

Sports

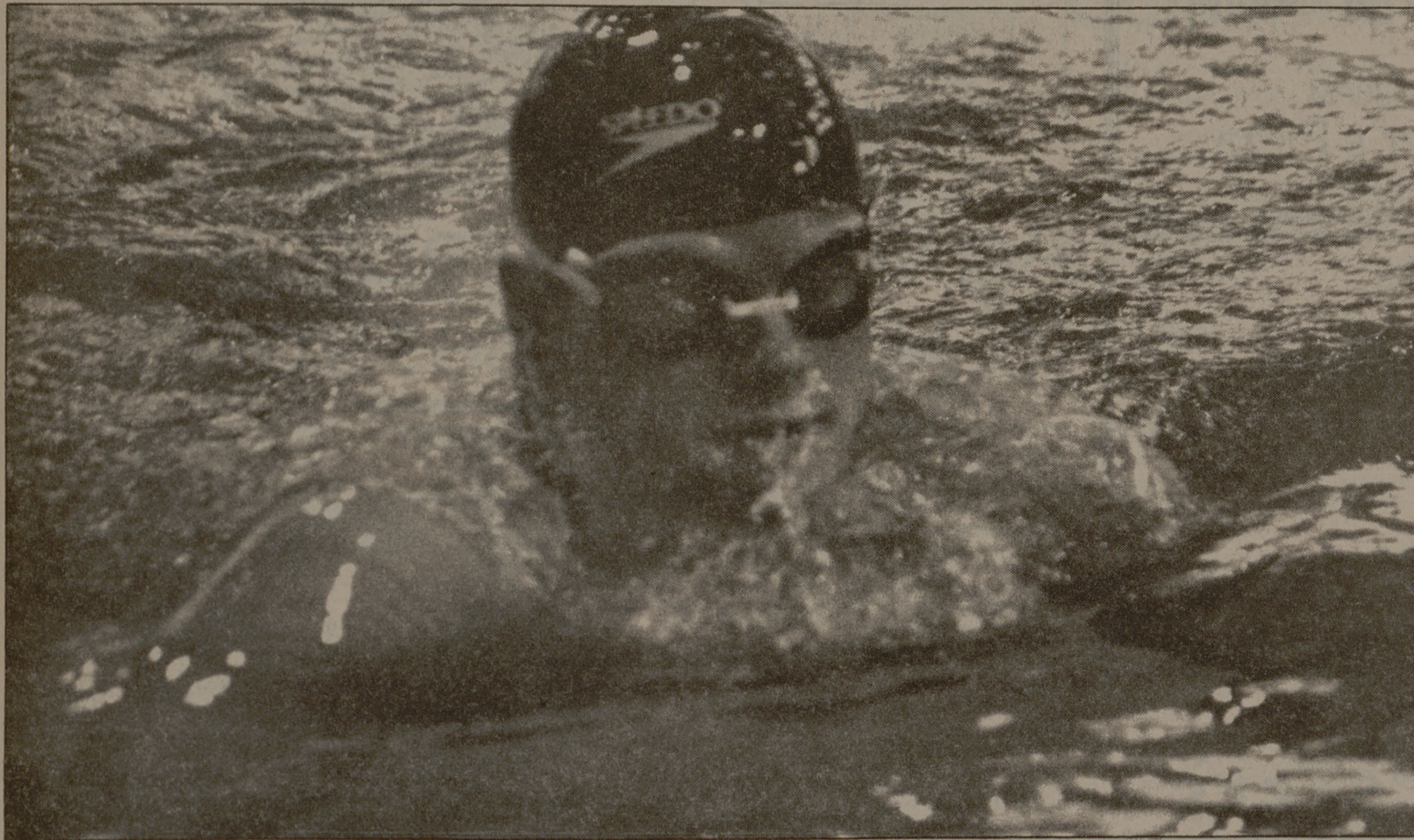


Photo by GREG BAILEY

Texas A&M swimmer Jeff Marks works out at the Downs Natatorium Thursday in preparation for the start of the Aggies' fall swimming schedule. The A&M men's and women's teams travel to Austin today to compete in the Southwest Conference Relays.

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A&M dives into swim season Aggies start hectic weekend with SWC Relays

By KEN SURY
Sports Writer

Let's hope Texas A&M's swim teams don't fall asleep in the middle of their races Saturday morning. But that wouldn't be difficult, considering the busy weekend the Aggies have in store.

Both the A&M men's and women's swim teams begin their 1985-86 season today in Austin, competing in the Southwest Conference Relays. An both teams follow with another meet against Arkansas and Texas Tech Saturday at 10 a.m. in A&M's Downs Natatorium.

"We don't ease into the season at all," said A&M Coach Mel Nash, who begins his seventh season with the Aggies. "Every year we've (the Aggie swim teams) gotten better. This year's no exception.

"Our women's team will be comparable to last year's, while our men's team will be much improved. It should be a real good season for us."

Last year, seven swimmers paced A&M's women's team to an 11th place finish in the NCAA Championships, while All-American Chris O'Neil and the men's team placed 23rd.

Nash predicts a healthy women's

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— Texas A&M Swim Coach Mel Nash

team to finish between 10th and 15th this season. Even the injury to one swimmer, Nash said, could tumble the team down to 30th because the team would lose depth. In fact, the women's team is so shorthanded swimmers, it can only fill 12 of the 14 relay teams in any given meet.

Four All-Americans return to this year's women's team: Senior Jody Tanner, freestyle and backstroke specialist; senior Meegan Wright, breaststroke; junior Britt Hoefs, butterfly; and sophomore Kelley Johnston, an all-around swimmer.

The Aggie men's team will be led by O'Neil, a senior and one of the top butterfly swimmers in the country. "I wish I had him for another four years," Nash said.

Other standout upperclassmen on the men's team include seniors Jeff Marx and Clark McDonald, and junior Chris Emig. Marx, a breaststroke specialist, and Emig, a back-

stroker, were named honorable mention All-Americans last year. McDonald, a freestyle swimmer, has qualified for the United States Swimming Nationals for two years in a row.

Well, that's the national outlook, but how will A&M stack up at today's SWC Relays?

"It's a good meet for us to start the season with, because we traditionally are a strong relay team," Nash said. "We also get a chance to see where everybody is in terms of training at this point."

Nash said he expects the A&M men to finish third at the Relays, behind Texas and SMU.

In the women's competition, Nash said the Aggies could finish anywhere from second to fifth in Austin.

"Texas is just awesome, they'll win easily," Nash said.

However, he expects the next four places to be a tough battle be-

tween A&M, Houston, Texas Tech and Arkansas.

And speaking of Tech and Arkansas, after the Aggies arrive home from the Austin, around 10 p.m., they'll wake up Saturday morning and host those same two teams in dual meet.

Nash said he feels the races this weekend should be exciting, but not particularly fast, since most teams are just beginning to swim against SWC competitors.

"You don't look for world record times to be set now," Nash said.

He added that a swimming team's season is really divided into three segments.

The first, Nash said, are the dual meets, where both men's and women's teams compete, in which swimmers learn their potential and hone their skills in competition.

During the second segment the swimmers "fine tune" their strokes for the SWC Championships. And the third segment is NCAA competition.

So even though the Aggies are just beginning, this weekend they are definitely diving head first into the competition.

A&M spikers turn out Georgia's lights

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Sports Writer

ATLANTA — Thursday night was the night the lights went out in Georgia.

The No. 17 Texas A&M volleyball team had a 7-2 lead in the second game of its match with Georgia, when suddenly the lights went out.

"We had that 7-2 lead and then the light just went out," A&M Coach Terry Condon said. "Before that, we were really moving well and playing good defense. I was really worried about what might happen after that."

What happened was the Ags turned the lights out on the Bulldogs, 9-15, 15-4, 15-7, 15-11.

The match started slowly for the Aggies, who improved to 19-5 overall, but in the second game they hit on all cylinders.

"The first game we were just real tired," Condon said. "I told Sherri (Brinkman) to wake up for two hours and then she could go back to bed. We were just standing around and Georgia was just playing real well. They were hitting everything."

The Aggies left Austin at 7:30 a.m. and arrived in Atlanta at 2 p.m. "I was very worried about the schedule," Condon said. "We just played last night and then we had to turn around and play this afternoon. And

then we have to play tomorrow and the next day. I told them to just pretend like they were in the pros."

Georgia, which fell to 27-4 overall, gave A&M some incentive to play like pros after the Aggies arrived in the "Peach State."

"They (the Bulldogs) started talking across the net when they got a lead and that got us fired up," Condon said.

The Ags were also ready to play to redeem themselves. Wednesday night in Austin, A&M was dominated by No. 13 Texas.

"We were talking about how anxious we were to win before the match," A&M setter Chris Zogata said. "In the lobby (of A&M's Austin hotel), before we left (for Georgia), we were even excited to play. This one felt real good."

"We really flowed as a team. Today we just went for balls and didn't worry about anything. Lesha (Beakley) and I crashed (together) a few times today. It was just real different today. We went for everything."

Outside hitter Cheri Steensma came off the bench to lead the Ags in hitting percentage at .400. Brinkman led A&M in kills with 16, while hitting .280.

And blocker Margaret Spence had perhaps her best game in the middle as she hit .230, had 11 kills and five blocks.

"Margaret did a lot better in the middle," Condon said. "She blocked a lot more balls and they set her more, so she had more kills."

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