

Sports

A&M holds off UT-Arlington

Ags earn right to play 'Horns in NCAA South Regional

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

It certainly didn't save its best for last, but the No. 19 Texas A&M volleyball team had just enough to get by the University of Texas-Arlington Saturday night in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

Playing their last home game this season, the Ags, now 26-7, coughed and sputtered to a 15-6, 11-15, 16-14, 8-15, 15-10 win over the Mavericks, who ended the season 28-4.

The real University of Texas, the one in Austin, could've been responsible for the Ags' sluggish play.

The Aggies hadn't played since Nov. 20 when they lost a five-game match to the Longhorns. The A&M wheels were in need of oil since they hadn't been used in two weeks.

"We were very rusty," A&M Coach Terry Condon. "We weren't very consistent. We would have two or three good points and then four or five bad ones. That's one of the chances you take laying off for two weeks."

With the win over UTA, A&M will get another shot at its Southwest Conference rival Friday night in Austin. The Aggies might have had their wheels rolling down Highway 6 a little too soon.

"I think we're ready for (Texas)," Condon said. "I think the problem tonight was a few people were thinking a little too far ahead. I stressed that a lot all week — do not look past UTA — but they did. They beat them easily in the first game, and kicked back in the second game and found out they were in trouble."

The Aggies zipped through the first game in no time flat using the outside hitting of Cheri Steensma and the middle play of Margaret Spence.

"Nerves got us a little in the first game," UTA Coach Lisa Love said. "We're the new kids on the block so to speak. The first game was probably over in record time."

But A&M got a little *too* comfortable.

While the Ags brought out their lawn chairs for a mid-game nap, the Mavs brought out their big guns — Ana de Oliveira and Katie Weismiller.

And after Condon called a

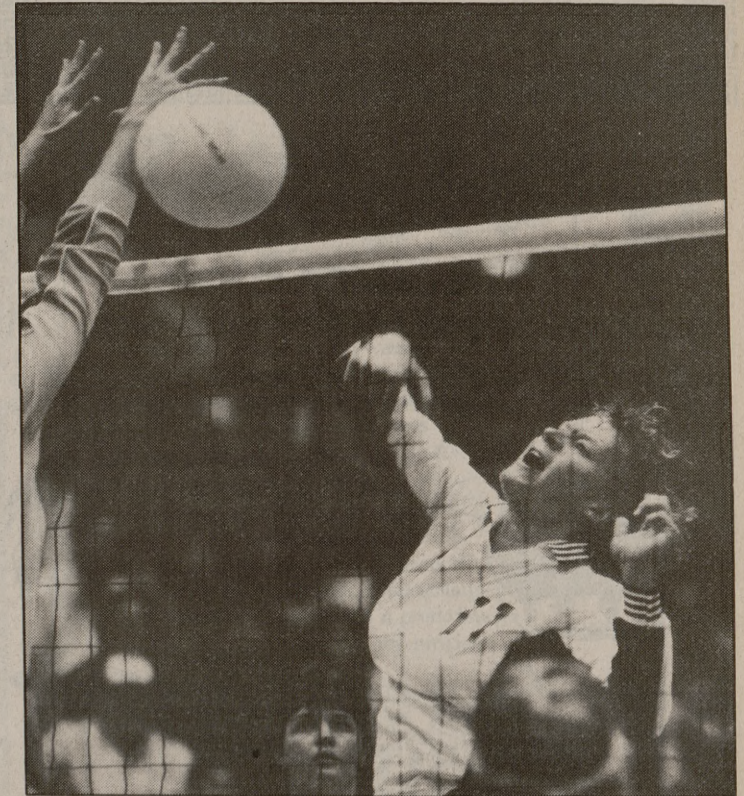


Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Texas A&M middle blocker Sherri Brinkman slams the ball past the arms of a UTA spiker during the Aggies' match win Saturday.

timeout trailing 7-6, A&M fell apart.

"I would blame the second game loss on me," Condon said. "I called the time out and was pretty mad. I went out there and really laid into them."

For awhile in the third game, it looked like the Ags might be taking a long siesta.

With the Aggies leading 13-8, key errors by their setters helped the Mavs take six straight points and a 14-13 advantage. With UTA serving for set point, Chris Zogata got a tap for the side out. Steensma popped Maverick Trava Davis in the face with a spike to tie the score. A Laura Hoppe service-winner and a Oliveira hit that went wide put the Aggies within one game of Austin.

The setters, Zogata and Leshia Beakley, had their problems all night.

Besides running into each other, their unusually low sets made it extremely difficult for the Aggie hitters, especially middle blocker Sherri Brinkman.

"Our setting was utterly atrocious," Condon said. "They got off to a bad start, and instead of relaxing, they got uptight and did worse. The setters just weren't getting the ball to (Sherri). Eighty percent of their sets to her were below the net. She was very frustrated."

Although admittedly flustered.

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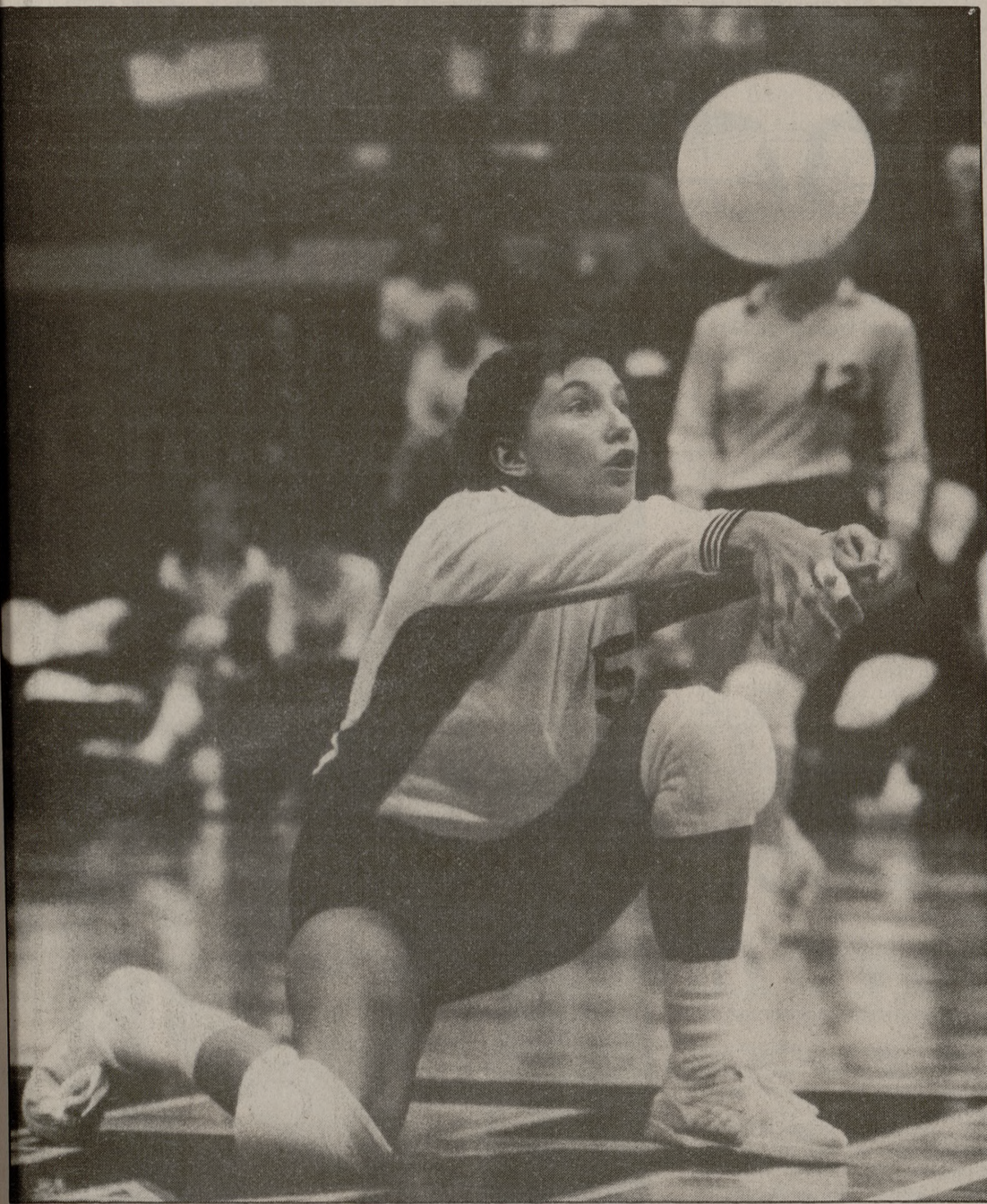


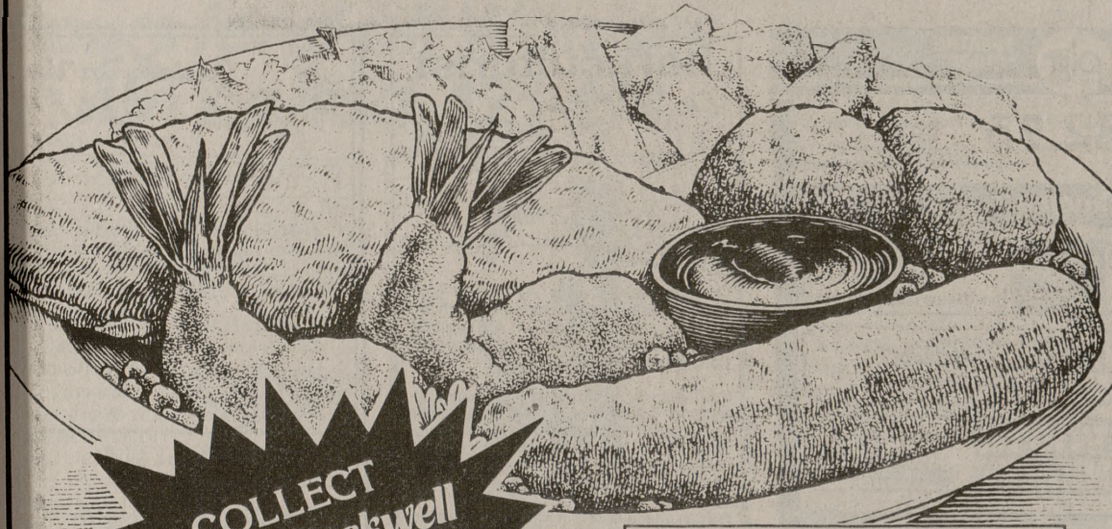
Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Texas A&M setter Chris Zogata (5) goes low for a dig against Texas-Arlington Saturday night. A&M defeated UTA in five games to advance to the South Regional of the NCAA Tournament.

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