

Sports

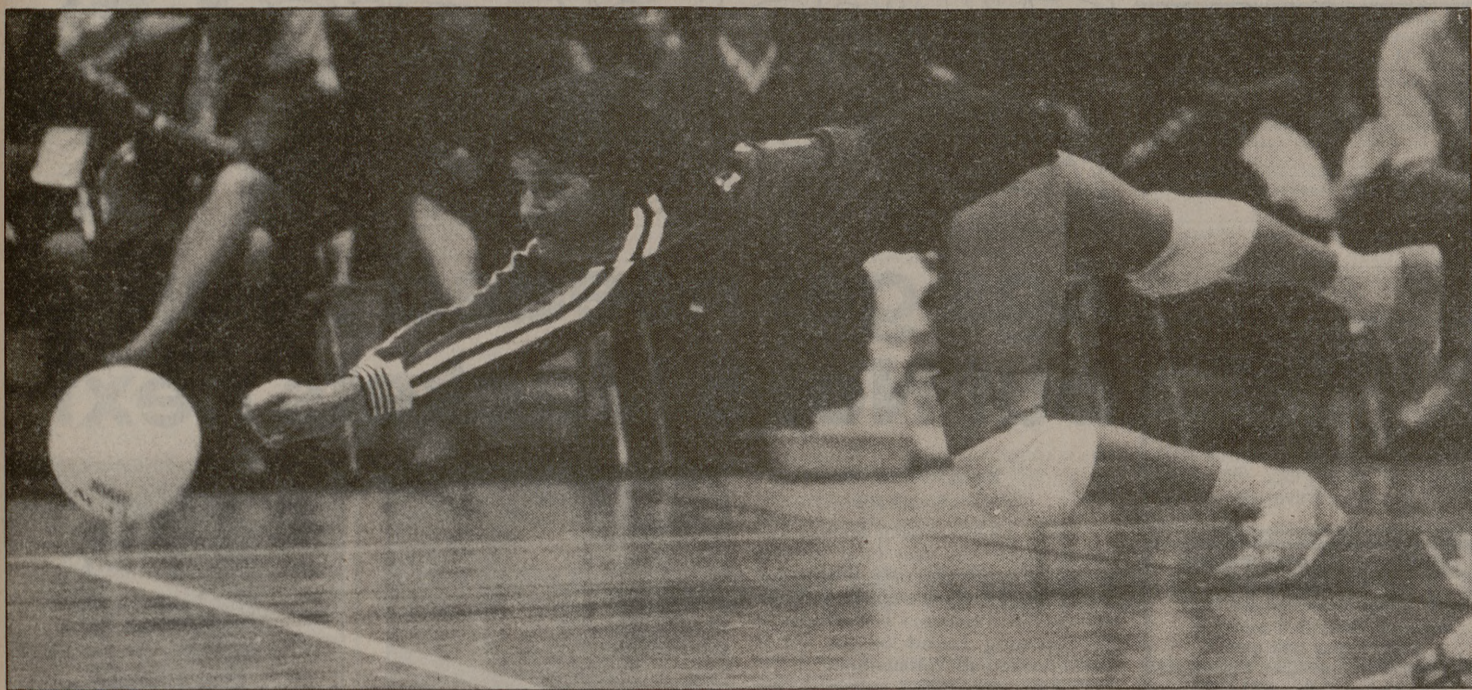


Photo by JOHN MAKELY

A&M setter Lesha Beakley tries in vain to keep the ball in play Friday night against Texas. No. 19 A&M lost to No. 8 Texas for the

third time this season. The 15-6, 15-8, 15-3 loss in the South Region of the NCAA Tournament ended the Aggies' season at 26-8.

Ags fall to 'Horns — again

NCAA loss worst ever against UT

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

AUSTIN — The Texas A&M volleyball team did everything it could to ward off the effects of playing Texas on Friday the 13th.

A&M Coach Terry Condon threw salt over both shoulders at the pregame meal for luck. Condon wasn't told setter Lesha Beakley's mother was going to the match because Condon said the Aggies don't play well when she's there.

And just for superstitions' sake, the Ags changed uniforms because as Condon said, "Every time we've worn our white shorts and maroon tops, we've lost".

So the Aggies entered Gregory Gymnasium Friday night for the South Region of the NCAA Championship Tournament decked out in their ominous all maroon uniforms, reminiscent of the Pittsburgh Steelers of the '70s.

But while A&M might have looked like champions, it was Texas who played like them.

It took just 57 minutes for the No. 8 Longhorns to smash, crash and dash the No. 19 Aggies' hopes of advancing to the prestigious final eight and playing Condon's alma mater, UCLA, Saturday night for a chance to move on to the Final Four in Kalamazoo, Mich.

The 15-6, 15-8, 15-3 score was the Ags' worst defeat ever at the hands of the 'Horns and extended UT's win streak over A&M to eight matches.

"I think we're still back at A&M," Condon said. "We were never in the match. We haven't been able to decide we have a chance. They just never got it through their brains that if they just played, they could win."

A&M All-America Sherri Brinkman side-armed the first ball cross-court to give the Ags their first side out of the match.

With outside hitter Cheri Steensma serving, UT outside hitter Karen Kramer was called for being in the net, and A&M had scored the first point of the match.

At that point the Aggies were in the match. But they never saw the

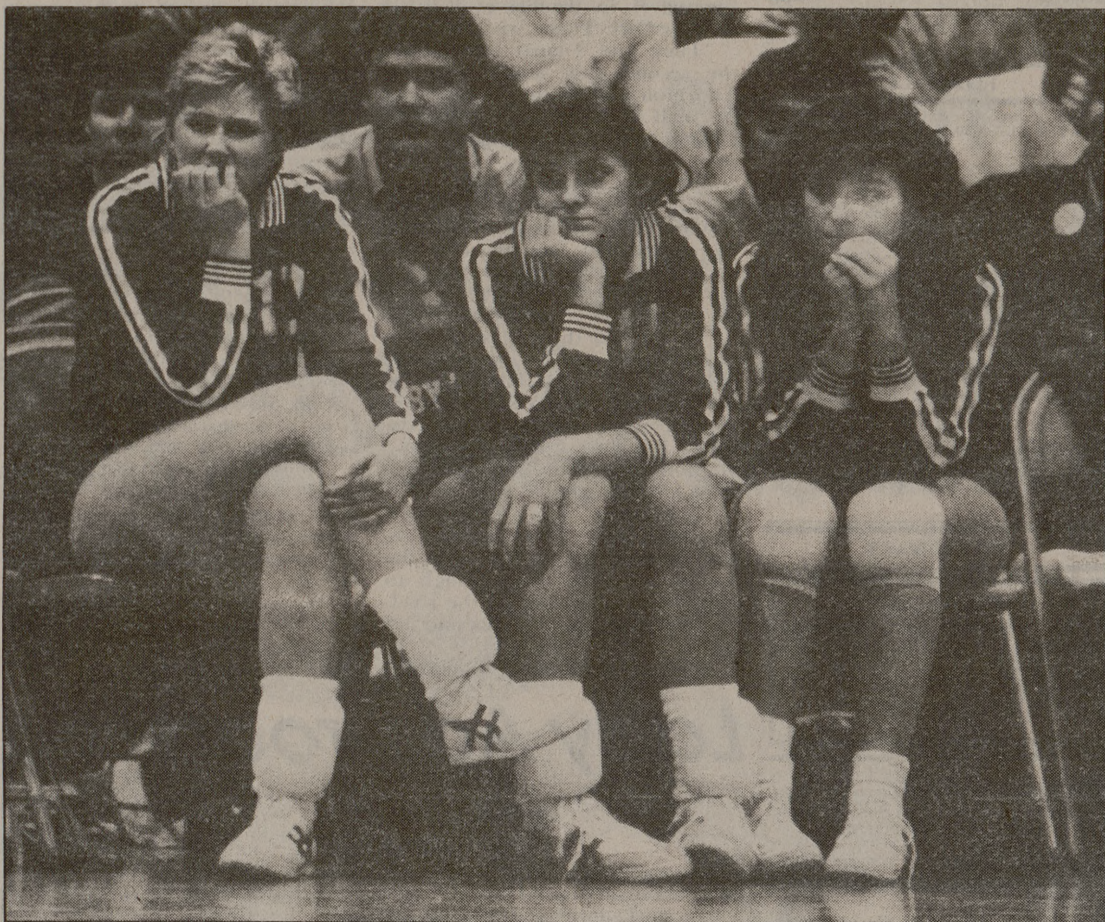


Photo by JOHN MAKELY

A&M's (from left to right) Dena Zalesky, Kelli Kellen and Kelly Gaughn dejectedly watch A&M

lose to Texas Friday night. The 15-6, 15-8, 15-3 defeat was the Ags' worst ever to the 'Horns.

lead again, and by the second game knew they were whipped.

"By the middle of the second game, I knew we were making too many mistakes to stay with them," Beakley said. "I knew we were in trouble. They were just dominating us. And with all the mistakes we were making, we were making it very easy for them."

It appeared the 'Horns had more than their allotted six players out on the court, while the Ags were playing with less than that — if not physically, then mentally.

"We just didn't go out there really wanting it," Brinkman said. "I don't know if it's something with Texas, a mental block or what. If you don't have all six, you can't beat them, and I honestly don't know how many we had out there tonight."

The Longhorns' Eva Murray was

setting an almost flawless match, making life easy for outside hitters Diane Watson, Laura Neugebauer and Angie Albrecht.

"Eva used all 30 feet of the court," Texas Coach Mick Haley said. "She used Laura as a decoy early. Then later, when she went back to her, it was almost an automatic side out."

Murray, who Condon calls "Texas' whole team," helped lead the 'Horns to a .500 setting efficiency and .383 hitting percentage.

Meanwhile, the A&M setters, Beakley and Chris Zogata, were having major problems for the second straight match, making it difficult for middle blockers Brinkman, Margaret Spence and outside hitters Steensma and Stacey Gildner to get anything going offensively.

The Aggies' setting percentage was only .310, while their hitting

percentage was .084.

"Our setting hasn't been very good," Condon said. "I probably should have switched to a 5-1 (five hitters and only one setter) earlier in the season. I have to take a lot of the blame for that."

"The setters haven't played very well in a long time. Maybe there's too much conflict between the two of them. I don't know."

Neugebauer said the Aggies' passing game was a key to their inability to get anything going.

"We played so well," Neugebauer said. "And they were having trouble passing the ball. They couldn't run anything at all, so it was hard for (Brinkman) to get a shot."

The Aggies last defeated the 'Horns in their first meeting in 1982.

See Aggie spikers, page 8

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