

# Ag tandem in national tourney

## A&M netters to face strong doubles field

By **KEN SURY**  
Assistant Sports Editor

While the Texas A&M women's tennis team faces Texas-San Antonio here today, its No. 2 doubles team will not be among them.

And why? Because Aggies Kim Labuschagne and Karen Marshall, who have an 18-3 doubles record, will be in Houston preparing for the Intercollegiate Tennis Coaches Association (ITCA) Nationals. The ITCA Nationals is an annual tournament composed of the first- and second-place singles players and doubles teams from regional tourneys held last year and others selected on an at-large basis.

Labuschagne and Marshall reserved their spot in the tournament when they won at the ITCA regional qualifying tourney in Austin Nov. 3.

But neither of them expect the upcoming tournament to be a cakewalk.

"We've had a couple matches when we've been ahead and ended up losing our lead," Marshall said. "I think with the type of competition we'll be facing at this tournament there's no way in the world we can let up like that."

"We're going to have to really bear down and not consider a lead that we may have, or how well we're playing, or whatever. We just have to go out and play."

Labuschagne added, "They're (the other teams) all going to be tough competition, whoever we have to play."

Although Marshall, a freshman, hails from California and Labuschagne, a sophomore, comes from South Africa, both said it seemed easy for them to play doubles together.

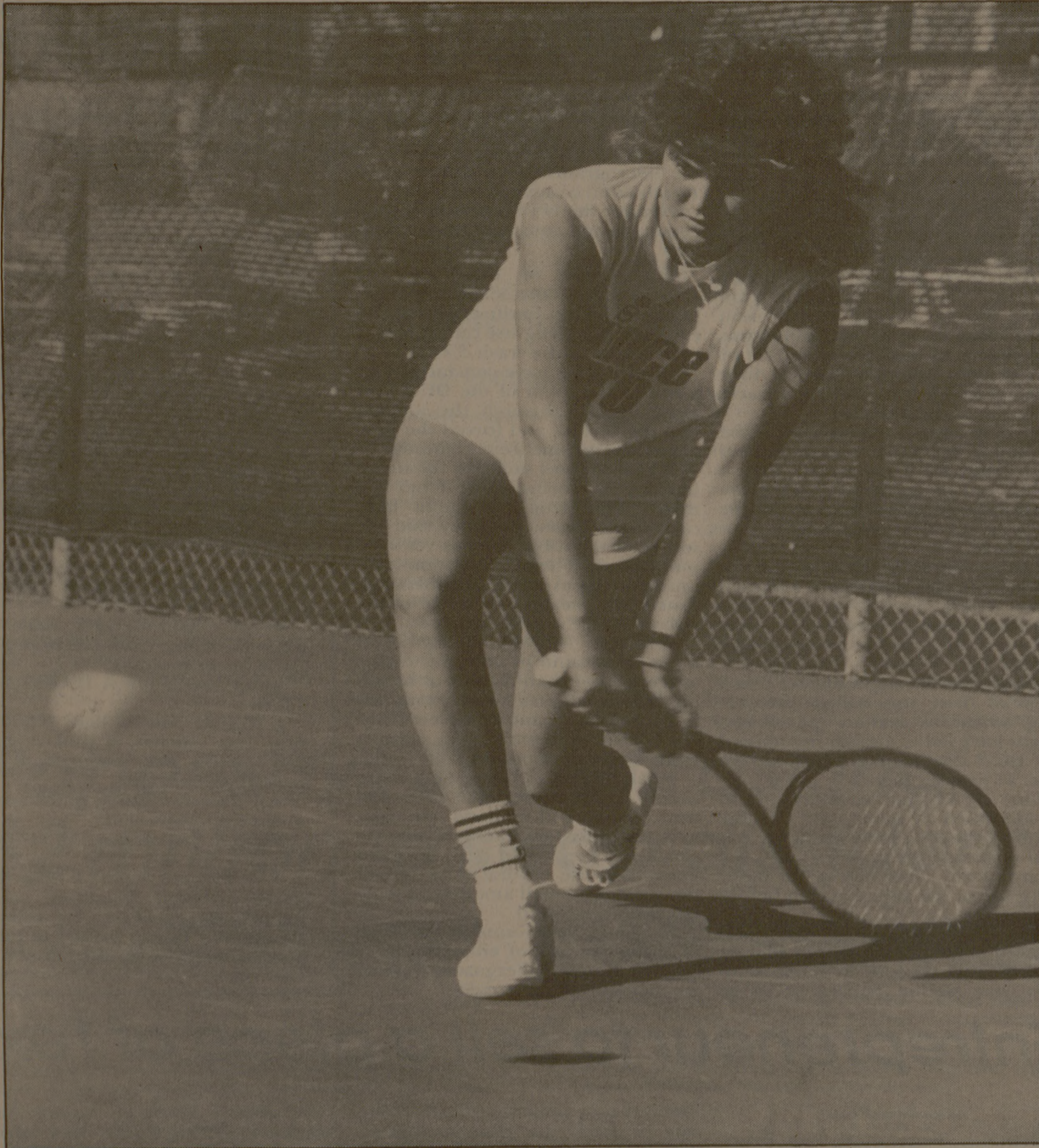
"We just kind of clicked," Marshall said.

Labuschagne added, "It's amazing, really. From the start, we just played so well together."

"It's like when we're playing, somebody would hit a drop shot and we'd just know, 'OK, Karen will go for it,' or, 'I'll go for it.' It's not 'Well, you go get it.'"

One of the few times the duo did not play doubles together was last Saturday against North Texas State. In the middle of her singles match, Labuschagne tripped and sprained her ankle. She defaulted the match and skipped the doubles competition to avoid any further injury or weakening of the ankle.

But Labuschagne said she thinks she'll be well enough to play their first match in the tournament Thursday.



A&M's Kim Labuschagne concentrates on her backhand during a recent practice. She and dou-

bles partner Karen Marshall will be competing in the ITCA tournament in Houston this weekend.

Photo by TOM OWNBEY

"I didn't twist it that badly," Labuschagne said. "I was more frightened (when the injury happened) than anything else. I think it'll be all right, although it's kind of stiff yet."

Although tennis is a large part of their collegiate life, both said A&M's academic excellence was a consideration in choosing to come here.

"I was first told about the school by a friend of (A&M Men's Tennis) Coach (David) Kent," Marshall said. "I looked at the school last February and I really liked it. It's very good academically and I felt the tennis program was quite good."

Labuschagne said her father nudged her toward A&M because of the academics, but she said her decision also was influenced by Grant Connell, A&M's No. 1 singles player last year and now on the Canadian amateur tennis circuit.

"I met him when I was playing in Europe," she said, "and he told me about the school. That's where I heard about it first. He would write me or call me and he really sold me on A&M."

Labuschagne said many South Africans come to the United States to play tennis because the sport is not played at the high school or collegiate levels. Anyone who wants to play tennis

competitively, she said, has to do so on an individual basis.

Labuschagne is one of three South Africans currently playing tennis at A&M. Sophomore Dean Johnson and freshman Brent Haygarth are on the men's team.

Labuschagne and Marshall said they don't have any butterflies yet, but expect a few before their 1:30 p.m. match Thursday. And each deals with the pressure in her own way.

"Karen gets psyched for a match," Labuschagne said. "I get quiet. I pump myself up during warmups."

Marshall added, "She won't be saying anything to me tomorrow, I'm sure."

# Women cagers gain new route to Final Four

Associated Press

Texas, still No. 1 in the women's college basketball poll, and several other ranked schools announced Tuesday they will change their approach to the NCAA postseason tournament.

Instead of worrying about just qualifying, they will all be trying to grab one of the eight national seeds in the 40-team field that could ease the road to the Final Four at Lexington, Ky.

The unbeaten Lady Longhorns, 19-0, who were again the unanimous choice of a nationwide panel of 60 coaches for the top poll position, and No. 2 Georgia, 19-1, are heading toward the top two NCAA spots.

Georgia, with a schedule tougher

than the 'Horns, might even receive the No. 1 seed if it wins the Southeastern Conference. Coach Andy Landers' team can help itself this week by clinching the regular season title and the home court for the SEC tournament.

Although No. 3 Virginia, 20-0, has the nation's longest winning streak, the Cavaliers will have to avoid their traditional February slump and maintain their lead in the Atlantic Coast Conference. A key league game will occur Wednesday when they host No. 15 North Carolina.

Louisiana Tech, 18-2, which moved up a spot to fourth in the poll, seems likely to be one of the eight national choices of the committee. But Coach Leon Barmore's club

will have to do well against Northeast Louisiana at home, as well as on the road at Tennessee and Penn State, to be a candidate for a top four position.

Western Kentucky, 19-1, which moved up a notch to an all-time high at fifth this week, is campaigning for a top four spot to help its cause of returning to the NCAA finals for the second year in a row.

That means the Hilltoppers must do well at Georgia next Monday, be successful against potential rivals Northeast Louisiana and USC in the Northern Lights Alaska tournament at the end of the month and win the Sun Belt Conference over defending NCAA champion Old Dominion.

Now that No. 6 Long Beach State, 17-2, has continued its hex over USC

at home, it also must show what it can do against the Women of Troy, 18-3, on the road. USC, which dropped from fourth to seventh, seems likely to be the top seed in the West.

No. 8 Mississippi, 18-4, and No. 10 Tennessee, which both moved up a spot, and No. 11 Auburn, 18-4, which fell from eighth, will have their fates determined by the performance against each other in the SEC wars.

No. 9 Rutgers, 18-2, which moved up a spot and is heading for its first-ever NCAA appearance, could make a bid for a top eight placement by winning the Atlantic 10 title. No. 12 Ohio State, 15-4, could gain the attention of the committee if the Buckeyes go unbeaten.

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