

Sports

Ags still like chances of winning SWC title

By Doug Hall
Sports Writer

After beginning its spring season with a first-, second- and third-place finish in three of its first four tournaments, the Texas A&M men's golf team has struggled as of late.

But in spite of the fact that the Aggies have finished no higher than seventh in any of their three tournaments since March 28, A&M is still optimistic about this weekend's Southwest Conference tournament in Fayetteville, Ark.

"Our goal is to win," said Jorge Coghlan, a 1984 All-SWC player and the Aggies' second lowest scorer. "We set that goal at the beginning of the year."

However, this weekend's SWC tournament will take more than just promises to win.

Houston, TCU, and Arkansas will give A&M its biggest challenge. All three teams finished ahead of the Aggies in the All-American Intercollegiate tourney in Houston three weeks ago. Baylor and Texas also field strong teams.

A&M Coach Bob Ellis said af-

ter the All-American Intercollegiate that he felt any one of five teams had a shot at winning the conference title.

When asked which team he picked as the favorite, Coghlan replied, "Probably Texas or UH. Texas Christian has a good team, but I just don't think they'll win it."

The Aggies have been led this year by senior Jeff Maggert who through 21 tournament rounds this spring has averaged 71.9 strokes, including an opening round 65 in the Morris Williams Golf Tournament. Maggert went on to win the tourney's individual championship with a three day total of 203.

Following Maggert is Coghlan who has averaged a respectable 73.3 shots per 18 holes this season.

Coghlan, however, has not been pleased with his performance so far this year.

"I've played very inconsistent," he said, "but I've been working on my concentration. I think everyone is ready to play (this weekend)."

"If we can get one guy to get out front and play well, we'll be in good shape," he said.

A&M, UT to play for SWC crown

Ags need to take 2-of-3 to lock 'Horns out of title picture

By Tom Tagliabue
Sports Writer

It's time to "put up or shut up" in the battle for first in the Southwest Conference baseball race.

Current league-leader Texas A&M, ranked No. 9 in the nation, will face second-place Texas in a three-game series at Disch-Falk Field in Austin this weekend.

A capacity crowd of 7,000 is expected for each ballgame — Friday's 7 p.m. opener and Saturday's 2 p.m. double-header.

The No. 5 'Horns, 45-9 overall and 12-3 in the SWC, have won 16 SWC championships during Coach Cliff Gustafson's 18-year stint.

Coach Mark Johnson's Aggies, 36-18 and 13-2, are on a roll, winning 12 of their last 13 games, including 10-straight SWC games.

Johnson said his team enjoys having control of its own destiny.

"I wouldn't trade our position with anybody right now," Johnson said. "Obviously, we're one game up on Texas and a 1/2 game up on Arkansas. We're in the best position of everybody. We have total control of our destiny. We can stir our own drink."

Gustafson, the Longhorns' coach since 1968, said his ballclub is in a must-win situation if it expects to claim the SWC crown.

"(Winning) 2-out-of-3 (games) is a must for us and, realistically, we need 2-out-of-3 because we've got to go to Houston next week and that's going to be a treacherous series," Gustafson said. "All 2-out-of-3 will do is keep us alive another

week. If the Aggies win 2-out-of-3, I feel like they'll virtually clinch because they've got TCU at home next week.

"(A&M) has a real well-balanced ballclub and has been playing extremely well. They've been doing what it takes to win ballgames. That's the kind of ballclub I like. They're winning games in a lot of different ways. They're getting good pitching, getting the clutch hits, winning close games and winning the one-sided games."

A&M's 1986 campaign mirrors the Aggies' 1978 SWC championship season in which they took 2-of-3 from Arkansas in Fayetteville, swept Baylor in Waco and won 2-of-3 against Texas in Austin. However, the last time A&M won 2-of-3 against UT was 1981.

Both UT and A&M will put their pitching aces on the hill in Friday night's opener, which will be carried on local radio station KTAM (1240 AM).

Left hander Dale Barry, 8-0 overall and 5-0 in conference, will throw for the Aggies against another lefty, Greg Swindell, 8-1 for the season and 1-1 in the SWC, in what Gustafson calls the most crucial game of the series.

"Well, I think (Friday's opener) is a very important game of the series and I think for us, it's probably more important than for the Aggies," Gustafson said. "Swindell means more to our success than Barry does to the Aggies' success — and that's not meant to underrate Barry at all, but they've been getting some really good pitching from (Darryl) Fry and the other guys."

Johnson refused to tag the first game, "the most important," because he fears a big letdown if the Aggies do lose the first game.

"Obviously, you'd love to start off the series with a win and then come into the double-header knowing you need 1-of-2 and not have to look at it and say, 'We've got to sweep today.'" Johnson said. "If we're going to be champions, we're going to do it with Barry pitching the first ball game and we're going to go right at them. We're not going to back off Swindell, we're going to throw our ace against him."

Johnson will use his second lefty, Darryl Fry, 9-4 and 3-1, for the first game Saturday, while Gustafson will counter with right hander Mark Petkovsek, 10-1 and 5-0.

Both coaches are undecided on who will pitch the finale. Gary Geiger and Pat Wernig are possible starters for A&M, while Daniel Pena or Curt Krippner could start for UT.

Texas and A&M are also as closely matched in the statistics as they are in the standings.

A&M has the top defensive team in the conference with a .975 fielding percentage, while UT is fourth with a .965.

The Longhorns, who have the second-best SWC team batting average at .309, are led by Elan Westbrooks, hitting .400; Kevin Gerner, .356 with 16 RBI; and Jay Searcy, four homers and two triples.

The Aggies, ranked third in the SWC at .300, are propelled by the hitting of Mike Scanlin, who has a .418 average with 17 RBI, 16 runs scored and 23 hits, including four homers and nine doubles.

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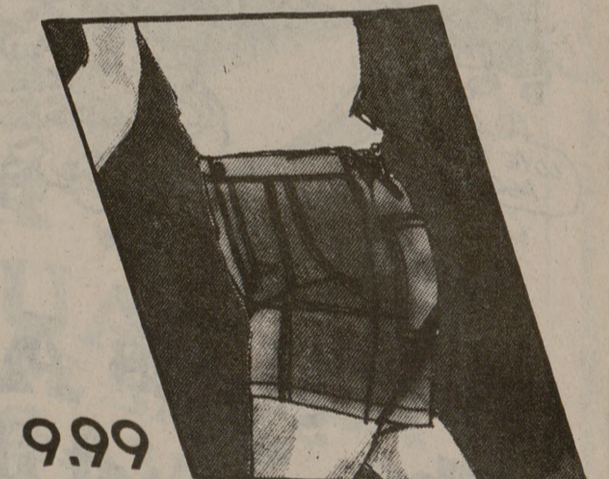
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