

Sports

Ags begin 'real season' tonight

By Doug Hall
Sports Writer

According to Texas A&M Volleyball Coach Al Givens, tonight's 7:30 match with Texas Tech in G. Rollie White Coliseum is not just any another match.

For the 11-3 Aggies, fresh off winning the Oklahoma tournament, it's a match that begins their real season — the Southwest Conference season.

"I think the conference season is definitely the most important part of the year," Givens said Tuesday. "Some people say it's a second season, but I say it's *the* season."

"Our preseason games are designed to prepare us for the conference matches," he said. "We've already played some tough matches, but that is because we play in a tough conference."

Givens said Texas Tech, which owns a 6-3 record with one of those losses coming at the hands of No. 16 Louisiana State University, returns all six starters from last year's team.

"They're a tough, scrappy team that keeps coming at you with good defense," he said. "I don't think they have the same amount of talent as we do, but I've been around athletics long enough to know talent doesn't always win it for you."

Givens said to beat Texas Tech, which hasn't played a match in 10 days, the Aggies must control the tempo and the composure of the match.

A key figure in controlling that tempo is senior setter Chris Zogata, a three-year letterwinner from LaGrange, Ill.

Earlier this season, Givens expressed disappointment at the Aggies' inability to get their offense on track. It was their defense, he said, that was keeping the team in the running.

However, due to the strong play of Zogata and Stacey Giddner, last week's SWC player-of-the-week, the Aggie offense has risen to the same level as the defense. Zogata was named to the all-tournament team in the Oklahoma tournament last weekend.

Zogata, who likens her position to that of a quarterback on the football field, said she hasn't felt any added pressure this season, but does feel the need to succeed.

"(Being a senior) doesn't add pressure," she said, "but when we aren't playing well, I tend to take it as me not doing well. But Coach Givens hasn't been putting any extra pressure on me. He's been real positive about everything."

Zogata also said the team has handled the transition from former coach Terry Condon to Givens in a professional manner.

"It's been a give-and-take exchange," she said. "Coach doesn't expect us to completely change and we don't expect him to conform to us."

"At times we have been frustrated, but we're working out very well."

Givens said he hopes A&M's SWC opener will attract a large crowd because, "The bigger the crowd is, the better they (the Aggies) play — especially at home."

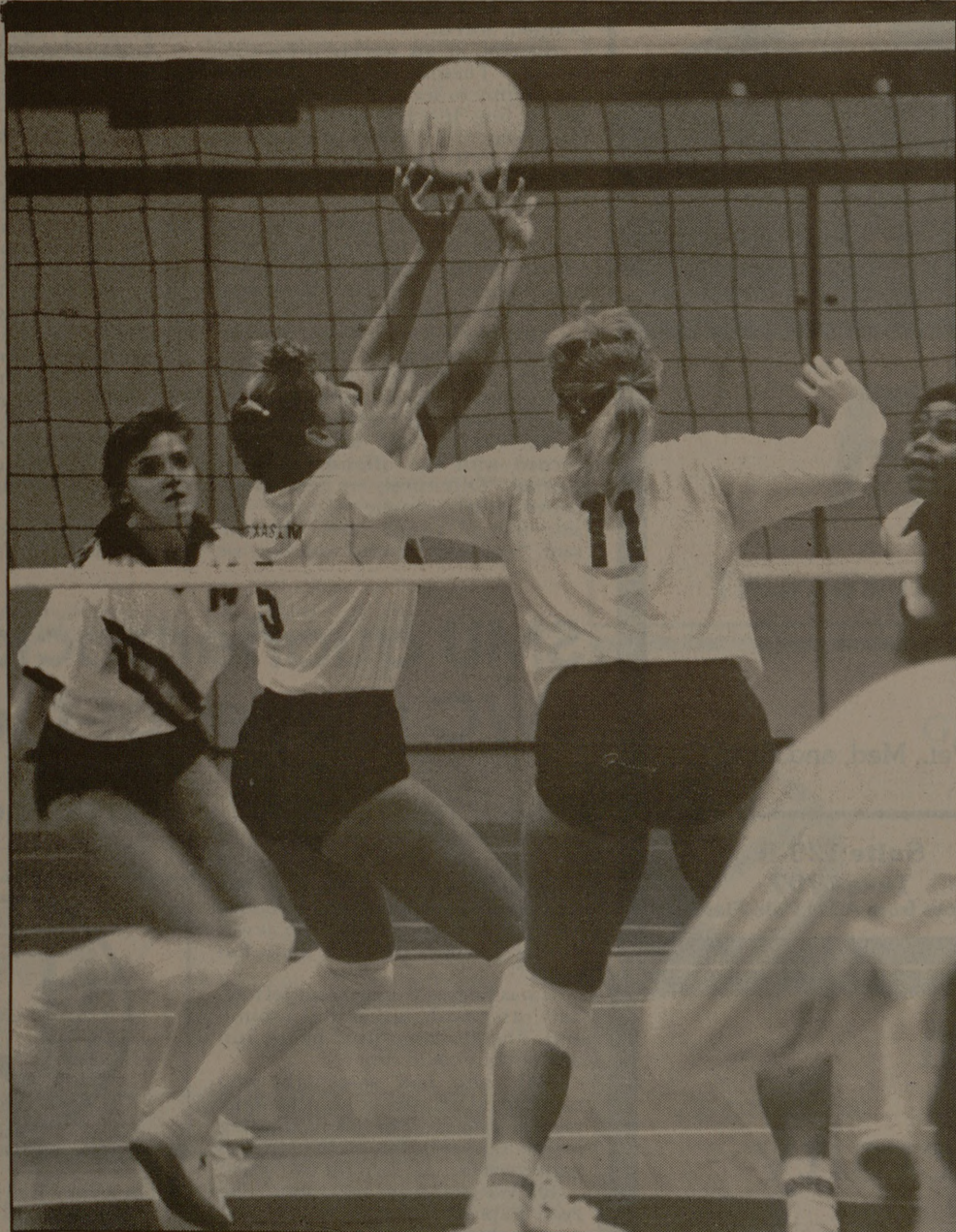


Photo by Michael A. Sanchez

A&M's Chris Zogata (5) sets the ball as Stacey Smith (far right) prepares to spike it in an earlier win over Sam Houston State. A&M opens SWC play against Texas Tech tonight.

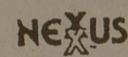
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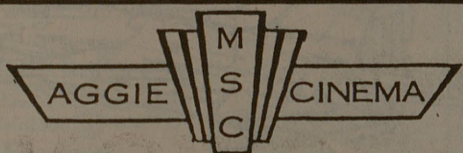
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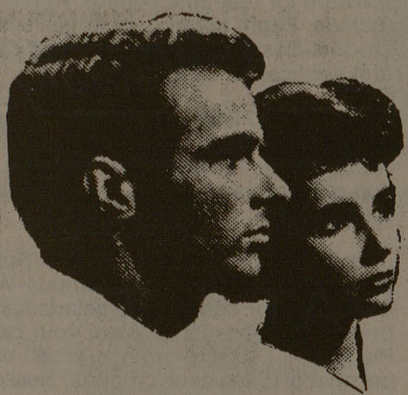
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