

## Women's Final Four is hot ticket

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas Coach Jody Conradt says the sixth annual Women's NCAA basketball championship isn't a sure thing for the Lady Longhorns even if they are the defending national champions playing on their home court.

"This isn't the same team that won the national title last year," Conradt said Wednesday at a press conference with the Final Four head coaches. "I lost six seniors off the team a year ago."

"Right now this team is being led by two freshmen. This team has played to the best of its ability, I will say that but we are no way as close to being as mature as the team we had last year."

The top-seeded Lady Longhorns are 31-1 with their only loss coming Dec. 14 in Austin to Tennessee 85-78. Texas avenged the defeat 88-74 two weeks later. Since then, they have won their last 25 games.

Texas meets the Louisiana Tech Lady Techsters (29-2) at 9 p.m. Friday while the Tennessee Lady Volunteers, who are 26-6, play the Long Beach State Lady 49ers (33-2) at 6 p.m.

The winners collide at noon on

Sunday for the national title in the Special Events Center. ESPN is televising all of the games nationally.

Only a few tickets remain with record sellout crowds of almost 16,000 fans assured for each session.

"I was shocked when I heard it's almost a sellout," Louisiana Tech Athletic Director Paul Miller said. "We may make some money this year. The women's Final Four teams only got about \$5,000 each last year. I think this is great for the Women's Final Four. It could be a big stepping stone for the future."

"We're excited about the ticket sales," Conradt said. "Ten years ago this was something you could only dream about. It's a very tough ticket now."

The tournament began in 1982 when Louisiana Tech won the title at Ruston, La.

"I'd like to have the same luck Louisiana Tech had when it hosted the Final Four on its home court," Conradt said. "Remember, we had it here two years ago, but we weren't in it. That was a big disappointment."

The Tennessee-Long Beach State game will feature the rookie versus the veteran.

Long Beach State Coach Joan Bonvicini is the only first-time coach in the Final Four. Tennessee Head Coach Pat Summit is in the Final Four for a record fourth time.

Louisiana Tech Coach Leon Barmore has extensive Final Four experience. He was twice co-head coach with Sonja Hogg and an assistant on another occasion.

"It's going to be tough to try to handle Texas at home," Barmore said. "But I still believe every team here has the chance to win the national title."

Summit, the coach of the United States' 1984 gold medal Olympic team, said "defense has been the key to our team. We benched three starters and the team has responded well. Long Beach will be hard to handle."

Bonvicini said she likes the Lady 49ers to be referred to as a "transition team. Some people like to call us run-and-gun, but all we do is just run on makes and misses. We don't try to score a lot of points."

The teams arrived late Wednesday and began workouts at the "Super Drum" which is the nickname for the Lady Longhorn's home court.

## Zone defense won't work against La Salle bombers

NEW YORK (AP) — La Salle, which faces Southern Mississippi for the title in the 50th National Invitation Tournament tonight, can forget about facing another zone defense that will let the Explorers again make eight 3-point shots in the first half.

"They've convinced me they can shoot," Southern Mississippi Coach M.K. Turk said Wednesday. "I can assure you that we won't open with a zone against La Salle."

"They know they have to play us man-to-man to win," La Salle Coach Bill "Speedy" Morris said. "But we feel we can handle a man-to-man and get the ball inside. Not many teams have tried to play a zone against us. We've had games where we've only shot five or six 3-pointers."

La Salle guards Tim Legler and Rich Tarr hit three 3-pointers each in the first half against Arkansas-Little Rock in Tuesday night's semifinals.

The Explorers made eight of their first 12 long-range attempts while taking a 43-25 lead 16½ minutes into the game, then freshman star Lionel Simmons scored 13 of his 21 points in the second half as La Salle went on to a 92-73 victory. Legler had 26 points and Tarr 23.

Southern Miss defeated Nebraska 82-75 in the other semifinal. Randolph Keys had 24 points and John White 19, and they scored all of the Golden Eagles' points during a 15-2 second-half spurt that turned a 60-58 deficit into a 73-62 lead.

## Norman looks ahead to TPC golf tourney

PONTE VEDRA, Fla. (AP) — Since Jan. 1, Greg Norman has won the Australia Masters and played in four PGA Tour events in the United States.

Norman, however, said the \$1 million Tournament Players Championship "is the real start of my American schedule."

"The rest of it was just a lot of running around," the current British Open champion said Wednesday before a practice session for the touring players own championship.

"I had a nice little break last week. Now I'm ready to get back to it. I'll play as much as I can between now and September, get my concentration back in focus, get my game back in tournament shape."

Norman, who led both the American and Australia tours in money-winnings and took 10 international titles last season, has a third and a fifth place finish as his best performances in the United States this year.

"The first time I played St. Andrews, I didn't like it," Norman said. "The more I played it, the better I liked it. This course is the same."

Norman, who acquired more than \$1.2 million in world-wide earnings last year, is part of a 144-man field that ranks as the strongest of the season.

The only figure of any consequence who is missing is Mac O'Grady, winner of the Tournament of Champions earlier this season. Among the major challengers for the \$180,000 first prize are U.S. Open winner Ray Floyd, PGA titleholder Bob Tway, defending champion John Mahaffey and Jack Nicklaus, who made a last-minute decision to add this event to his reduced playing schedule.

Other leading players include Payne Stewart, Ben Crenshaw, Fuzzy Zoeller, Tom Kite, Lanny Wadkins, Lee Trevino, Ben Crenshaw and Corey Pavin, already the winner of two 1987 titles.

Seve Ballesteros of Spain, who received a special invitation as the leading player on the European tour, heads a foreign field that also includes Bernhard Langer of West Germany, Sandy Lyle of Scotland and Tommy Nakajima of Japan.

## Astros get by Pirates 8-4

BRADENTON, Fla. (AP) — Jim Pankovits picked up two hits, including a home run, drove in two runs and scored two runs as the Houston Astros defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates 8-4 in exhibition baseball Wednesday.

The game was played at Bradenton's McKechnie Field, where the wind was blowing strongly toward left field, helping in giving both teams five homers for the day.

The Astros scored three runs in the first inning on RBI singles by Terry Puhl and Pankovits, and a fielder's choice grounder from Craig Reynolds.

Pankovits scored in the fourth on a single by Glenn Carpenter, who advanced to second on an error by Pirates' right fielder Tommy Dunbar. Carpenter then scored on another Pirates error, this one by shortstop Onix Concepcion.

Pankovits hit a solo homer in the fifth inning and the Astros scored two more runs in the ninth.

All of the Pirates' scoring came on solo home runs off starter and winner Nolan Ryan. Tony Pena hit his in the first inning, R.J. Reynolds followed in the second, and Jim Morrison and pitcher Bob Paterson connected in the fourth.

## Rangers blast Orioles 14-1

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla. (AP) — Pete Incaviglia returned to the Texas lineup Wednesday night after an eight-game absence and hit a two-run homer and a two-run double in his first two at-bats of the Rangers 14-1 victory over Baltimore.

Oddibe McDowell and Larry Parrish also hit their first home runs of the spring, Parrish's leading off the fourth against Bell and McDowell with one man on base against Rich Bordi in the sixth.

Darrell Porter hit his second, a two-run shot off lefty Brad Havens in the eighth. The Rangers also came up with five more runs on three hits, two walks and three Orioles errors in the seventh.

Bobby Witt, making his second exhibition start of the year, struck out six in four innings and allowed an unearned run when he walked Ken Gerhart with the bases loaded in the second after third baseman Parrish dropped a foul pop up.

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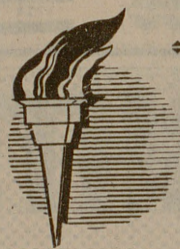
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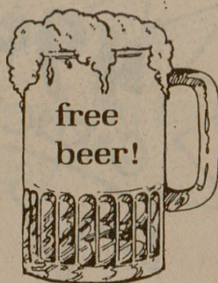
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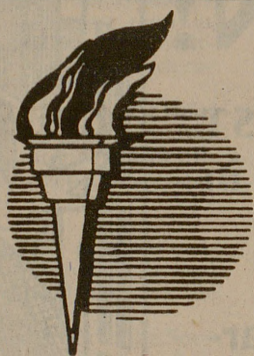
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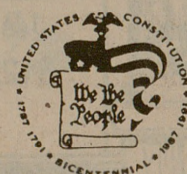
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