

# Sports

## Whitwell to play final home match Texas game signals close of volleyball career

By Anthony Wilson  
Sports Writer

When Texas A&M senior outside attacker Michelle Whitwell takes the floor against the University of Texas tonight, it will be her last hurrah as an athlete.

Whitwell, the lone senior for the A&M volleyball team, will be playing in her last home game at G. Rollie White Coliseum at 7:30, and she realizes how much she'll miss it when it's over.

"I think I'm just like any other senior who comes to their last home game here," Whitwell said. "Aggie fans are so much fun to play for. It's nice to play somewhere where you don't lose. You just get outscoored. I think I'll really, really miss that and people like the Bleacher Bums who always come to watch your games and always make you feel special.

"And I think after this game when I wear my sweats to class in the spring semester and people ask me if I'm on the volleyball team and I'll have to say, 'Well, I was,' then that's going to give me an empty feeling."

This season has been a bittersweet one for Whitwell and the Lady Aggies. The team had high expectations for itself, but lost all five of its games in the first half of the Southwest Conference season. However, since then the team has won its last four matches and six of the last seven to improve their record at 15-19.

"It feels so successful at this moment that it's hard to look back at the disappointment," Whitwell said. "We've tried so hard to put it behind us."

Before the season, Head Coach Al Givens had each member of the team write down her team and personal goals. Whitwell, who said she has a tendency to set extremely high goals for herself, said that she wanted to win the SWC championship and lead the team in digs. The team is 4-5 in conference play and Whitwell is fifth on the team in digs with 188.

Whitwell is also fifth on the team in games played, with 96, and kills, with 148. She leads the team with four others in matches played. Her .220 hitting percentage is third on the team and her 23 service aces are fourth.

"Needless to say a lot of my goals weren't reached," she said. "Of course, it's disappointing. I always set really high expectations for myself, both personal-wise and team-wise. Some of those have fallen short this year but there's a lot of others we have reached."

One of those goals was set after the first half of the SWC when the team decided it didn't want to lose to the same team twice.

"We made a goal earlier this year that no one was going to beat us twice," Whitwell said. "So far we've lived up to that. We just have one more team to make it come true."

That team is Texas, A&M's toughest conference foe, ranked seventh in the nation. The lowest points of Whitwell's career have been the home losses to Texas, she said. A&M has yet to beat Texas in Whitwell's previous three years.

"The lowest point would have to be the years and years we've lost to Texas here," she said. "And we always have the feeling that there's no one who can beat us at home if we're playing well and we have our fans here. That's one of our philosophies.

"And it's really true. I feel like we're always given enough edge (at home). And if we play to the best of our ability, which is always close to our competition, then we can win."

"There are so many five-game matches and 15-13 losses that we should have gotten over the hill. And it always hurts so bad. Because everybody's there for the Texas game. It's a hump that we've never been able to get over. We just can't seem to beat them."

To get over that hump, the team is taking a different approach mentally for tonight's game. The team is trying to relax and have fun rather than getting uptight, Whitwell said.

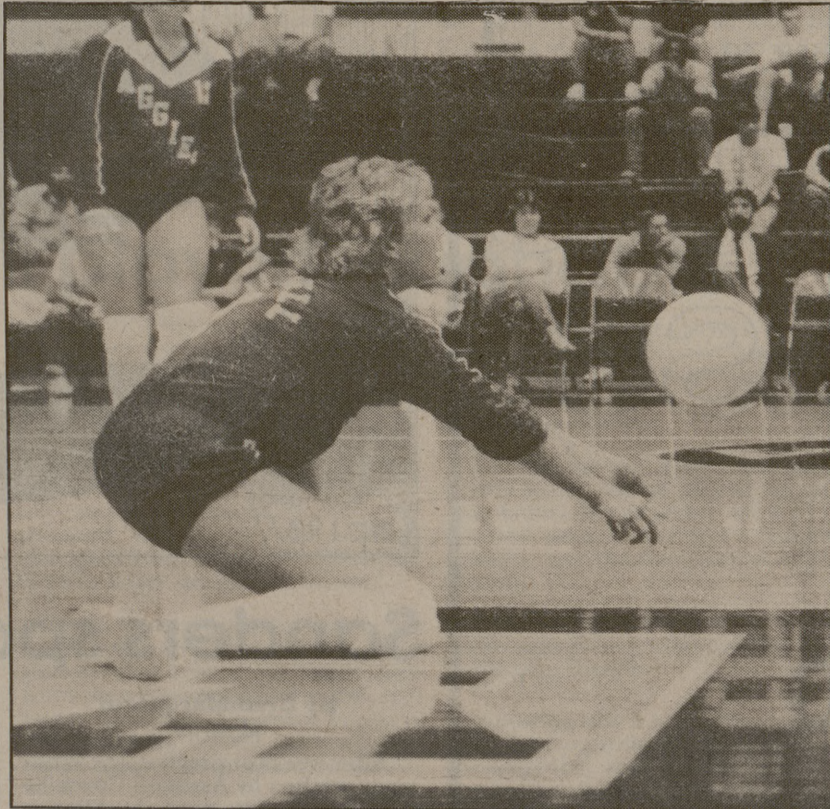


Photo by Jay Janner

Texas A&M's Michelle Whitwell attempts to return a volley from the Oral Roberts volleyball team at the Texas Aggie Classic held earlier in the year here at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

"We're going out on the offensive," she said. "They have to stop us. We're not changing our strategy just because we're playing Texas."

"We're going in with a real free-spirited attitude. We have nothing to lose. They're the ones with all the pressure on their shoulders. We're kind of taken on what we like to call the spoiler position. We've definitely done that. We've changed some people's outlooks just by beating everybody in the second round."

Before the season, Whitwell was named to the GTE Southwest Conference Academic Honor Team. Whitwell, who has a 3.47 grade-point-ratio in English, was A&M's representative on the Southwest Conference Volleyball Academic Honor Team in 1986 and 1987.

A&M's academic opportunities and the influence of her brother and sister, who both attended A&M, swayed Whitwell enough to reject volleyball scholarship offers from

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## Sherrill considers TCU tougher than Hogs

By Hal L. Hammons  
Assistant Sports Editor

Texas A&M's effort against Arkansas was impressive, but Texas Christian will be a bigger test for the Aggies, A&M Head Coach Jackie Sherrill said at his weekly press conference at Cain Hall Tuesday.

"I'd rather play Arkansas than TCU," Sherrill said.

He said the "drastic improvement in their defense" was the reason this year's Horned Frog team is better than the teams A&M destroyed 74-10 last year and 53-6 the year before. He called TCU "without a doubt the best 5-5 team in the country."

"It's not like they haven't played anyone," Sherrill said. "They've played some good football teams."

He noted that earlier this year TCU easily defeated Brigham Young, which in turn handled Texas with little difficulty.

He said Frog halfback Tony Jeffery, along with Texas' Eric Metcalf "are without a doubt the best offensive players in the conference. They're as good as anybody in the country."

He said the most underrated player on the team was the Horned Frog quarterback, David Rascoe.

"Regardless of what you've

seen, (Rascoe) is the one making things happen," Sherrill said.

He said A&M would not look past TCU to the Thanksgiving Day showdown with Texas, even though the Aggies would go to the Cotton Bowl with a victory over the Longhorns, regardless of Saturday's outcome.

"If you look at it that way, you're not going to do anything against TCU," he said. He said it would be very difficult to play poorly against the Frogs and come back with a strong effort against UT.

The quarterback situation does not seem to have changed drastically, despite Craig Stump's strong showing off the bench in the Arkansas victory.

"Bucky (Richardson) will start," Sherrill said, "but don't hold me to that. It depends on what happens this week (in practice)."

Sherrill lauded the defensive effort against Arkansas, particularly the efforts of linebacker John Roper and safety Kip Corrington. Both players are being touted for All-America honors by Texas A&M.

"Roper was as good on film as he was in person," Sherrill said. "I don't know if there's a better (linebacker) playing in the country than John Roper."

## A&M-Texas student tickets to go on sale Thursday

Distribution of tickets for the Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Day clash between Texas A&M and Texas will begin Thursday for graduate students and seniors.

Juniors can pick up tickets Friday, sophomores can Monday of next week, and freshmen can get theirs Tuesday.

The Athletic Ticket Office will be open on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. for students with ticket books.

The 7 p.m. game at Kyle Field, to be broadcast nationally by ESPN for the fourth year in a row, will decide which team represents the Southwest Conference on Jan. 1 in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

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