

Sports

Lady Aggs' Roper thrives in shadow of football brother

By Cray Pixley
Sports Writer

There is more than one athlete named Roper at Texas A&M. John Roper is an All-America punter; his sister Donna Roper has her sights set on All-America status as well. "I think people wonder if I'll be an All-American like him, but I don't know what will happen," Roper said.

Roper, a junior guard for the A&M women's basketball team, is well on her way to a great college career. She is consistently one of the top scorers for the Lady Aggies, averaging 18 points a game.

Roper's basketball days began in her own backyard where she practiced shots. She began shooting in elementary school then started playing in the seventh grade.

"I watched guys shoot and tried to develop my shot from them," she said. "I had this one-hand shot — I don't know where it came from. I just shot crazy."

Roper, who is from Houston, continued her early career at Jack Yates High School.

Her team competed in every state championship during her stay and won the title her sophomore year.

Roper's choice of college came down to Lamar and Texas A&M.

"My mom wanted me to come to A&M so she could come see me and John," she said. "It didn't matter at the time which school I picked, but I think A&M was the best choice for me."

The Lady Aggies have a 12-10 overall record and are 6-6 in the Southwest Conference. The team is in fourth place and probably headed for the SWC tournament in Dallas.

"The beginning of our season was going well until we began SWC play, and then things started going downhill," she said.

The Lady Aggies have had disappointing games where it came right down to the end and the other team won, but Roper is confident her team will reach the tournament.

"Right now we are trying to regroup and win more games."

Although her college career is far from over, she is already considering her options after her graduation. Professional basketball in Europe is not one of them.

I was thinking about going to play overseas, but I knew I would get over there and not know what people were saying," she said. "I would get overseas and become homesick. There are too many people I would miss."

Roper is disappointed that her career ends after leaving A&M.

"I had hoped there would still be a professional women's basketball league in the United States, but that program ended."

She said it would be nice to continue playing like the men.

"They don't have to quit until they get old," she said, laughing.

At this point, Roper says her main priority is school, not basketball.

"I'm concentrating on finishing school and graduating," she said.

"Basketball is just my sport."

Basketball isn't her only sport either.

In high school, Roper played volleyball in addition to basketball, and it's a sport she is still interested in.

"After basketball I play intramural volleyball with Lisa Jordan."

Roper said she doesn't feel she has an advantage over the other players.

"We played in B level and did really well, but when we moved to A level there was some tough competition."

Really, when I'm not playing basketball I like to get away from other sports," she said. "I've been running and playing all year, so it's nice to sit around and watch television."

Pitchers lead Aggies to 2 wins

By Anthony Wilson
Sports Writer

Like a vat of fine wine, the Texas A&M baseball team keeps improving with time. The pitching staff particularly has aged gracefully, as evidenced by the three earned runs it held Lamar University to in a double-header Tuesday at Olsen Field.

A&M won the games 2-1 and 4-2. The victories upped fourth-ranked A&M's record to 11-0. Lamar dropped to 1-8.

The Aggies' bats were silenced by a stiff 15 mph wind blowing in from centerfield and a strong Cardinal defense. The usually potent A&M offense could manage only 11 hits in the two games.

"We hit the ball today as hard as we've hit the ball," A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "But we hit it right at them. Sometimes you crush the ball but hit it right at them."

"In the short games (seven innings), if the winds are blowing in and you've got some pop, which we have, it makes it tough."

Johnson was pleased to see his team really tested in a close game.

"You have to have those games to build team chemistry," he said. "It lets players know they're clutch players."

The crusaders of clutch in the first game of the twinbill were Nick Felix and Chuck Knoblauch.

Felix pitched a complete seven-inning game to become the team's first three-game winner. The left-hander gave up one run on five hits and one walk. Five of Felix's six strikeouts were the last batters he faced.

"I got mad," Felix said of his game-ending strikeout binge. "I was a little pumped up and excited. We didn't play as well as we should have. I was spotting the fastball, but my curveball wasn't even close."

Johnson agreed that Felix's curveball wasn't as effective as it had been.

"Nick Felix threw well but he didn't throw the breaking pitch well," Johnson said. "He got by but he won't be able to do that in the conference."

Knoblauch drove in both of A&M's runs in the sixth inning with the Aggies down 1-0. Pinch

hitter Tom Carcione led off the inning with a single. Carcione moved to third on a sacrifice bunt by Terry Taylor and a fielder's choice.

Lamar intentionally walked Scott Livingstone who advanced to second on a wild pitch. John Byington also walked to load the bases. With the runners breaking on a full-count pitch, Knoblauch lined a single into centerfield, driving in Carcione and Livingstone. Knoblauch stole second base on the next pitch. When the second baseman bobbled the ball, Byington broke for home but was gunned down at the plate.

The Aggies also had to come from behind to win late in the second game. Scott Centala relieved starter Keith Langston in the sixth inning of the second game with two outs and struck out Todd Benoit with a runner in scoring position.

A&M's seventh, eighth and ninth place hitters each got a hit and scored a run in the seventh inning to propel the Aggies past Lamar. The big blow was Deron Dacus' double off the right field

wall to drive in the first two runs of the inning.

"With a man on third base, I was looking for something to hit on the ground, and he hung a curveball," Dacus said.

Since Dacus had played sparingly recently, Johnson's decision to start him in the second game was a surprise.

"It wasn't a genius move on my part," Johnson said. "He isn't beat out. I wanted to get him in the game and keep him ready, not bury him on the bench."

Dacus scored the game's final run on an RBI double by Kirk Thompson.

Centala struck out five in 3 1/2 innings while picking up his second win of the year.

A&M travels to Louisiana on its first road trip of the season this weekend. The Aggies play a three-game series against Louisiana Tech on Friday and Saturday. A&M faces Northeast Louisiana in three games on Sunday and Monday.

A&M men netters easily handle UTSA

By Cray Pixley
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M men's tennis team easily blew away the University of Texas-San Antonio 9-0 in a dual match on a blustery Tuesday afternoon at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

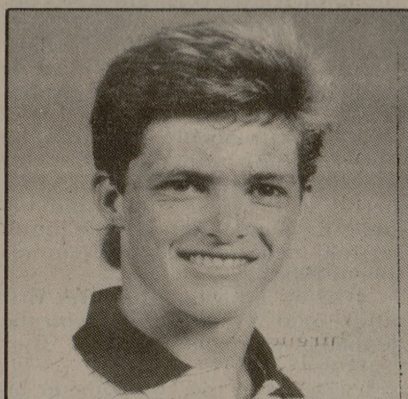
A&M took all six singles matches, four of them in two sets.

No. 2 Shaun O'Donovan dropped only one game to smash Johan Hedberg 6-0, 6-1.

"Odie (O'Donovan) is on a streak. He's been dominating his last few matches," Assistant Coach Tim Drain said.

No. 1 Dean Johnson defeated Craig Hiddleston 6-2, 6-4.

Recently released Intercolliate Tennis Coaches Association rank-



Shaun O'Donovan

ings have Johnson slotted in the No. 39 position.

No. 3 Steve Kennedy won 6-3, 6-4 over Orlanda Batista while No. 4 Michael Chambers defeated Bobby Galligan 7-6, 6-2.

A&M's No. 5 and No. 6 seeds Craig Whitteker and Wayne Green were taken to the third set before knocking off their opponents.

Whitteker defeated Vince Giordanello 6-1, 2-6, 6-2.

"Whitteker will leave his blood on the court," Drain said. "He plays best when things don't look like they're going his way. In today's match he lost the second set and the momentum had swung the other way."

Whitteker later regained his momentum to win the match.

Green also lost the second set but came back to beat Ace Horan 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.

A&M's doubles action told much the same story as the men took all three matches.

A&M's No. 1 doubles team of Steve Kennedy and Shaun O'Donovan are now ranked No. 25 by the ITCA.

The Aggies have won four consecutive matches at the Tennis Center.

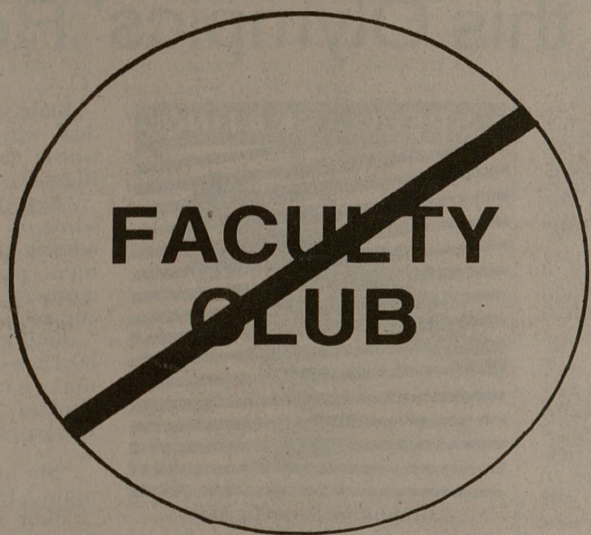
"At home we don't have to go through the wear and tear of travel and eating out," Drain said. "We've proved we can win at home, now we need to start winning the road matches."

The team will have two more home matches before hitting the road again. The Aggies will take on Southwest Texas State on Thursday, Feb. 25 and 16th-ranked Trinity the following day.

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