

Sports

No 'fish' on the court Churchwell plays tennis like veteran for A&M

By Anthony Wilson
Sports Writer



Cindy Churchwell

Ever wonder why freshman are called fish? Perhaps it's because the majority of first year students flounder — academically, extracurricularly and socially. Freshman athletes are no exception.

They are rarely successful because of immaturity, undeveloped skills or a combination of the two.

But 1987-88 could be called the Year of the Fish at A&M. Bucky Richardson and Darren Lewis were major contributors to the football team's Cotton Bowl championship. Melanie Rother, Freddie Ricks and Steve Hughes all played well in their initial seasons.

But another, less acclaimed freshman has quietly been racking up victories on the tennis court.

Competing in the No. 2 or 3 seed in singles competition, Cindy Churchwell has compiled a 14-3 record this spring entering today's 8 a.m. match with the University of Georgia.

She is ranked No. 84 in the nation in singles play by the Intercollegiate Tennis Coaches Association. Churchwell also had a 10-5 record in fall competition.

Not bad for an 18-year-old straight out of high school who was simply hoping to make the top six on the team.

"I figured I could play top six, but I had no idea I'd be playing three," Churchwell said Thursday. "When Coach (Bobby Kleinecke) first told me I was playing three it was a surprise. But now I've gotten use to it and I feel comfortable there. I've been playing pretty well at three."

think that's why I've been playing really well."

However, Churchwell has faced times when being a freshman was a big disadvantage because of her lack of experience.

Against No. 12 Texas, Churchwell and her doubles partner, fellow freshman Susan Williams, played in the final match which decided the outcome of the team results. Churchwell and Williams lost, giving UT the win 5-4.

"We felt so bad," Churchwell said. "We wanted to win that for the team. But it's a team effort. We lose as a team and we win as a team. I can look back on it and say, 'Well, the next time we're in that situation, we won't do it again.'"

"We had not been in very many situations where the team match came down to our match. I'm not glad we lost it, but it helps because next time we're in that situation, we'll be a lot stronger and know what to do. It's just a matter of experience."

The pressure of playing in matches does not usually effect the freshman, but she said knowing the team is counting on her to win can put her on the spot.

"You just have this feeling that you want to win for the team," she said. "That's probably the most pressure. I'm out there for the team more than for myself."

Although Churchwell thought she was good enough to be in the team's top six, she had no idea she would be as successful as she has been. Even though she was the Texas 5A state runner-up and state champ in 1986 and 1987, she realized college tennis would be much tougher.

"Most of the tennis was on your

own," Churchwell said. "It wasn't high school related."

"Most college coaches don't go by your high school tennis. They go by how you've done in USTA (United States Tennis Association) and your rankings in the state of Texas. To play high school tennis is really for your own personal preference. But it's a lot tougher in college. It doesn't even compare to high school tennis."

"I'd compare college tennis to a lot of the matches in national tournaments. That's how hard all your matches are going to be, give or take a few matches."

Churchwell's daily regimens with tennis coaches in Houston paid off in the juniors division when she was ranked No. 1 in the state and in the top 80 in the nation. She was also one of 32 junior players selected to play in the U.S. Olympic Festival this summer.

But Churchwell has turned her focus exclusively to collegiate tennis and helping A&M battle UT and SMU for the conference championship. A&M has a 3-1 Southwest Conference record with four matches remaining.

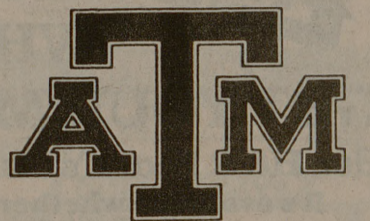
"We're looking to finish in the top three and tie for conference champion," Churchwell said. "It'll be close because SMU and Texas are tough."

Although she has achieved great success early in her tennis career, Churchwell said the thought of playing professionally doesn't cross her mind.

"I don't feel I'm anywhere near good enough to be pro," she said. "But with the next four years, I'll just see what happens. When I'm a senior maybe then I'll consider it. That's not my first initial goal, but it's a possibility."

A&M could face fine or Cotton Bowl ban over radio controversy

By Loyd Brumfield
Sports Editor



Texas A&M could face some harsh penalties ranging from fines to not being allowed to play in the Cotton Bowl as a result of violating the Southwest Conference's radio agreement with Host Communications.

However, SWC Commissioner Fred Jacoby said Thursday that no affirmative action had been taken against A&M and any penalties discussed were only of a speculative nature.

"The conference has decided to come to a final decision regarding A&M on April 15," Jacoby said in a telephone interview with *The Battalion*.

SWC athletic directors met Wednesday in Dallas for a series of meetings in which the A&M radio situation was discussed.

A&M recently signed a three-year contract with Learfield Communications, Inc. worth more than \$1 million.

A&M Head Coach and Athletic Director Jackie Sherrill has said A&M abandoned the Host agreement because of preferential treatment for the University of Texas.

Jacoby said the SWC is urging a spirit of cooperation between A&M and Host.

"The conference has requested that A&M and Host work out their differences and come to an agreement that would be beneficial to the whole conference," he said.

SWC President Bob Sweazy, in an interview with the *Houston*

Post said Wednesday that 10 penalties were being considered, including barring A&M from the Cotton Bowl, withholding revenues and levying a fine.

Sweazy, who was unavailable for comment Thursday, said in the *Post* his main concern was getting A&M and Host to come to an agreement.

"We're looking at a number of options, but we want to work out a fair and equitable agreement," he said. "The situation has undoubtedly become more clear."

Jacoby emphasized that all discussions about penalties were strictly informal.

"They (athletic directors) are just tossing ideas around at this point," he said.

There was speculation that the University of Arkansas and UT could follow A&M's lead and pull out of the Host agreement if A&M wasn't penalized.

"That again is nothing more than speculation," Jacoby said. "I'd rather not comment on anything of that nature."

Jacoby said no further action would take place until the April 15 meeting.

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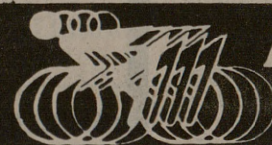
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