

# Sports

## Lady Ags return 6 starters; depth may lift team in SWC

By Doug Walker  
Sports Writer

With the return of all six starters from a team that gradually improved last year, the Texas A&M volleyball team looks to make a big jump in the Southwest Conference standings this year.

Led by senior All-SWC outside hitter Cheri Steensma the Lady Aggies, 15-22 overall (4-6 in the SWC), should improve on a fourth place finish as Coach Al Givens begins to establish his program after heavy losses to graduation in the past.

Givens (38-36 at A&M) is entering his third year at A&M and expects his team to contend with Texas, winner of six straight SWC titles.

"We're gonna be extremely disappointed if we don't finish in the top two in the conference this year," Givens said.

With a balanced starting lineup consisting of two seniors, two juniors and two sophomores the team should not experience a major drop in talent for the next few years. This should enable Givens to establish the power he has hoped to produce since coming to A&M from Mississippi three years ago.

"I think it's real important to keep a degree of balance," Givens said. "With two seniors and two juniors we're only looking at replacing two of our personnel in the next two years. We're going to be good this year. But we're going to be better next year and even better the year after that."

The two seniors lead the returnees.

Steensma, who led the league in kills average (4.05 per game), was third in hitting percentage (.322

and fourth in digs (2.92 per game). The three-letter senior from San Ramon, California, is the centerpiece of a team that struggled last year after losing five starters to graduation.

Vivian Viera, a former junior college All-America, is set to start at middle blocker after finishing fourth in the SWC in kills average (3.33) and among the leaders in digs average with 2.78 per game. She is optimistic about the season and feels the Lady Aggies will improve because of depth and experience.

"We have more depth and we're not as young (as last year)," she said. "I'm just gonna take it one game at a time and try to reach my potential."

A pair of second-team All-SWC performers are the junior starters. Setter Yvonne Van Brandt led the SWC in assists average (11.22) and digs per game with 4.08. However, she is expected to miss the first four weeks of the season with a knee injury.

Kelli Kellen, middle blocker (MB), is the other junior performer. Kellen was fourth in the SWC in hitting percentage with a .280 percentage and fifth in blocks with 2.94 per game.

Sophomores Krista Hierholzer (setter) and Amy Cumings (MB) should battle for the remaining starting positions with redshirt freshman Lara Rupf (OA). Rupf is a former top 50 recruit from Amarillo who has made a full recovery from a knee injury suffered in her senior year in high school.

Sophomore Melanie Rother should provide help in a reserve role at outside attacker.

Newcomers include junior transfer Lynn Ponder from Texas Tech (OA) and freshmen Sheri Hermes-meyer, an outside attacker who Givens is particularly excited about.

"Sheri is a gifted athlete who was named as an ESPN scholar athlete and was one of 36 selected to the Olympic elite team last year before she sprained an ankle," Givens said. "She was selected to the top 12 of that team. She's an explosive player and has a 31-inch vertical jump."

Outside attackers Raychelle Michalke and Alysia Gonzales join middle blocker Cindy Kleinhenz to round out the roster.

In an effort to generate interest in the sport at A&M, Givens has devised a tough schedule for the squad in which the Lady Aggies will face 16

## V-ball looks 'sweet' to enthusiastic Viera

By Jerry Bolz  
Sports Writer

Vivian Viera is looking forward to a "sweet" season for the 1988 Lady Aggies volleyball team, she said Wednesday, using her favorite word.

Viera is in her second year at A&M after two seasons at Miami-Dade Community College, South. Even after winning a national championship two years ago at Miami-Dade, and having a losing season here last year, there is no lack of enthusiasm on Viera's part.

"We have so much depth this year it's incredible," she said. "I don't think there is any weakness that would hold us back."

She said the freshmen this year have a lot of talent and shouldn't be a weakness.

Viera had 15 offers to play when leaving Miami-Dade which she narrowed to three choices before choosing A&M. She was drawn to A&M by the efforts of third-year Coach Al Givens.

She said Givens impressed her with a visit to her home in Florida.

"I knew I could talk to him if I



Vivian Viera

had a problem," she said. "He wouldn't be just a coach. He had a very good heart."

There have been no regrets for

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## So how do you pick an MVP? Controversially, that's how

It's an annual argument.

As the baseball pennant races heat up, one of the most popular topics of conversation among baseball fans involves the selection of the Most Valuable Player (MVP) awards in the American and National Leagues.

The argument usually centers around what the qualifications are (or should be) for a player to win the award.

So what determines a most valuable player? Batting average? Runs batted in? Leadership?

If there were a perfect way to determine the MVP, there would be no need for a vote. Certainly, a player's contributions are made up of his entire game.

To win the MVP award, a player must usually play for a league championship team and lead the league in RBI. Sixty-eight of the first 100 MVPs selected by the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) played for the team that won the pennant. Of the last 42 recipients, 20 led their league in RBI.

Few pitchers, and no designated hitters, have won the award. The writers usually vote for everyday-position players.

A good illustration of the controversy is the story of two of the games greatest players: Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox and Joe DiMaggio of the New York Yankees.

Williams and DiMaggio were the best American League players of the 1940s. Their careers overlapped from 1939 to 1951. Of the 10 seasons they were in the



Doug Walker

league together (neither played from 1943-45 because of military service) DiMaggio won three MVPs and Williams won two.

DiMaggio's contribution to many Yankee pennants helped him win the award.

Williams won in 1946, when Boston won the pennant, and in 1949. The latter year Boston lost the pennant to the Yankees on the final day of the season.

However, Williams had three great offensive seasons in which he didn't win the award: 1941, 1942 and 1947. In both 1942 and 1947, he won the rare Triple Crown by leading the league in three statistical categories: home runs, RBI and batting average. In both of these years he was second in the balloting.

The most controversial MVP vote was in 1947 when DiMaggio beat Williams by a single point in the closest non-tie ballot ever.

In 1941, both men had probably the best year of their respective careers and it made for another tough choice for MVP.

Williams' offensive statistics were superior to DiMaggio's. He batted .406 for the year. No one has batted .400 or over since.

DiMaggio hit in an incredible streak of 56 games, a feat believed to be one of the most unconquerable in all of sports.

To predict this year's MVPs one only needs to look at the top of the division standings and find that team's top offensive player. Chances are that person will be a leading candidate.

Following the record of the past, I think the winners in each league will be Oakland's Jose Canseco in the American League and Darryl Strawberry of the New York Mets.

My vote, if I had one, would go to the Detroit Tigers'

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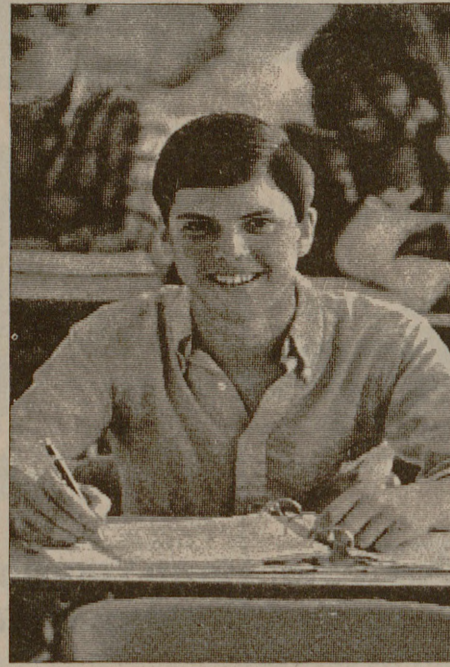
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