

Tuesday, February 21, 1989

## Aggie softball in rebuilding year Brock's 9th-ranked Aggies start season today at No. 13 UTA

By Stan Golaboff

SPORTS WRITER

They say if something happens in Aggieland twice, it becomes a tradition.

The Lady Aggie softball team is counting on that proverb.

A&M, ranked ninth in preseason polls, begins what can only be called a rebuilding year today when they face No. 13 University of Texas at Arlington.

However, the last time A&M was supposed to be rebuilding, they won the national championship.

"Rebuilding worries us and it doesn't," Head Coach Bob Brock said. "If you are rebuilding, whatever you can get out of this year will help you in years to come."

Despite the fact that A&M is ranked ninth, Brock is not sure if his team is the ninth best in the country.

"The ranking is quite a tribute to the girls on the team, especially

when you consider all of the things that have happened to us," he said.

Brock is entering this season with just 13 players on the team. That leaves just three players on the bench.

### Aggie Softball

- **What:** No. 9 A&M plays a double-header at No. 13 Texas-Arlington
- **When:** Today at 4 p.m.
- **Where:** Arlington Athletic Center.

"We are a little low on numbers, but I think we can manage," he said. "These girls are all good athletes and they have the desire to do what it takes to win."

With only 13 players on the roster, it goes without saying that the team can not suffer a rash of injuries like last year when five players were out at one time.

"We can't have any injuries," he said. "We might be able to get by with one, but any more could be disastrous."

One problem Brock shouldn't

have to face this year is having just one pitcher. Last year when Catherine Steadman broke her leg, A&M had to rely on Julie Carpenter to pitch every game.

Carpenter pitched in 61 games last year posting a 40-21 record. A&M was 43-21 last year.

"We had to put Julie in a glass cage last year to try to protect her from injury," Brock said. "Hopefully we won't have that problem this year."

A&M will be relying on the pitching arms of freshman Dana Mitchell and junior college transfer Michelle McSpadden to lead them to victory.

"Both Dana and Michelle have had some good outing in practice and if we can get good performance from them, we should be able to win a lot of games," he said.

"In softball, pitching is everything. If we can answer some of the question marks about our pitching, who knows what we will do."

The mound is not the only place where the Aggies will need answers. Brock has moved some several players into new positions this year.

The most talked about shift is Carrie Heightley's move from catcher to first base and her subsequent move to shortstop this year.

"I have no doubt in my mind that Carrie can play shortstop," Brock said. "She is an awesome athlete and will make the transition. She was tentative at first, but she has practiced a lot and I think she is better than some of our previous shortstops."

"She could be an All-American at shortstop, she's that good of an athlete."

Taking over behind the plate is junior Erika Eriksson.

"If it wasn't for Erika, I wouldn't even think about moving Carrie to shortstop," Brock said. "Having Erika let's us do some things we normal wouldn't be able to."

Taking Heightley's place at first, where she played last year, is freshman Michelle Mayfield. Another addition to the infield is Renee Blaha at third base.

"If we have some good practices before the season opener we should be ready," Brock said. "If we are

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## Rain gives Aggies extra home game

By Jerry Bolz

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Texas A&M baseball fans get a treat today when the Aggies take on Sam Houston State at 3 p.m. on Olsen Field. The game, originally scheduled to be played in Huntsville, has been relocated due to wet grounds at the Bearkats field.

### Aggie Baseball

- **What:** 6th-ranked A&M (7-0) hosts Sam Houston State (4-2).
- **When:** Today at 3 p.m.
- **Where:** Olsen Field.

The Aggies are fresh off a two-game sweep of Northeast Louisiana last weekend to up their record to 7-0.

The undefeated start has moved the Aggies to No. 6 in the nation

according to the ESPN/Collegiate Baseball poll and No. 8 on Baseball America's list.

The Bearkats are 4-2 on the year after taking three of four from Pan American over the weekend.

Sam Houston sends righthander Bubba Butler (2-0) to the mound to face A&M's Keith Langston (1-0), also a righty.

The Aggies faced Pan American in their season-opening series and took all three games. After the series A&M led the Southwest Conference teams with a .389 batting average.

Since the game with Sam Houston was not originally scheduled to be played at Olsen Field, only general admission seats will be sold. Season tickets won't be honored.

Tickets go on sale at 1:30 p.m. at the Olsen Field gate. Adult tickets are \$2, high school age and under \$1 and A&M students with a season pass and an I.D. get in free.

Despite the game location being switched, the game between the two teams scheduled for April 4 at Olsen Field will not be changed.

## Coaches need to use a firm hand while dealing with players

To kids who grow up playing sports, few people have equal influence on them than coaches.

A good coach not only makes a season successful and enjoyable, but leaves an impression on children that lasts. An impression — good or bad — affects the child until it is either reinforced or changed by someone else.

From coaches, kids learn proper form for batting and throwing a baseball. They learn how to defend the wishbone offense in football, or how to kick a soccer ball with the greatest accuracy and distance.

Kids also pick up on other things that coaches might not teach directly, but are learned just as well. Unfortunately many of these lessons aren't good. Athletes learn things like how to influence others negatively using their status as an athlete or how to take advantage of others with that status.

With all of the NCAA violations against coaches and players around the country, and criminal incidents involving athletes



**Jerry Bolz**  
Assistant Sports Editor

like those at several universities, you have to look and see how coaches are influencing the players.

Growing up in athletic programs the last 15 years, I've seen some changes in how strict coaches are with players. I feel privileged to have always been on teams with coaches who demanded the players' attention at all times.

It was the days when a spirit of foolishness fell on all the players and the practice session went into disorder that I really appreciated a coach with a firm hand.

Those days seemed fun for a while — practical jokes, giggling and just general funning around — but it got old soon and players realized it wasn't much good goffin' off.

But things like being allowed to goof around on a pee-wee team can get a lot worse when little leaguers grow up.

A good coach makes kids feel like they are part of something worthwhile, where they can see the result of their work. Kids realize when they're goofing around that they aren't really pursuing anything worthwhile and it bothers them; at least it did me.

Kids need to be corrected. They scream for attention. And if they are not corrected for mistakes — which might hurt them a little then — but are ignored, they are capable of doing any number of rebellious things to get attention — which can hurt a lot more in the long run.

But it seems that coaches these days, especially in colleges and high schools — and without a doubt on the pro level — are

content to give players free reign and let them act like wild stallions.

Part of it I can understand. When kids get to be 16 or 17 years old, they are physically adults, and a coach must show them respect to get respect back. When an athlete gets to be older than 20, there is no question they are physically mature and worthy of respect.

But adult coaches need to realize the positive effect of discipline on an athlete that builds respect for authority. Coaches are throwing the baby out with the bath water when they abandon discipline for the reason of not making athletes feel immature or childish.

Kids (infancy to college age) need discipline. They need to understand authority and that they are under it. I'm not talking about the authority of an angry coach punching out a player. I'm talking about a man or woman who knows when to constructively tell an athlete he's out of line.

Look at college football. Big-name high school athletes are catered to all their young

lives. When they are pursued by every school in the nation and they pick one, they might feel like they have some pull around the school. Really, a lot of them seem to think they can get away with anything.

I understand that college coaches are in a tough position. They're stuck right between the big-name athletes who want their way all the time and a school who wants the athletes to play there no matter what he acts like.

But that doesn't make it right for a coach to step back and let an athlete run free when he's breaking every moral code and law there is.

It's not right. With the authority coaches have, or should have, they should take the responsibility of keeping athletes in line — for everybody's good.

It is disheartening to see athletes, who were once full of character and integrity, receiving the admiration of everyone when they can't even respect themselves. Something needs to be done, and coaches are in the right place to do it.

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