

Lots of reasons to come to A&M, Bayless

I had a column about baseball cards half-written when I read Skip Bayless' column in Friday's Dallas Times Herald.



Alan Lehmann
Sports Editor

I had to scrap the card column so that I could answer some of Bayless' burning questions about why a football recruit would come to Texas A&M.

Mr. Bayless said he doesn't understand why recruits would come to College Station, which he calls "the most inaccessible campus this side of Fayetteville."

He said that he doesn't know why the Aggies get so many top recruits on signing day.

"Sure, A&M is a great place to be a farmer or veterinarian or general or captain of industry. But a football player? One with a choice of playing in L.A. or Miami or Austin or Houston or Dallas?"

Well, I can think of plenty of reasons. L.A., along with the rest of California, could fall off into the ocean at any minute. Who wants to play under that kind of pressure?

I don't know why any self-respecting player would want to be a part of the Miami football program. The Hurricanes display less class than many death row inmates. Their Cotton Bowl antics were without doubt the sorriest display of sportsmanship I've ever seen.

Austin? The only place to play in Austin is for the Longhorns, and most Texans either love or hate the 'Horns. Football players who love the University of Texas go there. Those who hate it generally come here (or Oklahoma).

If you rule out Rice, and most recruits do, the only college football team in Houston is the University of Houston. It's easy to ignore the Cougars because of the NCAA probation so recently hanging over their heads. Of course, you also can overlook UH because the campus is basically a commuter's school and has no visible fan support or school spirit.

Dallas pretty well boils down to Southern Methodist or Texas Christian. Gee, Mr. Bayless, I can see why a recruit would bolt for those legendary football showcases. Not!

What's so wrong with College Station? Granted, the night life leaves something to be desired, but if it's so much better in Austin or Houston, what's wrong with driving there?

That's what I do when I have an urge to be in Dallas or Houston.

Sloum not fancy

Bayless then goes on to question R.C. Sloum's status as a coach. Well, he's not flashy like Jackie Sherrill, but I don't think he'll ever be run out of town by the NCAA like Sherrill was, either.

True, Sloum isn't a high-profile coach like Joe Paterno or Lou Holtz. But Sloum isn't in trouble with the NCAA like Paterno, which could be the deciding factor with fashion-conscious recruits.

Bayless does answer his own question late in the column, when he mentions the splendor of Cain Hall, the A&M athletic dorm and the fine food served there. What recruit would turn down such nice room and board?

Bayless then flaunted his ignorance of the A&M student body with some borderline racist remarks.

"Excuse my ignorance, Ags," Bayless said, "but I cannot comprehend why so many fine young football players, especially blacks with no Aggie ties, keep choosing to spend their college years in College Station."

For the same reason that whites with no Aggie ties do — because the school is fun to be a part of.

A&M atmosphere fun

Anyone who has been a part of the atmosphere at A&M knows that there is something special about being an Aggie. The people are friendlier, the women are prettier and fans are more supportive than anywhere else in the nation.

Contrary to popular belief, some of the recruits that come to A&M actually think about what they will do after college if they *don't* make the pros. And they know that an A&M diploma will take them farther than a Texas sheepskin in most instances.

Employers seem to love the team spirit that Aggies pick up from their surroundings, and this holds true for athletes as well as other students.

True, A&M doesn't draw the size crowds that giant schools like Texas and Michigan do, but the A&M student body hasn't always been as big as it is now.

With over 42,000 students this year, the A&M student body has grown by leaps and bounds over the last 10 years. A few years down the line, when A&M has graduated some of these huge classes, the crowd sizes will grow as well.

So, Mr. Bayless, I hope you understand now why a recruit would come to A&M. If not, maybe you should stop by this little out of the way campus.

A&M can't start streak

Ladys lose

From Staff and Wire Reports

The Texas A&M basketball teams came up with a split-decision this weekend.

The Texas A&M men's basketball team came up short trying to capture its second straight conference win.

The Aggies were defeated by Texas Christian University 71-69 Saturday night in Fort Worth.

The Lady Aggies defeated TCU 80-71 Saturday afternoon to end their three-game losing streak.

The Horned Frogs never trailed in Saturday night's game.

A&M falls to 1-10 in the SWC and 6-16 overall. TCU improved to 6-4 in the conference, 15-6 overall.

The Aggies have lost 13 of their last 15 games.

A&M coach Kermit Davis said the Aggies could not overpower the Horned Frog defense.

"We had a tough time getting over the hump," Davis said. "You've got to give TCU credit."

"They defended well and their man defense put a lot of pressure on us."

Brooks Thompson led the Aggies again in the scoring column.

Thompson scored 24 points on 8-for-12 shooting and 5-5 from the free-throw line. It was the Aggie's third straight 20-plus point performance.

Rashone Lewis added 15 points and nine rebounds.

Shedrick Anderson and Freddie Ricks each contributed 10 points for the Aggies.

Each team was mired with sloppiness in the game.

TCU shot 44 percent from the field, while the Aggies turned the ball over 22 times, tying a season high.

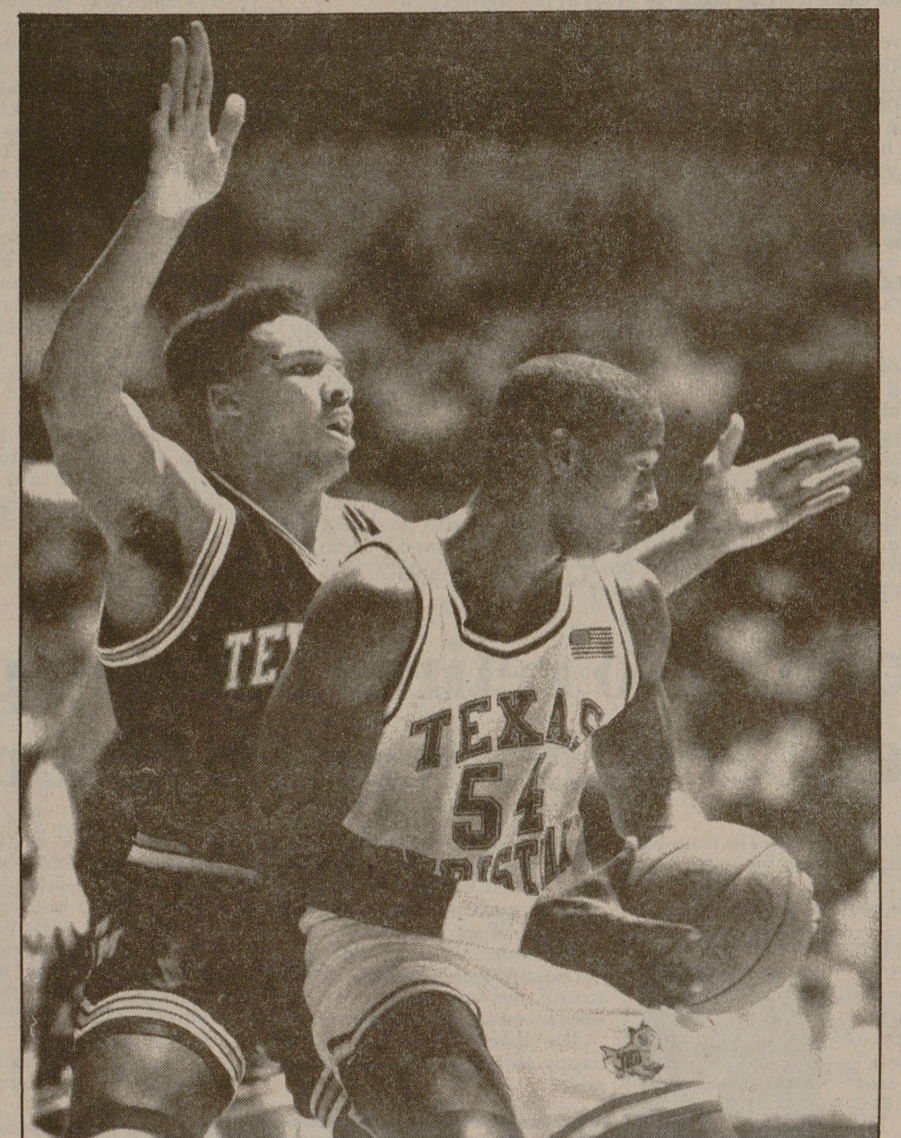
A&M also converted only nine of 18 free throws against the Horned Frogs, while shooting better than 58 percent from the field.

TCU's Albert Thomas scored 18 points to lead the Frogs. Mark Moten and Reggie Smith each contributed 15 points and eight rebounds for TCU.

The Aggies kept the game close in the second half and got to within one point, 50-49, on a lay-in by Anderson with 6:12 to play.

But TCU's Michael Strickland hit a three-pointer and Moten converted a three-point play 40 seconds later as the Horned Frogs jumped ahead 56-49.

Davis said he hoped his team could take advantage of the game when Smith,



Shedrick Anderson defends TCU's Reggie Smith in the Ags' loss Saturday. MIKE C. MULVEY/The Battalion

the Frog's 6-10 center, fouled out with 4:14 remaining.

The Frogs led by eight points with 30 seconds left. Thompson scored a bucket from the three-point stripe and David Martin sank a three-pointer as time expired.

The Aggies trailed 32-25 at halftime.

A&M remains in the conference cellar. The Aggies could have caught up with the Baylor Bears 2-9 SWC mark. The Bears lost to Texas Tech Saturday.

A&M will try to improve its record next Wednesday. The Aggies play Southern Methodist University at 7:30 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Lady Aggies improved their SWC record to 5-6, 10-11 overall. The Lady Frogs fell to 2-8 and 5-16 on the season.

Yvonne Hill scored 18 points and pulled down five rebounds to lead A&M. Hill was one of four players to score in double figures.

Aggies take pair from Pan-Am

From Staff and Wire Reports

The Aggies finished 2-1 in their season opening series against Texas-Pan American after splitting a doubleheader Saturday at Jody Ramsey Stadium.

The Aggies won the opener 7-3 after a four run seventh inning, but the Broncos came back to win the nightcap 4-3 with a ninth inning rally.

"It's good to go on the road and win two of three close games," A&M coach Mark Johnson said. "I was really pleased with our pitchers. They were forced into some difficult situations and they threw strikes."

"I was also pleased with our defense. We did not hit the ball as well as I'd hoped, but it is early in the season."

Dan Robinson helped the Aggies break open a 3-3 tie in the first game Saturday with an RBI single in the seventh.

Right-hander Jason Bullard relieved freshman starter Kelly Wunsch in the fifth inning and earned his first victory of the young season.

In the second game on Saturday, Aggie starter Jason Hutchins, a junior college transfer making his A&M debut, pitched four scoreless innings before being relieved in the fifth.

In their game on Friday the Aggies' avoided a bases-loaded jam in the bottom of the ninth to beat the Broncos 4-2.

Bullard was called on to replace freshman reliever Jay Hogue with one out in the final inning.

Bullard struck out pinch-hitter Tommy Ayala, walked leadoff man Clint Morrison to load the bases and forced Frank Akers to end the game with a ground out.

Juniour pitcher Ronnie Allen, who looks to anchor the Aggie pitching staff this season, started the game and earned a victory with a solid seven inning performance. Allen allowed two runs on six singles and struck out three.

"Ronnie Allen had a good effort," Johnson said. "He really bulldozed his way through the sixth and seventh innings. Jay Hogue did a good job as a freshman coming in a close game."

The Aggies begin an eight-game homestand at Olsen Field with a game against Southwest Texas State on Tuesday at 1 p.m.

Men's Tennis Weekend Wrapup

Kennedy toes line after knee injury

By Steve O'Brien
The Battalion

Some lines Steve Kennedy won't go near and some boundaries can't stop him.

For good luck, Kennedy, a senior on the A&M tennis team, avoids stepping on the painted court lines during his matches, he said.

And luck owes him one.

Kennedy, who played his high school tennis at Winston Churchill High in San Antonio, tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee while a junior at A&M.

Kennedy, who led his team in victories as a freshman and sophomore, remembers when his life changed on court No. 5.

"It was an incredibly scary moment," Kennedy said. "Because I saw my leg bending the wrong way. I felt all the tendons and ligaments just ripping."

"They said I let out a big scream, but from that point on all I remember is waking up in the training room. I just remember feeling my leg, and it felt like noodles."

The injury happened in January 1988, so Kennedy was granted a medical hardship for his junior year and left to recover from a career threatening injury.

It was a recovery that no one expected him to make.

"I said that it was over," Kennedy remembers. "I thought my whole career was over and it just really scared me."

But an injury, no matter how severe, couldn't stop Kennedy from playing college tennis again.

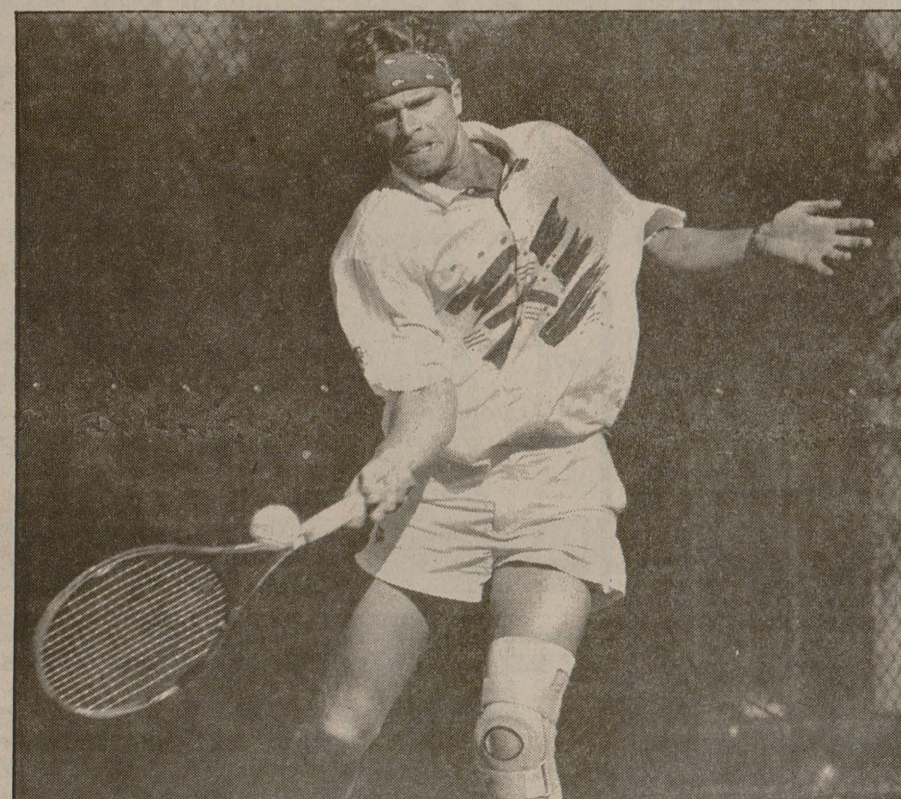
Kennedy had reconstructive surgery to rebuild his knee in the spring of 1988 and returned to play in the fall of 1989.

He started his comeback with a modest 4-10 record in the fall but then went on a 13-3 tear to end the season at 17-13. He also teamed with several players for a 11-7 doubles record.

After going 4-5 this past fall, Kennedy feels ready to start playing better tennis this spring.

"So far this spring I've turned it around," he said. "I feel like even when I'm playing bad I'm somehow winning."

With a knee held together by metal screws and plates, though, Kennedy knows he'll never be the player he once was.



Aggie netter Steve Kennedy returns a shot in this weekend's action. SONDRRA ROBBINS/The Battalion

"Having a knee that's not a 100 percent, you have to learn the angles of the court so much better," he said. "I used to be able to hit a severe angle baseline to the other guy, and if he hit one back I could run it down."

Kennedy explained how his tennis has changed.

"I had to change my game 180 degrees," Kennedy said. "Now, the object for me any time I'm in a point, is to take away all angles so the guy can't run me. It's like counterpunching."

Comparing how he once played to his tennis now isn't easy for Kennedy.

"It's frustrating for me after coming back from the injury to know that I'll never have the speed I use to have," he said. "Now, it's frustrating when I hit a shot and I see where the guy is going to hit the ball and there's no way I can get to it."

"I was slow before, but now I know what slow is."

But the injury has changed more than just the way Kennedy plays the baseline. It's put tennis into perspective.

"After my freshman year I decided to play tennis for myself," Kennedy said. "Then the knee injury happened and I realized for the first time in my life I loved the sport."

"I've got no future plans professionally now. I don't have dreams of being on Wimbledon Center Court anymore, so I play for the love of the sport."

With this his final year of competitive tennis, Kennedy has become more focused on his play.

"This is my last hurrah," Kennedy said. "Even if I get beat, I want to compete. When you're younger you say 'I'm playing bad so what the hell I'll lose this match.' Every match I do now is like one more 'til the end, so even if I'm playing bad I'm saying 'hell I got to compete.'"

And Kennedy is looking to make his last season of college tennis more than just competitive.

Kennedy is looking to help the Aggies become Southwest Conference champions.

Aggie netters return home for two wins

By Craig Wilson
The Battalion

After a slow start this season, the Texas A&M men's tennis team picked up the pace over the weekend in its first two home matches at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

With victories over the University of North Texas and the University of Texas-San Antonio, on Friday and Saturday respectively, the Aggies evened their record to 2-2.

The Aggies crushed UNT 7-2 Friday afternoon, led by a superb performance from junior netter Doug Brown.

Brown, who had missed the Aggies first two matches because of the flu, outplayed UNT's Scott Peebles 6-1, 6-0.

Men's tennis coach David Kent praised Brown for his solid performance.

"Brown is unbelievable," Kent said. "He's our best player day in and day out. No one's better than Doug Brown."

"If we had him in Miami we might have beaten one of those top teams. He's one of the best competitors ever to play here."

Freshman Clayton Johnson also scored a big victory over UNT's Kevin Peters, 6-3, 6-1.

Other Aggie singles winners were freshman Mark Weaver, senior Steve Kennedy and sophomore Scott Phillips.

One of A&M's top players, senior Matt Zisette, was beaten in singles play by UNT's Ronnie Eddins, 6-4, 6-3.

"Matt Zisette had a few problems," Kent said, "but that kid was a good player and we have no excuses. Matt will come around, though."

In doubles play, the Aggies won 2-1, as the combination of Kennedy and Brown outlasted UNT's Ronnie Eddins and Sean Cobb, 7-5, 6-4.

Also winning in doubles were Weaver and Phillips over UNT's Greg McCurdy and Kevin Decaat, 6-1, 6-3.

"North Texas is a much improved team this season," Kent said. "They've brought in some good players and played hard. They can compete with some good teams."

A dominant victory over UNT Friday turned out to be just the beginning for the Aggies, although Kent confirmed that there would be no overconfidence before

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