

STEVE O'BRIEN
Sportswriter

SWC basketball must improve national image

The Southwest Conference basketball tournament begins Friday and the whining has already begun.

The SWC is too weak in basketball. The loss of the Arkansas Razorbacks has taken away the conference's television appeal. Houston and Texas, the two top teams in the league, can't even find a place in the Top 25.

It's not that you're wrong if you whine about the current situation in SWC basketball. Actually, you're right in every way.

The conference is on shaky ground it seems. Dallas' Reunion Arena and the tournament may be on the last leg of a long-standing relationship if all of the event's 11,000 tickets aren't sold. As of Sunday, 2,700 tickets needed to be sold to keep the tournament at Reunion in 1993.

When Arkansas was still part of the conference, athletic departments weren't worried about selling tickets — fans were worried about being able to buy them.

But in some instances, conference games were easier to watch then, because, believe it or not, there were conference games on national television.

From national TV and conference tournament sellouts to whining, the conference is basically a joke.

But even though you might be right if you're whining, you're still just whining.

There is a more positive approach to it all. And it's fairly simple. The conference needs a dominant team.

Every sport, (SWC basketball is a sport if you were wondering) has to have an

See O'Brien/Page 8

Men's tennis set for new win streak

Team faces Illinois today; prepares for Southwest Conference play

By Doug Foster
The Battalion

Texas A&M men's tennis coach David Kent said he would like to give his young team a little bit more playing time before opening up their Southwest Conference schedule.

Kent will get that chance today when his Aggie squad, now 9-2 on the season, hosts the University of Illinois at 2 p.m. at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

A&M is a team with a small amount of experience, Kent said, and the match with Illinois is a chance to get more experience before taking on conference foes.

"We're starting three freshman and a sophomore," Kent said. "Our freshman are getting experience and are improving every match."

"We need this match against Illinois desperately after losing some close

matches in the Corpus tournament."

The Aggies suffered their first two losses of the season to Colorado and Clemson last weekend in the H.E.B. Team Championships in Corpus Christi after opening the season with eight straight victories.



Kent

"We've got a good team, but a lot of other people have good teams too," he said. "They always have a tough team, and we will have our hands full with them."

"One thing that makes them tough is that they have players from all over the nation and the world. They have players from France and from all over the United States, and they are all quality players."

Despite the youth on the team, Kent said he has had some quality play from some of the younger guys, as well as some solid leadership from his veterans.

"Our No. 1 player, Mark Weaver, has just been sensational," Kent said. "He's just a sophomore, and he's one of the best players I've seen here in a long time. He's already beaten people who are ranked in the top 25 nationally."

"We've also had some great play from Doug Brown, who is a senior," Kent added. "He's our captain, and we get great leadership from him playing in the No. 2 spot. He's a sensational player and

See Tennis/Page 8

Slocum fills open coaching position

The Battalion News Services

Texas A&M head football coach R. C. Slocum named Bill Johnson as the Aggies' new defensive line coach Monday.

Johnson, a defensive line coach at Arkansas during the 1990 and 1991 season, was hired to replace Greg Mattison, A&M's defensive line coach who accepted a coaching position in February at the University of Michigan.

Slocum said Johnson is an excellent recruiter and will make an important addition to the A&M staff.

"I've been impressed with his coaching abilities," Slocum said. "If you saw our game with Arkansas, you know the defensive line played extremely well."

Aggies look to redeem losses today vs. Lamar

The Battalion News Services

The Texas A&M baseball team has a chance to redeem itself.

A&M hosts the Lamar Cardinals at 7 p.m. today at Olsen Field. Left-hander Jay Hogue (0-0, 1.00 ERA) takes the mound for A&M, and right-hander Stephen Westbrook (1-1, 3.52) takes the hill for Lamar.

The Aggies (13-7) lost both ends of a Saturday doubleheader to the Baylor Bears after winning the series opener on Friday night.

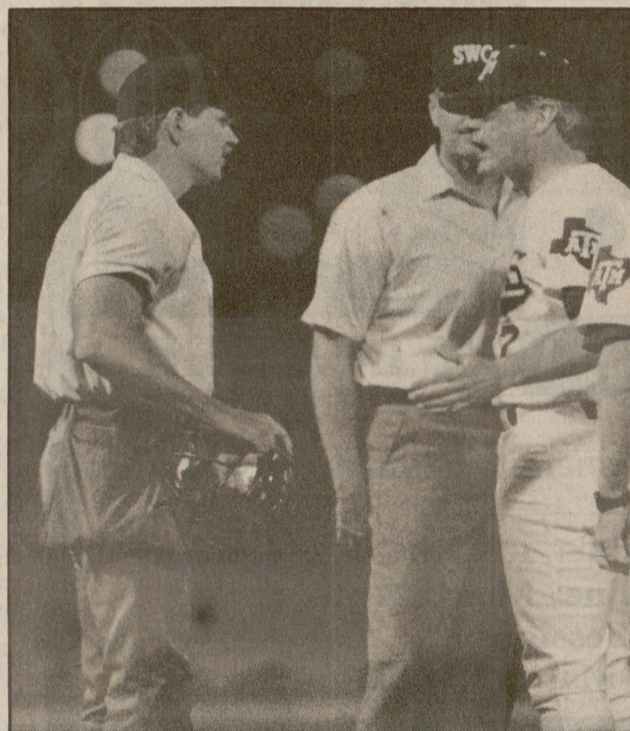
The two losses dropped A&M to 5-4 in SWC standings and pushed them out of the college baseball's Top 30 for the first time since April 15, 1991.

The Aggies hold a 19-3 series advantage over Lamar (12-6) that dates back to 1972, and last year when the two teams met, A&M swept a twinbill from the Cardinals in Beaumont.

A&M head coach Mark Johnson said tonight's game will give the Aggies a chance to prepare for their next Southwest Conference series against Texas Tech this weekend at Olsen Field.

The Cardinals are coached by Jim Gilligan, who served as coach at Lamar from 1973-86, leading his team to seven Southland Conference championships and six NCAA regional playoff appearances.

Gilligan is in the first year of his second stint at Lamar. His overall record is 516-305.



DARREN HILL/The Battalion

A&M coach Mark Johnson argues with umpires during the Aggies' win over Baylor last Friday.

A&M's Russo joins SWC second team

The Battalion News Services

A&M senior Dena Russo was named to the All-Southwest Conference second team by a vote of the eight head women's basketball coaches, the conference office released Monday.

Russo led the Lady Aggies in scoring and rebounding this season with an average of 13.8 points a game and 7.2 rebounds a game. Against the University of Texas in Austin, she went 11-for-11 in the second half and scored the game-winning layup to give A&M its first victory over Texas in 14 years, 74-73.

The Friendswood native scored 25 or more points in four games this season. She was honored as SWC co-Player of the Week and national player of the week by Sports Illustrated.

Russo came back this year after doctors told her she could not continue her basketball career because of a painful knee condition.

The members of the first team include Sheryl Swoopes of Texas Tech, Evenda Barnes of Rice, Cinietra Henderson of Texas, Krista Kirkland of Tech and LaShawn Johnson of Houston.

Russo joins LaNita Luckey of Baylor, Fey Meeks of Texas, Darla Simpson of Houston and Johnna Pointer of Texas on the second team.

Swoopes was not only named SWC Player of the Year but also named Newcomer of the Year.

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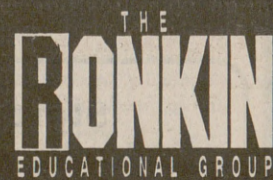
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