

Aggies, Lady Aggies climb one step closer

A&M back to full strength for '92-93, as five starters return with ample backup

By Julie Chelkowski

THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M men's basketball team will be shooting for a higher level of play and status this season as they try to break out of their shell and into a more competitive ring.

In his third year as head coach, Tony Barone said times have changed for the Aggies that went 10-17 last season. This year, he said will mark the end of a rebuilding period and the start of posing a more serious threat inside and outside of the Southwest Conference.

"For the first two years, our team was in a survival mode," Barone said. "Now, our expectations are a little bit different in that we want to compete, and we want to win some games."

"We want to be a championship program. I don't know if we're at that level yet, but that's our goal."

Senior guard David Edwards said the team has taken a more aggressive stance.

"He (Barone) wants us to keep people on their toes instead of us being on our toes all the time," Edwards said. "He wants us to attack instead of being attacked. We should be able to do that this year."

SWC coaches have also recognized A&M's potential, picking them to finish second in the league - a big jump from their sixth-place finish and 5-9 record in the SWC last season. The Aggies have not reached second or higher since 1986 when they captured a tri-championship with Texas Christian and Texas.

Barone said the preseason ranking means little to him but provides a confidence boost for the players.

"There's a credibility factor," Barone said, "when the players know the coaches have shown in their poll that (we) have a chance to be decent in this league. So, the credibility factor tends to motivate us."

The respect shown in the polls may come from A&M posting narrow losses against tough competition last season, facing teams such as Nevada - Las Vegas, New Mexico, Alabama, Rice, Southern Methodist and Texas. However, for this season Barone and his troops are looking to turn the small losses into big wins.

Junior forward Damon Johnson said the team is already on the right track after an intense preseason training regimen in which Barone demanded extensive strength and conditioning work.



Johnson

"We're already at a point where we weren't at this time last year in terms of being in great shape, and knowing and executing plays with intensity," Johnson said. "So, I think we've already taken that step to win some of those close games."

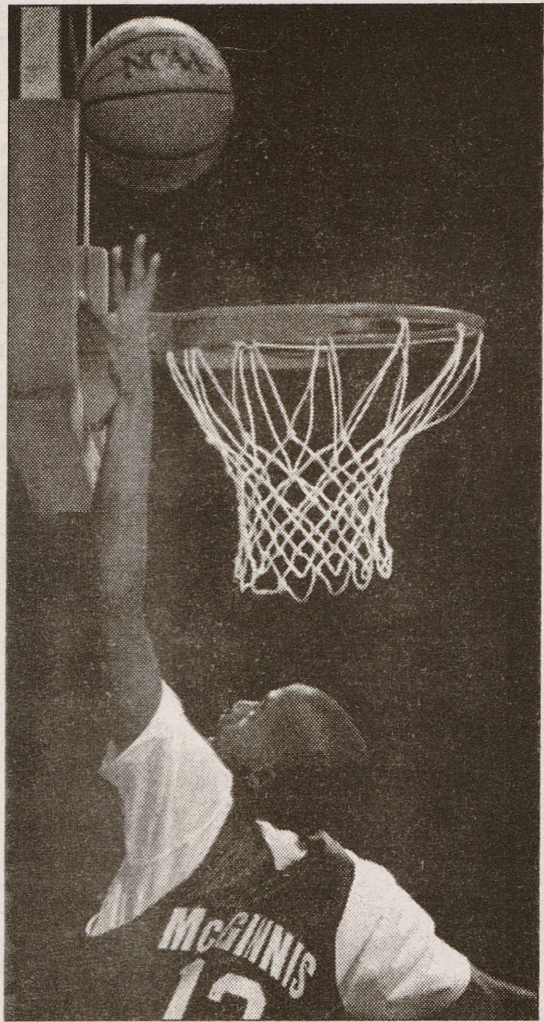
Barone said he was very impressed with preseason workouts.

"These kids have worked harder than any team I've been involved with," he said. "We have worked hard, and the results have been there because we have seen dramatic improvement in our conditioning and our strength."

Also a plus for A&M is the increase in the number of scholarships from seven to 13, giving the team eight veterans and five newcomers.

Two top returners who have been essential in leading the team are Edwards and Johnson. Edwards is a

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Mary Macmanus/The Battalion

Texas A&M junior forward **Tony McGinnis** is one player the Aggies will be counting on to help them reach the upper limits of the Southwest Conference.

The rich get richer for women's basketball, as Lady Aggies rebound amid high hopes

By William Harrison

THE BATTALION

The prospects for the 1993-94 Lady Aggie basketball team may be best anticipated by surveying sophomore guard Donyale Canada and the world-class success that she accomplished this summer.

As a member of the United States national squad, Canada not only competed in the 1993 U.S. Olympic Festival, but made the all-tournament team for her efforts. She turned it on in the Gold medal game, pacing her team as its leading scorer with 14 points while also dishing out five assists.

For Canada, the performance helped put to rest a frustrating season last year, when as a freshman she struggled to make the change from a high school point guard in Austin to a college shooting guard at Texas A&M.

"Last year I just had a hard time with the transition," Canada said. "I wasn't able to find my shooting touch, frustration set in and then confidence went down, and it just really took me out of my game."

And for the rest of the Lady Aggies, last year also provided a rough period

of adjustment as six freshmen took their knocks but still turned in a fourth-place finish in the Southwest Conference. That was the highest finish in 17 years of women's basketball at Texas A&M.



Canada

Expectations are even higher with another bumper crop of recruiting talent. A&M head basketball coach Lynn Hickey said last season will fast become a memory with what is in store this season for the Lady Aggies, a team many polls have picked to finish second or third in the SWC.

"With all these players coming back not only this year, but for the next two years, this program is built,"

Hickey said.

"I think everyone forgot what a tremendous thing those kids did: There was not another team in the United States that put five freshmen on the floor that were the whole depth of the team."

"We've done the right thing, and this is a very good team of young ladies; there will not be many disappointments this year."

Indeed. The SWC Newcomer of the Year, sophomore point guard Lisa Branch returns to complete a formidable backcourt with Canada.

But where A&M has the most sizable advantage is in its frontcourt. The Aggies are the second-tallest team in the country, behind only Vanderbilt, a team that made the NCAA Final Four last season.

Sophomores Martha McClelland and Kelly Cerny stand at 6 feet 4 inches, while senior Teri Bartlett looks down from 6 feet 5 inches. This size can be the main offensive threat if the rest of the team can do one thing: Hit the outside shot.

"If you look at our team on paper, and if you look at them out on the floor, you can tell our strength is definitely in the size that we have," Hickey said. "But in order to be able to use the size, we're going to have to have the threat on the outside."

"We've got to do some things to make the defenses respect our outside shooting."

With Branch and Canada settled in after a year's court duty and a recruiting class that scores high on outside shooting credentials, A&M's options may have become completely loaded.

Hickey said the team



Kyle Burnett/The Battalion

Texas A&M sophomore guards **Donyale Canada** (foreground) and **Lisa Branch** (background) will give the Aggies a potent combination in the backcourt.

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