

Quesada adjusting to American basketball

□ Spaniard finds home with Aggie basketball.

By Jim Anderson
THE BATTALION

Most freshmen that come into Texas A&M have a tough time adjusting to life during their first year at school. Classes and a new environment take a toll on many incoming students. However, for Texas A&M freshman forward Dario Quesada, the biggest problem coming into college were learning the English language and eating the food.

"I think the first couple of weeks I had a hard time learning the language and adjusting to the food," said the 6-foot 9-inch freshman who is averaging 10 minutes, 3.9 points, and 2.9 rebounds per game so far this year for the Aggies. "My teammates helped me out tremendously as far as adjusting to college life at Texas A&M."

There are other aspects of life on the basketball court that Quesada has had to adjust to, namely the American style of play and the quick-

ness and strength of the players. These are the two areas where Quesada has concentrated his game.

"I feel that I need to run more and build my strength to adjust to the style of play in American collegiate basketball," said Quesada, who was a member of the Spanish National team before coming to A&M. "Extra time in the weight room and running after practice is helping me adjust to the level these guys are on."

This unique player's European background made him a hot college prospect. As a youngster, Quesada led his prep team to five Spanish championships and played goal keeper on his youth soccer team. He was recruited by such schools as Seton Hall and Providence before deciding on Texas A&M.

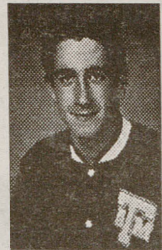
"I made the decision pretty quickly to come to A&M," he said. "The program really impressed me and the quality of academics at this school made it an easy decision."

He is also the first European player to play basketball at A&M. This is a fact that Quesada doesn't think very much about, citing the improved quality of European basketball as the

main reason for the increased number of European players in the college and pro ranks.

"Europeans are beginning to catch up to the Americans as far as basic basketball skills," Quesada said. "That is why European players in the NBA are becoming a more common occurrence."

Quesada's contributions to the team as a freshman this season have



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— Dario Quesada

been limited but noticeable. Against Holy Cross, he scored eight points and grabbed a career-high seven rebounds in the 96-82 Aggie victory. He had a career-high 15 points in the Aggies loss to Texas on January 14. Still, Quesada said he realizes what his role to the team is and what he

needs to do to contribute.

"Joe (Wilbert) and Damon (Johnson) are the seniors so they deserve the most playing time," he said. "My job is to work myself up to the point where I will be at their level eventually."

Quesada's goals also go well beyond college basketball. While a pro career is always a possibility, Quesada says that an even loftier desire for him is to return home and play for the Spanish National team in the 1996 Olympics.

"That is my ultimate goal," he said. "Everyone should have the right to represent their country in the Olympic games, whether they are pro athletes or not."

So, does this mean that Quesada relinquishes the fact that he was not able to play with the Spanish team that lost to USA's "Dream Team II" in the World Championships in Toronto last year?

"No, I'm glad I wasn't there," Quesada said. "The thought of trying to guard Shaquille O'Neal is not one I like to think about."

Obviously, Quesada has learned the ways of America quite well, even if he still prefers Spanish cuisine to hamburgers and hot dogs.

Ferguson's hustle sparks Lady Aggies defense

By Chip Hanson
THE BATTALION

While it may be that point guard Lisa Branch is the "straw that stirs the Lady Aggie drink," there is little doubting which player provides the fiery spark to the A&M attack.

Whether she's diving on the floor for a loose ball, knocking down a three-pointer or verbally psyching herself and the crowd, there's always one constant in her game: Junior guard Bambi Ferguson is a competitor.

"Bambi is just a fighter," A&M head coach Candi Harvey said. "She has such spunk and fire, I

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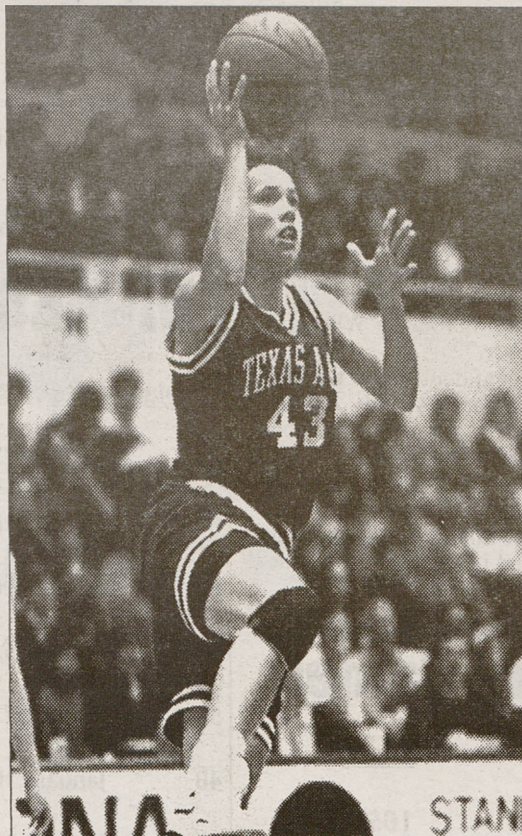
Ferguson lists Charles Barkley as one of her favorite players because her style of intense play is similar to his. Much like Barkley, she admits to having an attitude. Ferguson said she can be too negative at times and is trying to work on being more optimistic.

"Sometimes if things don't go my way on the court, I tend to get a temper," Ferguson said.

The Lady Aggies have been in the Top 25 since the beginning of the season but Ferguson believes they have the capabilities of being a Top 10 team. She said is disappointed about the season thus far and has come to the conclusion that the Lady Aggies need to become more intense competitors, especially at the beginning of the game.

"Coach Harvey has told us that the first three minutes are the most important," Ferguson said. "We need to go out there and get fired up."

This season, Ferguson is shooting 37.5 percent from the three-point arc and a solid 78.9 percent



Courtesy of Texas A&M Sports Information

Bambi Ferguson drives for a layup.

from the free throw line. She also averages 2.4 rebounds per game and is contributing 6.2 points per game.

Ferguson has set lofty goals for herself and the team. She would like the team to win a Southwest Conference title. As for herself she wants to work on her positive attitude and defensive game.

The Lady Aggies are currently 1-1 in SWC conference play, losing a disappointing game to Texas

Tech. Despite the defeat, Harvey was very pleased with Ferguson's performance, which included 12 points coming off the bench.

"She had a great game against Texas Tech," Harvey said. "I think if everyone had played as aggressively as Bambi did, we would have had a good chance to win that game."

Ferguson is a junior education/kinesiology major from Jayton, Texas. She says her career ambition is to coach at the collegiate level, preferably under Coach Harvey, the women's basketball coach.

As for the academics of this busy athlete, she is a two-time recipient of the GTE academic achievement award.

She is a member of Aggie Athletes Involved, she also served as a volunteer at the local Boys and Girls Club and The Big Event.

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