SPORTS BRIEFS

Softball team splits twin bill with UTSA

The University of Texas-San Antonio held the Texas A&M softball team to just four hits in 1-0 win to gain a doubleheader split with the Lady Aggies Tuesday in San Antonio.

The Lady Aggies won the first game, 6-4, behind the pitching of Christy Bunting, who allowed no earned runs and struck out five batters in four-and-two-thirds innings pitched.

Second baseman Mary Mapp continued her hot hitting in the first game, going 2-4 with two RBIs. Also enjoying a big day at the plate was Beth Gerken, who broke out of a hitting slump with a 3-3 day and four runs batted in.

Erin Field was pegged with the loss in the second game, despite allowing just one run in seven-and-one-third innings.

The Lady Aggies will return to action on Thursday when they host Louisianna Tech at 2 p.m. and the University of Texas-Arlington at 4 p.m. at the Lady Aggie Softball Field.

Mavericks win by one on Jones' tip-in

DALLAS (AP) — Popeye Jones of Dallas tipped in a shot and hit a free throw with 23.9 seconds left and Hakeem Olajuwon missed a short jumper at the buzzer Tuesday night, sending the Mavericks to a 102-101 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Clyde Drexler's driving layup with 58 seconds left gave Houston a 101-99 lead.

Jones was fouled by Chucky Brown as he went up to tip Jamal Mashburn's miss. Jones made the free throw and the Rockets called timeout. Olajuwon had a clear look at the basket with time running out but the ball bounced off the back of the rim.

Scott Brooks, recently obtained in a trade from Houston, tied it 80-80 with a drive with 3.4 seconds left in the third quarter, then put Dallas ahead 82-80 with a jumper. He had 12 points.

Houston's Vernon Maxwell played for the first time since being suspended for 10 games without pay and fined $20,000 for punching a fan in Portland. He scored six points, including a layup that tied it 97-97 with 3:18 to play.

Panthers sign free agent Lamar Lathon

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Panthers signed their fifth unrestricted free agent Tuesday, linebacker Lamar Lathon from the Houston Oilers.

Lathon, the Oilers' No. 1 pick out of the University of Houston in 1990, had 8 1/2 sacks last season, more than one-third of the sacks recorded by Houston.

"I felt after visiting the Panthers organization that this is where I wanted to play," Lathon said in a statement released by the Panthers. "This is a first-class organization and the people I spoke with here are all committed to winning football games. The chance to be a part of that from the very beginning is a great opportunity."

The Panthers did not release the terms of Lathon's signing.

Roger Hsieh/ THE BATTALION

Senior forward **Joe Wilbert** eyes the basket as he prepares the slam the ball.

Aggies try to avoid emotional letdown

❑ Five seniors will play their last game in G. Rollie White Coliseum tonight.

By Jim Anderson
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M men's basketball team will try to keep their new found momentum going as they host Southern Methodist University at 7 p.m.

The Aggies, 5-7 in conference play and 12-15 overall, are coming off an emotional victory over Texas Christian University on Wednesday. A mental letdown is something head Coach Tony Barone is hoping will not effect his team as they prepare for the conference tournament next week.

"We are not going to take anyone for granted going down the home stretch," Barone said. "The seedings for the Southwest Conference tournament are still up in the air, and we want to get the best possible position we can."

The Mustangs, 2-10 in the SWC and 6-18 overall, are also fighting for final position as the season comes to a close. They must find a way to stop Joe Wilbert, who had 39 points in the first meeting between the two teams, a 79-60 Aggie victory. The extra effort put forth to stop Wilbert should open up the offense to other players.

"As other teams double and triple team Joe down in the paint, we will be able to open up some other shots," said senior guard Corey Henderson. "The thing is that we have to take advantage of those open shots when we get them."

"SMU has some terrific guards and is really a lot better than their record would indicate," Barone said. "They should give us a lot better effort than the last time we played them."

The game has special significance for the five Aggie seniors, Henderson, Damon Johnson, Wilbert, Tony McGinnis and John Jungers who will play in their final game at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Henderson admitted that the emotions of the game will be on the players' minds as they take the home floor for the last time as Aggies.

"After a while, it hits you that this is the final time you will go out before the home crowd and could be the last time playing organized basketball," Henderson said. "It will be an emotional experience for all of us."

Still, the players must put personal experiences aside as they prepare for this crucial stretch run.

"The main thing is that we need to get that big momentum going into the tournament," Barone said. "If we can do that, we have the ability to compete against anyone."

Lady Ags look to even score

❑ The woman's team battles to stay in second place in the SWC.

By Shelly Hall
THE BATTALION

The Lady Aggies will attempt to defend their position in the race for the second seed in the Southwest Conference tournament when they play Southern Methodist University tonight in Dallas.

Women's basketball head coach Candi Harvey said the main key to victory will be defending the basket.

"One thing is man-to-man defense," Harvey said. "We need to increase the defensive pressure overall."

Harvey said playing smart and minimizing errors will be the other keys to the game against a tough SMU team.

"We have to come out and play smart," Harvey said. "They will make you pay if you make errors."

Harvey said her team came out slowly in the first half and picked up the momentum in the second the last time the two teams met, when SMU upset A&M at home.

"We need to come out and put two halves together to make a whole game out of it," Harvey said.

Harvey said the Lady Mustangs will load the floor with talented players against the Lady Aggies.

"All five players are very versatile and very well-balanced," Harvey said. "They are a good offensive basketball team."

Two SMU players who will need to be contained are junior forward Kim Brandl and junior guard Jennifer McLaughlin.

Brandl has averaged 15.9 points and 7.3 rebounds a game while McLaughlin has averaged 16.3 points per game.

Freshman guard Carey Owens, who tied her career-high with 16 points on Saturday against Texas Christin, said the Lady Aggies have to come out against SMU and establish their superiority immediately.

"They will have the home court advantage," Owens said. "But, we just need to come out and establish that we're the better team."

Owens said she will help the team by taking the open shot, especially behind the three-point arc.

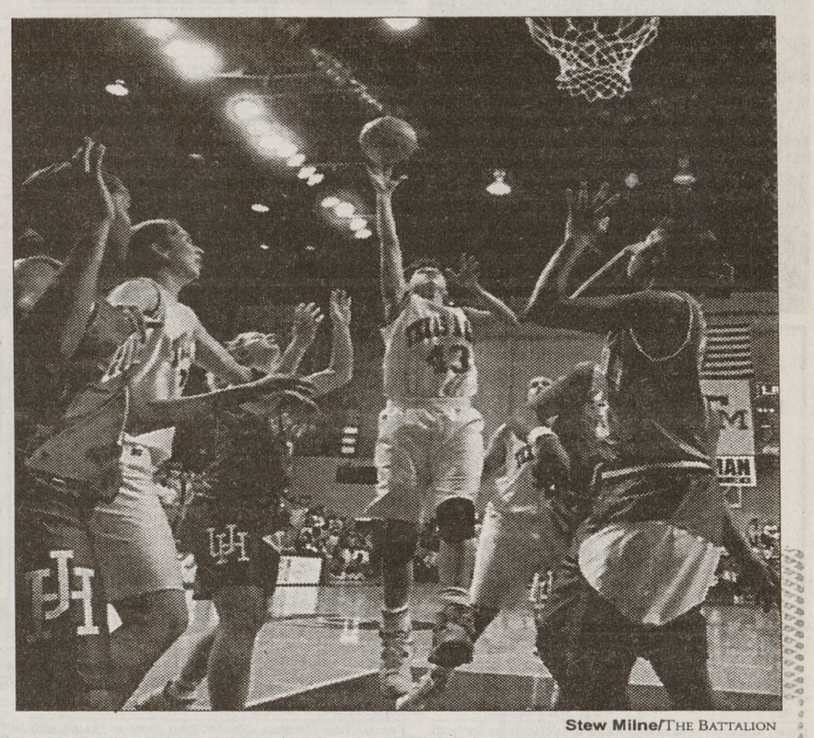
"Coach Harvey told me that whenever I'm open, I need to take it," Owens said. "If I hesitate, I will sit down."

Defense is the key to the game for Owens against SMU.

"First, I need to work on my defense," Owens said. "I've never played at SMU before, so I will need to get used to the rim to see how it bounces."

Junior guard Bambi Ferguson said the keys to her game against SMU are to relax and use the confidence she gained

See **Lady Ags**, Page 8



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

Junior **Bambi Ferguson** drives the lane against Houston.

Big 12 success depends on recruiting

TOM DAY
SPORTSWRITER

When one thinks of Texas A&M and recruiting, it's natural to see images of blue-chip recruits flocking to Aggieland, eager to wear maroon and wave 12th Man towels. That's on the football field, of course.

On the basketball court, however, it's been a different story in recent years. Simply put, the program hasn't exactly been a recruiting magnet.

With the move into the Big 12 just around the corner, this trend must change in a hurry. To enjoy life in the new conference, A&M as to have top-notch recruiting classes on a yearly basis.

Up until now, the climate hasn't been right for this to occur. G. Rollie White Coliseum is a great place to play and watch basketball. However, its age and small capacity (7,500 seats) doesn't exactly qualify the "Holler House" as a state-of-the-art facility.

The new special events center, due to open in 1997 will have a capacity of 12, 500. Attendance has been a perennial problem, but the new conference and the new arena should help that.

With probation and scholarship limitations no longer tainting the program, recruiting is expected to flourish. Based on A&M's success during last fall's early signing period, the expected changes are already beginning to pay off.

The Aggies landed four top recruits in November, including guard Gary Nottingham of Otero Junior College in Colorado. The JUCO All-American candidate will be joined by national top 100 players Calvin Davis of Killeen and Brad Stricker of Devine.

A&M also signed guard Joel Ockey, a highly-regarded player out of Payson, Utah.

Head coach Tony Barone said the new players should make an immediate impact on the team.

"Gary Nottingham is a JUCO player, so he'll be more ready than the other three," Barone said. "We think the other three kids will help us if they play up to their capabilities and skill levels.

"We know that it's very difficult for the freshman to come in and play, but we're anticipating that they'll have good years."

With two more scholarships available, A&M still has a golden chance to add more talent to the mix during the spring signing period. Barone said an evaluation of returning players is necessary before the team can address its specific needs.

"We're going to sit back and make some evaluations on the players in the program and see where we need to improve," Barone said. "We'll make some value judgments on the recruiting process based on this."

Considered to be one of the best recruiting classes in school history, this year's crop of talent is solid. But if A&M is to compete in the Big 12, it will need a recruiting effort this strong or even stronger in the coming years to bring in the necessary weapons.

Currently, the Big 8 has six teams in the Top 25. It's obvious the Aggies will have their work cut out for them in 1996 when the SWC and Big 8 become one super-conference.

The equation is simple: The Big 12 plus a new arena plus higher attendance equals solid recruiting and a winning program.

For the A&M basketball program, the fun is just beginning.

A&M walks away with win against Sam Houston

❑ Error-prone SHSU allow Aggies to escape with 11-9 victory.

Staff and Wire Reports

The Texas A&M baseball team used four Sam Houston State errors and 11 walks to beat the Bearkats, 11-9, Tuesday in Huntsville.

The big opening for the Aggies came when SHSU pitcher Jamey DeBruin committed a bases-loaded throwing error that allowed all three Aggie runners to score in A&M's four-run sixth inning.

Junior John Codrington picked up his first win of the season by working two innings of relief, allowing three hits and striking out two. Senior Brian Parker came on to earn the save by working the final three innings and striking out the final batter with the tying run on base.

Aggie senior first baseman John Curl continued his torrid hitting streak with a three-run home run in the fourth inning. Curl increased his hitting streak to eleven games.

Texas A&M head coach Mark Johnson said that while the win was not the Aggies' best performance, he noticed improvement in key areas.

"This was an ugly win, but when I look back on the game, I see pressure points where our players responded well, " Johnson said. "We need to be put in pressure situations, and I'm glad our players responded. It always seems to be a wild game against Sam Houston State."

The win moves A&M's record to 8-5-1. The Aggies return to play on Friday when they open up a three-game series with Cal State-Northridge at 3 p.m. at Olsen Field.

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