

SPORTS BRIEFS

Lady Ag basketball receives two recruits

The Texas A&M women's basketball team signed two players, Patricia Thomas from Diboll and Kerrie Patterson from Houston, to national letters of intent Thursday.

Thomas, a 5-foot-9-inch guard from Diboll High School averaged 31 points, 12 rebounds, nine steals and five assists per game last season. She was named to the first-team all-state team.

Patterson, a 5-foot-8-inch guard from Yates High School, averaged 16.4 points and 10 assists per game this season while being named District 18-5A's Most Valuable Player.

Thomas and Patterson will join future A&M teammate Brenda Beard, a five-foot, 10-inch small forward from Temple, at the Texas Girls' Coaches Association all-star game in July.

Track teams head to Austin for SWC meet

The Texas A&M men's and women's track teams will attempt to move up in the world when they begin competition in the 1995 Southwest Conference Outdoor Championships today at Memorial Stadium in Austin.

The men's team will be looking for its first SWC team title since 1981. A&M has finished second three straight years, all three times behind the University of Texas.

The Lady Aggies will be trying to improve on last year's fifth-place finish in Houston. Only once in the last 12 SWC women's outdoor meets has A&M finished higher than fourth.

SWC comes to Aggieland

The tennis teams are ready for the opposition as the other seven SWC schools converge towards A&M.

By Shelly Hall THE BATTALION

The best tennis players in the state of Texas will grace the Texas A&M campus this weekend when the men's and women's tennis teams host the Southwest Conference championships at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

The men's tennis team comes into the championships ranked No. 22, while the women finished the regular season with a No. 42 national ranking.

Two-time NCAA qualifier Bernardo Martinez said the advantage of playing at home is enormous.

"There is a huge advantage (playing at home)," Martinez said. "Over the past four years, I can count with one hand the losses we've had at home."

Martinez said the success from playing at home has come from the atmosphere involved at Omar Smith.

"We've got more crowd than any other team in the nation," Martinez said. "We are used to our courts, fans, atmosphere and even the weather."

Martinez said his goals for the championships include beat-

ing arch rival Texas to win the Southwest Conference.

"We are going in to win," Martinez said. "My goal is to beat Texas in the final. Both TCU and Texas are the top seeds, but we have the ability to win."

Men's tennis coach David Kent said he feels the team can realistically contend with anyone in the SWC.

"We've got as good a chance as anybody to win," Kent said. "We're ranked No. 22 and we've got the greatest fans in the world."

"Over the past four years, I can count with one hand the losses we've had at home."

—senior Bernardo Martinez

Kent said pressure from last year's successful team will have no effect on this team.

"We have steadily improved," Kent said. "Our big problem was losing Mark Weaver, but we have good people at the top."

On the women's side, coach Bobby Kleinecke said home field advantage will definitely factor into his team's success.

"They love to play at home," Kleinecke said. "They just need to focus on one game at a time."

Despite the home advantage, Kleinecke said a championship will not be difficult to obtain.

"The road is not easy," Klei-

necke said. "We had a tough match with Houston, TCU, Baylor and Rice."

The doubles team sophomore of Nancy Dingwall and junior Wilson Pate, who qualified for the NCAA championships last year and set a school record for doubles teams with a 25-5 record, hope to repeat last year's championship.

Dingwall said revenge for a loss sustained in the regular season will motivate her against her Houston competitor.

"We start off with Houston," Dingwall said. "I want to get off to a good start and get revenge for the regular season."

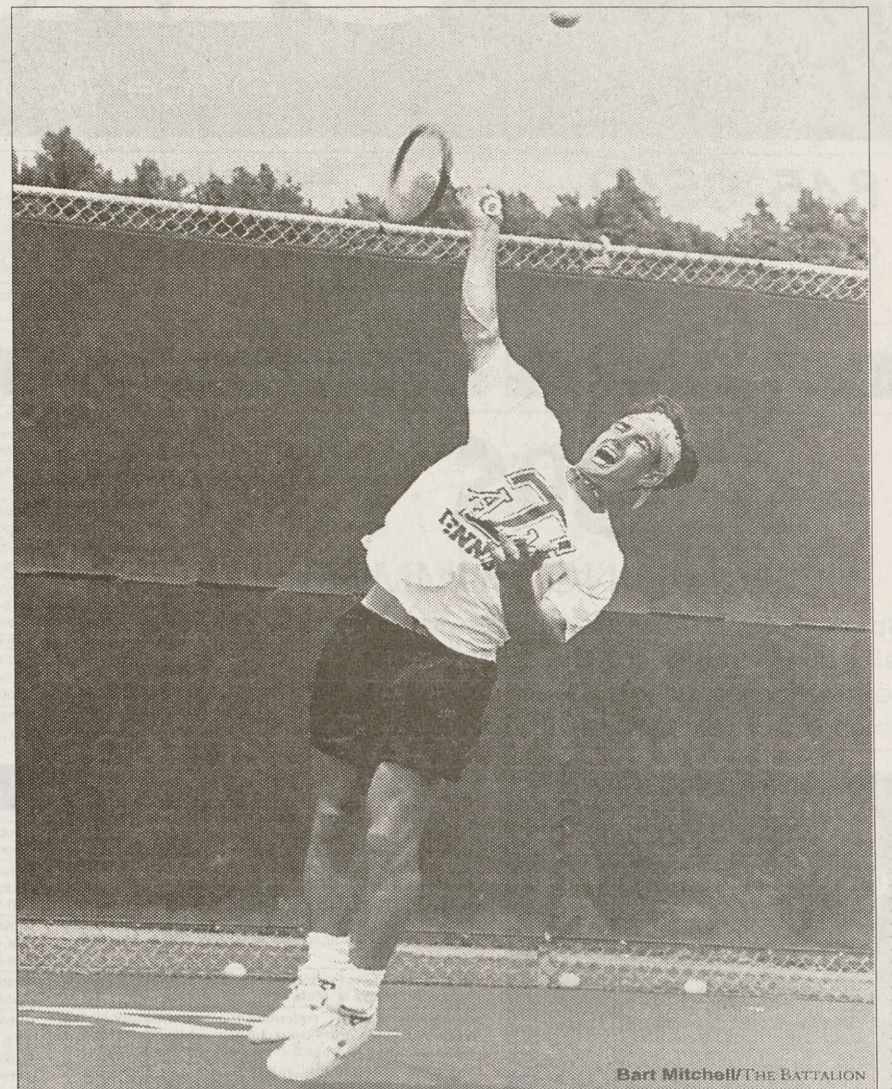
"Each match is going to be different," Dingwall said. "I need to devise a plan for each match that comes along."

Dingwall said standout players will include the University of Texas' Kelly Pace, who is ranked No. 1 in the nation, and Suzanne Anderson, who is ranked in the top 50.

Pate said she has no doubts about who one half of the finals competition will be.

"I think we will be in the finals," Pate said. "It's basically a mental thing because we are physically ready at this point."

Both the men's and women's matches will start at 1:00 p.m. today and continue on through Sunday.



Junior Blake Arrant puts everything into his serve as he prepares for this weekend's SWC tournament.

Ags, win streak to be tested against Tech

This weekend's series proves to be pivotal as the SWC race is starting to heat up.

By Robert Rodriguez THE BATTALION

They can hit. They can pitch. They can field. And they are coming soon to an Olsen Field near you.

The eighth-ranked Texas Tech Red Raiders, leaders of the Southwest Conference in hitting, fielding and pitching will play a crucial four-game series against the Texas A&M baseball team this weekend.

The Aggies are in first place in the conference race, 1 1/2 games in front of Tech. However, the Red Raiders have a team batting average of .345 and a team earned run average of 3.99, tops in the conference. Their fielding percentage is .970, which is second best in the conference.

Head coach Mark Johnson said Tech is a team that has all the tools.

"They've got a well-rounded team," Johnson said. "They're ranked high and it's not by accident. They are a complete package, and I don't know if you can stop one thing and not get hurt by the others."

Offensively, the Red Raiders have the top three hitters in the conference. Jason Totman leads the SWC with a .429 average, while both Clint Bryant and Randy DuRoss are second with .415 averages. Both Bryant and Dion Ruecker are among the conference leaders in home runs with 10 apiece.

"They're a solid hitting ball club," Johnson said. "They score

a lot of runs and their batting averages are high. This will be a real test for our pitchers."

Defensively, the Red Raiders have made only 51 errors in 43 games and their pitching has been sound all year. Both Jeff Peck and Travis Smith are among the top 10 in the conference in earned run average, while Matt Miller leads the team with eight victories. All three pitchers are also in the top 10 in the conference in strikeouts.

One thing Tech does not have that the Aggies do is the momentum from a 14-game winning streak. Johnson said this momentum is crucial, especially in a series like this one.

"We got some momentum going and we have been playing good, so I'm pleased that we are going in on a pretty good roll," Johnson said. "I'd rather be going in strong like we are right now than (be) going in struggling."

Junior Paul Barber agreed with Johnson and said the momentum the Aggies have has jelled the team together.

"We are just on a high right now and things are going our way," Barber said. "We are playing good and the team is like one big family. Everything is just great."

Another factor that is in A&M's favor is the home field advantage they will have. All four games will be played at Olsen Field this weekend and Johnson said this will help the team that much more.

"I'm glad we are playing here and the key for us is to get a lot of fans out," Johnson said. "We got to have fan support since this is a major series for us. One team is going to gain ground and one team is going to lose ground, so this is a great matchup."

"This matchup with Tech is going to be a dogfight," Barber said. "It's one we are looking forward to and we are ready to go."

The first game of the series will begin at 4 p.m. today at Olsen Field.

After rough times, Barber still lucky to take the field

Paul Barber remembers back to the car crash that almost ended his baseball career.

By Tom Day THE BATTALION

Junior infielder and pitcher Paul Barber has accomplished many feats on the baseball diamond. In high school, Barber was an All-State selection, two-time MVP and was named to the All-District team three times.

But perhaps his greatest accomplishment as a player came last season, when he simply took the field for the Aggie baseball team.

Barber was redshirted after a promising freshman year when he suffered injuries in a car accident the day before practice began in 1993.

"It was a tough time when it happened, but the coaches, the team and everybody helped out a lot," Barber said. "We were winning that year and that helped out a lot, too. It kind of took the pressure off and eased the struggle of being out."

Breaking both sides of his jaw and suffering a dislocated and broken ankle in the accident, Barber's road to recovery was not a smooth one.

"I did a lot of exercises and running under (the supervision of) Danny Kniffin, the physical therapist for the department," Barber said. "I also worked out over the summer to get back in shape."

"He lost a little bit of speed and agility because of the frozen ankle," A&M head

coach Mark Johnson said. "But, he can still do everything we ask of him."

"It took dedication and hard work to get back to the Division I playing level."

Johnson said a reshuffling of the A&M infield was necessary in Barber's absence. "After fall workouts (in 1992), he was projected to be our starting shortstop and Robert Harris was going to be at second base," Johnson said. "After the injury, we had to move Harris to shortstop. We had prepared differently, but everything worked

"To me, a position is just a position, it's fun no matter where you're at."

— junior Paul Barber

out all right."

After rejoining the team for the 1994 season, Barber was happy just to be on the field.

"I just enjoy playing the game," Barber said. "To me, a position is a position, it's fun no matter where you're at."

This season, Barber has found much success at the plate, hitting .351 with a .452 on-base percentage. However, Johnson has also made Barber his closing pitcher, an opportunity the right-hander relishes.

"I like the closer's role that I'm in right now," Barber said. "In tight games, you want to be on the mound."

"It's an adrenaline rush and something you look forward to because there's nothing like it."

ing like it."

It is doubtful that the batters Barber faces look forward to seeing him on the mound because he is sporting the lowest earned run average on the team at 0.96. Barber is 3-0 on the year with a save and opposing batters are hitting just .152 against him.

Drafted by the Houston Astros in 1991, Barber picked up extra experience playing summer baseball for the Wichita Broncos in the Jayhawk League.

Johnson said Barber's well-rounded athleticism and team-first attitude are what impress him the most.

"He is a complete team player with no hidden agendas," Johnson said. "He's not trying to impress scouts or raise his batting average, he's only trying to help the team."

"When you have a dual position player that can hit, pitch and play infield, you have a special commodity."

Barber attributes the A&M coaches for teaching him the game and providing him an avenue to success on the college level.

"You come in here as a young guy and you think you know everything, but you don't," Barber said. "It takes a while to adjust and really focus in on what the coaches are trying to teach you."

Barber said his first priority is to help lead the team back to the College World Series.

"My biggest goal is to go back to Omaha because I missed out (in 1993) being hurt," Barber said. "I want a national championship, and I think everybody on this team does."

Lady Aggies seek revenge against South Carolina

The softball team heads into the series at USC with some much-needed confidence.

By Tom Day THE BATTALION

Despite losing to the University of South Carolina in the Frost Cutlery Tournament last weekend, the Texas A&M Lady Aggie softball team is brimming with confidence. The players felt that their 2-0 setback to the Lady Gamecocks could have gone either way.

"We had a lot of chances to win, but we let them slip away,"

sophomore first baseman Mya Truelove said. "They made some All-American catches and robbed us of some hits. They're good, but they're definitely a team we can beat."

The Lady Aggies, 24-18 on the year, will carry this confidence to Columbia, South Carolina this weekend when they take on USC again in a four-game series.

South Carolina, 41-14 and ranked 11th nationally, owns a 21-1 home record.

"We have a chance to turn the season around if we do really well there, so we're pretty motivated," A&M head coach Bob Brock said. "I felt like we could have won (last week's) game at any time. We just didn't get the

hit at the right time and they made the catches."

A&M was also without the services of second baseman and No. 3 batter Merry Mapp, who was out with an injured hand last week. She will rejoin the starting lineup this weekend.

"Her injury has responded and she should be ready to go," Brock said. "She's been working out all week and she's got the green light."

Although it lost to South Carolina, A&M fared well in its other games in last weekend's tournament posting a 4-1 mark.

The Lady Aggies will be looking to recapture some of the momentum that propelled them to a 10 game winning streak earlier

in the month. Junior shortstop Kendall Richards said the team will be looking to get back on a roll.

"We're pretty excited to play (USC) again," Richards said. "We've lost two out of three now, and it would be good to turn that back around and get a four game winning streak going."

Brock said the Lady Aggies have improved in all areas in recent weeks.

"Last weekend, we got some good things going," Brock said. "We ran and hit the ball well."

"We've been playing a lot better percentage defense and our batting averages have been going up. We're playing good ball right now."

Whether a Chief or 49er, Joe still the greatest of all time

He has been trying to dodge the warning signs, a sore elbow and bad knees, but to the dismay of sports fans everywhere, there will be no more Joe.

The aches and pains finally caught up with future Hall-of-Famer Joe Montana as he decided 16 seasons of playing professional football were enough and retired Tuesday.

Montana is perhaps the best quarterback in the history of the National Football League and his contributions to the game will be missed. Montana's career illustrates that no matter what obstacles one might come up against, hard work and dedication will enable you to overcome those obstacles.

At a time when athletes are trying not to be role models, and others are not worthy of that distinction, Montana will be remembered as an athlete and a good role model.

He epitomizes hard work and perseverance. Aspiring athletes look to him as one who never quit and gained the success of which he was deserving.

It is hard to believe that a man who has won four Super Bowl rings was once cut from his high school team. Montana's coaches believed that he lacked both arm strength and athleticism.

Additionally, while he had a successful career at Notre Dame, professional scouts did not really see him as a NFL type quarterback. He was picked in the third round behind prospects Jack Thompson and Steve Fuller (who?).

But Montana proved them all wrong.

The numbers speak for themselves. In 1982, Montana set a NFC record with five consecutive games in which he had 300 or more passing yards. In 1988, Montana set a Super Bowl record with 357 yards passing in the 49ers' win over the Cincinnati Bengals. Montana is fourth in career passing yards (40,551) and touchdown passes (273) and second in quarterback rating (92.3).

KRISTINA BUFFIN SPORTSWRITER



At Montana's news conference, over 20,000 fans chanted, "One more year," but while another year of Joe would be ideal, Montana realized that the time had come.

Football was no longer fun but a job. It would be a disservice to fans to play because he felt he had to not because he wanted to.

Although Montana's retirement was a celebration of a great career, a dark cloud loomed over the ceremony. The question was, "Is Joe going to retire his number as a 49er or a Chief?"

The answer seems simple, his 49er number should be retired.

All of Montana's accomplishments came as a 49er. He won four Super Bowls, three Most Valuable Player awards and various passing titles.

When running back Roger Craig retired last season, he was a Viking. However the 49er owner-

ship picked him up as a free agent and signed him to a small contract, then Craig retired. The same should be done for Montana.

It would be extremely strange to see a number 19 hanging at Arrowhead Stadium, considering Montana only spent two seasons there. It would be like Chris Webber retiring as a Golden State Warrior.

If anything, the 49ers should have seen a situation like this coming. When they traded Montana for a first round draft pick, they should have included a clause in the trade that when Montana retired the 49ers retained rights to retire his number.

Montana has said that if he coaches it will be tee-ball but even if he departs the world of football, his mark has been left. He was an athlete who did not succumb to the greed and selfishness that is pervading the world of sports.

Even if Montana's number is not retired as a 49er, in my mind and in the minds of San Francisco fans every where, he will always be a 49er.