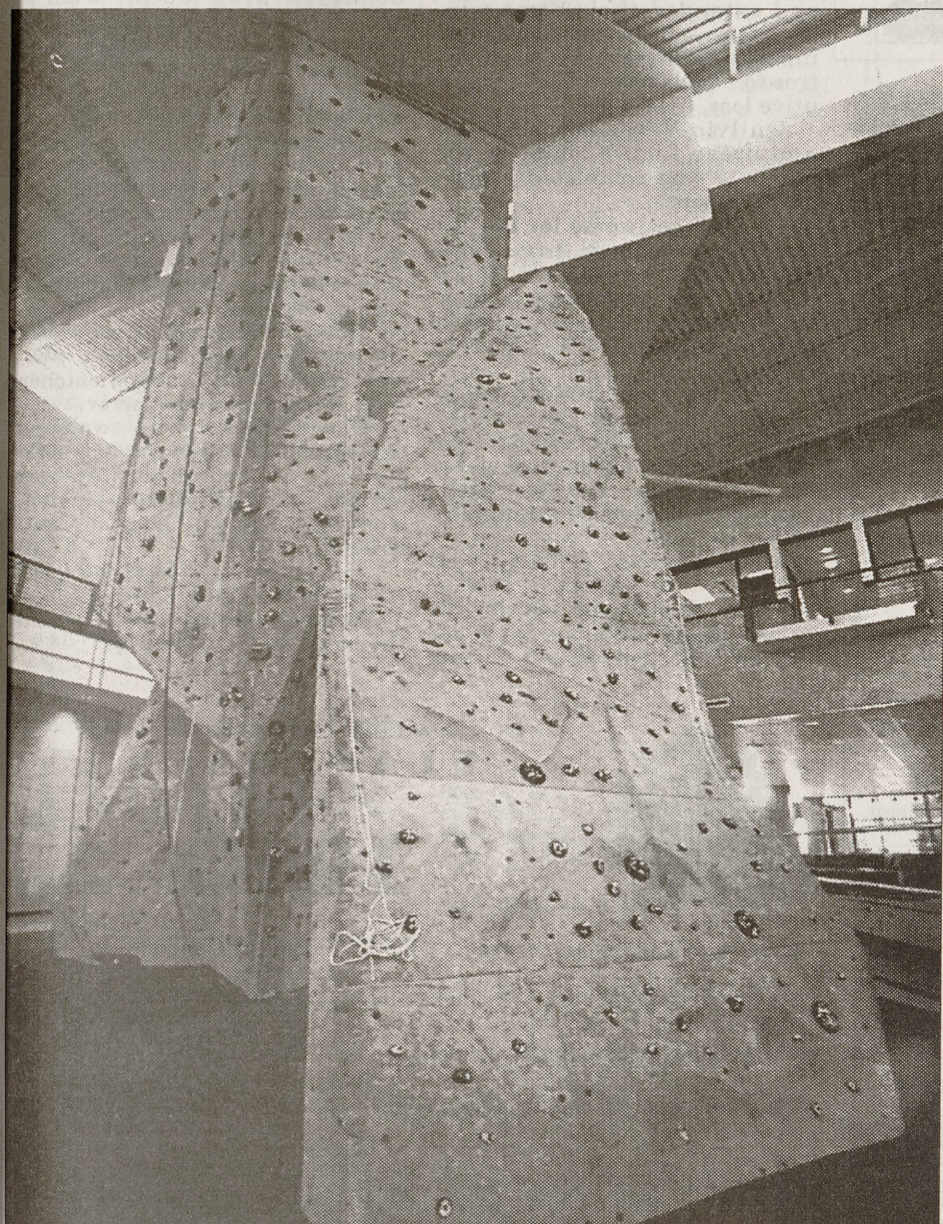


New Rec Center offers something for everyone



A 42-foot rock climbing wall looms in the main room of the new Student Recreational Center. The wall is the only of its kind between Houston and Dallas.

Encompassing 286,000 square feet with equipment and facilities for more than 20 sports, A&M's new Student Recreational Center has everything from archery ranges to volleyball courts.

By David Winder
THE BATTALION

It's finished. Well, everything except the natatorium is finished. But with all the neat stuff in the new Student Recreational Center, you will never have time to go swimming.

You will, however, be able to participate in sports ranging from archery to volleyball for the extra \$50 added to your fee statement this semester.

Overall, the facility provides for over 20 sports, cost \$36.4 million to build, and is 286,000 square feet or roughly five football fields.

As you walk into the state-of-the-art facility, one thought enters your mind, "Man, those sofas look comfortable."

But you came here to get some exercise, and those muscles are not going to tone themselves. So you turn left down the corridor and enter the weight and fitness room.

There you see machine weights, free weights, cardiovascular equipment and a cardio-theatre — which combines treadmills and exercycles with large-scale video screens — resting on 14,000 square feet of carpet.

After working out on one of the 125 weight machines,

you do lifts with some of the 19,000 pounds of free weights and finish up by getting the old ticker pumping with one of the 80 cardiovascular machines.

After that, you decide to work on your medium-range jump shot and look for a pick-up basketball game on one of the four indoor courts.

After giving the shooting performance of the ages, you are asked to play a little volleyball on one of the four indoor volleyball courts. After dominating the net, you get a badminton game going on one of the six courts.

Feeling a little bit tired after crushing the competition, you go into the huge snack bar and lounge to grab a quick drink.

From there, you proceed to the video and games room where you challenge all comers to beat you at Mortal Combat II and air hockey.

Rejuvenated, you win a couple of racquetball games on court one and a few handball games on court 14. Then, even though you have never played before, you find squash a fun game. You play on both courts and walk away with a 3-0 record.

All this exercise has made you a little winded,

so you decide to work on stamina.

After running a couple of miles on the one-fourth mile, four-lane indoor track you decide to do some aerobics in the 4,000-square-foot dance room. You make a mental note to come back when martial arts and dance classes occupy the other four 2,000 foot rooms.

Walking around the complex, you discover the Special Events room that will also be used for concerts, archery classes and as a banquet facility. Two classrooms are found nearby.

Then, just when you think your day is about to come to an end, you see it. You don't know how you missed it before but you are now looking at a 42-foot, freestanding facility for rock climbing.

The wall has over 3,500 square feet of climbing surface and has interchangeable hand and footholds. After climbing it three times, you become bored and decide to look for something more adventurous.

You find it at the two indoor soccer courts with the dasher boards and Plexiglass walls like those found at a hockey rinks. You are asked to leave after scoring four goals and body-checking a guy into the hospital.

Mad at the world, you wander outside and discover an outdoor pool with a current channel and underwater seating.

Then to your chagrin, you notice there is no water in the pool. In fact, you will not be able swim there until early October.

So you walk around to the south side of the building and come upon the new home of TAMU Outdoors. You buy a couple of tents and rent a canoe just for the fun of it and make your way back to the entrance of the building.

What you really want to do is cool off but you know the natatorium will not be open until early October. You decide to sneak a peek anyway and find a 17-foot dive tank, a 50-meter competitive pool, two warm water spas and an instructional pool.

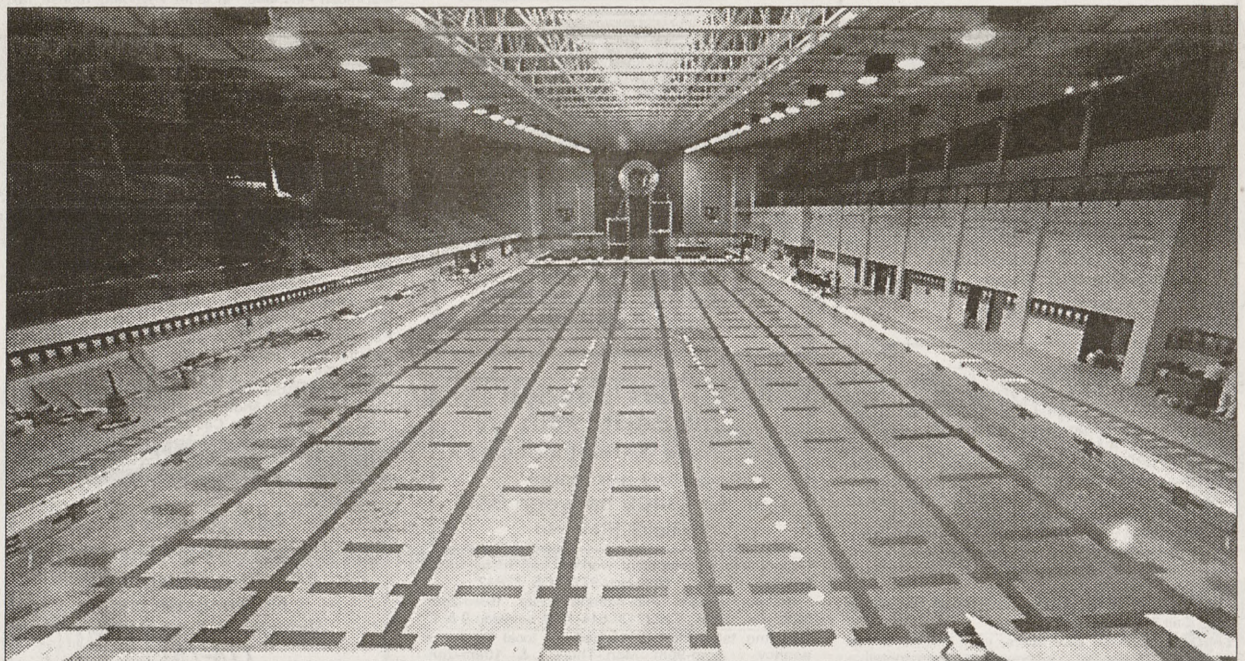
Trying to find your way out, you choose the wrong door and end up in the large locker room.

You put your clothes in one of the full-size lockers and take a shower to finally cool off. You find yourself liking the complimentary towel service.

After finding the correct exit, you make a mental note to work out harder tomorrow but to fall asleep on one of the comfortable sofas.



Olsen Field is visible from the quarter-mile jogging and walking track on the third floor of the new Student Recreational Center.



The natatorium in the new Student Recreational Center is set to open in early October. The A&M swimming and diving teams will train and hold meets there, including the first-ever Big 12 Championships, in 1996.

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