

# THE BATTALION SPORTS

## A new era for A&M volleyball and soccer

The Lady Aggs are hoping to start off on the right foot in the Big 12 with the first championship

The eighth-ranked Aggies will accept nothing but success

By ROSS HECOX  
THE BATTALION

After making it to the Sweet Sixteen in 1995, the Texas A&M volleyball team is driving into the Big 12 with the possibility of winning a championship.

Last year was a record year for the Lady Aggies, who ranked 15th in the final 1995 USA Today/AVCA Coaches Top 25 Poll — an all-time high. A&M made its third consecutive trip to the NCAA Finals after posting a 23-7 record.

The Lady Aggies are ranked 8th and return three starters of eight letterwinners from last year's squad. The starting lineup features a sophomore, two juniors and a senior.

This year, the team hopes to improve on last year's success. To reach its goal, A&M must have to compete — and possibly defeat — talented teams in the new Big 12 conference.

The University of Nebraska, which won the NCAA Championship last year after defeating Stanford in the final, is ranked fourth in the USA Today/AVCA Top 25 preseason poll. The University of Texas is ranked fifth, and Colorado finished 22nd. Either the Huskers or the Longhorns are projected to win the conference.

Texas Tech, Oklahoma, Iowa State, and Kansas State should also be solid teams.

Fourth-year Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said she believes the competition will be tougher this year for reasons other than the opposition.

"We have our sights set on

finishing in the top 3 (in the conference)," Corbelli said. "We are no longer the underdog in our matches. We are a top 20 program. We have to change the way we approach matches now because we are the team to beat."

Corbelli said the team is working on building better team chemistry on the court.

"We're trying to get our team chemistry and get real set in our offensive system," Corbelli said. "We're young teamwork-wise, but I think our players are very capable and very talented individually."

Last weekend the Lady Aggies played in the University Park Holiday Inn Classic in Fort Collins, Colo. and went 2-1.

Senior middle blocker Page White said the tournament was a good learning experience for the team.



Corbelli



Junior Bryn Blalack slips past a defender in last season's game against Texas Tech.

By NICKI SMITH  
THE BATTALION

With hopes of repeating its year of success in 1995, the eighth-ranked Texas A&M Soccer Team is gunning its way into the Big 12 as a veteran team with extraordinary talent. Not only have the Aggies set their sights on capturing an inaugural Big 12 title, they are also the preseason favorite with 18 out of 24 players returning.

"We are flattered to be getting so much preseason respect, but we view the rankings as a double-edged sword," Head Coach G. Guerrieri said. "It can feed our confidence, but it also fuels the fire in our opponents to upset us."

Although their season opener against Texas was postponed another week due to rain last Friday, the Aggies traveled to Plano on Sunday to take on Tulane University.

The Aggies routed the Green Wave 8-0 with junior forward

Bryn Blalack leading the way with four goals.

The Aggies will not open Big 12 play until Sept. 13 when they face the University of Kansas at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

Senior goalkeeper Sunny McConnell said the team has an optimistic outlook about the new conference play.

"It is a compliment that we are favored to take the conference," McConnell said, "But we need to focus on one game at a time and think of every game as a conference game."

The Big 12 is featuring five first-year programs including Baylor University, the University of Colorado, the University of Missouri, the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University.

The University of Nebraska, the University of Texas and Texas Tech University have two seasons of experience, while Iowa State University and KU have one season

See **SOCCER**, Page 13

## Leading By Example

As the only senior on the A&M volleyball team, Page White has taken on the role of leader

A&M senior soccer forward Koop has gone from walk-on to team captain

By JAMIE BURCH  
THE BATTALION

When she's not spending her time flying kites, Texas A&M senior middle blocker Page White is soaring above the net, quickly becoming one of the most versatile and dangerous players on the Lady Aggie volleyball team.

However, White has not always been the feared player she is today. White did not start playing volleyball until she was a sophomore in high school. Until then her preferred sport was basketball.

As the lone senior on this year's squad, A&M Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said White will be called upon to lead the Lady Aggies, who are looking to make an impact in the inaugural Big 12 season.

"It's clear that we do need a spiritual leader — a confidence type leader — and I think she's ready to provide that," Corbelli said.

In her freshman season, White showed signs of promise with nine kills and three aces in

just 13 games. As a sophomore she played in 122 games, reaching double figures in kills in 13 matches and ranked ninth in the Southwest Conference, averaging 0.35 aces a game.

Corbelli said her vast improvement was due to her hard-work ethic and ability to immediately respond to instruction.

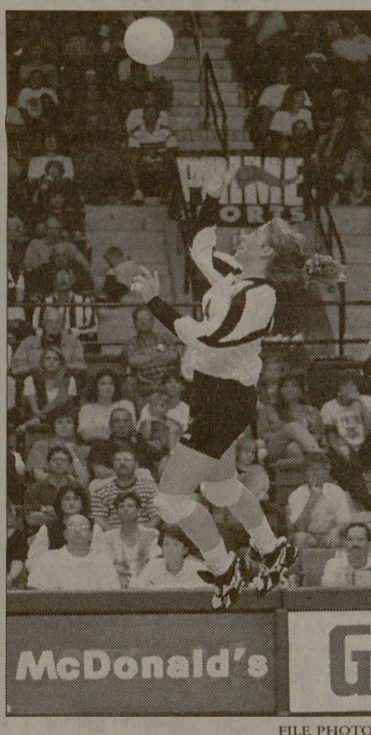
"It doesn't take her any lag time for things to kick in," Corbelli said.

Another reason for the improvements in her game may be the close knit relationship between player and coach.

White said she sees Corbelli as more than just a coach.

"Laurie has a special place in my heart," White said. "She pushes us hard but really cares about us as individuals. It's kind of like a dual relationship. It's a friend and a coach."

This give and take relationship is also evident in Corbelli's description of White as a player. While watching an ESPN interview with University of Tennessee



FILE PHOTO

Page White goes for the set against Texas last season.

By MATT MITCHELL  
THE BATTALION

Five years ago, Texas A&M senior forward Kristen Koop thought her soccer career was over when she was not highly recruited out of high school.

At that time, A&M fielded only a women's club team, so Koop decided to concentrate on her engineering curriculum and came to A&M to pursue her academic career.

However, things changed when A&M soccer became a Division I team the next year, and Koop decided to try to walk on the team. Three years and a several records later, Koop has become the captain of one of the most prolific teams in the country.

Koop is one of 17 lettermen returning from a squad that surged to the second round of the NCAA Tournament last year. The Aggies finished as one of the top teams in the country and the Aggie strikers are highly touted again this year, with top 10 rankings in both major preseason polls.

Koop said the team members will try not to let the rankings go to their heads.

"It's a big compliment to us, but it is also something to take in stride because teams are definitely going to be out to get us," Koop said. "It's going to be a fight the whole game."

Koop's success began at age 6 and continued through her club team play in both California and



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Senior Kristen Koop is looking forward to the new challenges of the Big 12 Conference.

See **WHITE**, Page 13

See **KOOP**, Page 13

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### Health & Safety

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- Tae Kwon Do • Oct 21
- Yoga I • Sept 9
- Yoga II • Oct 28
- CPR & First Aid • Sept 16

### Dance

- Beginning Country & Western Dance • Sept 23
- Jitterbug • Sept 23
- Ballroom Dance • Nov 4
- \* American Ballroom Dance • Oct 2
- \* Latin Ballroom Dance • Nov 6
- Bellydance • Sept 10

### Languages

- Chinese • Sept 16
- Japanese • Sept 16
- Russian • Oct 29
- Italian • Oct 15
- French • Oct 21
- German • Oct 21
- Spanish I • Sept 16
- Spanish II • Sept 16
- English as a Second Language (ESL) • Sept 23
- Sign Language I • Sept 17
- Sign Language II • Oct 22

### Wines

- American Wines • Sept 17
- International Wines • Oct 15

### Jewelry & Flowers

- Jewelry Making • Oct 5
- Purchase an Engagement Ring • Sept 25
- Wedding Bouquets • Nov 20
- Flower Arranging • Oct 16
- Potpourri • Nov 13

### Photography

- Photography I • Sept 25
- Photography II • Oct 23

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- \* Work Your Way Around the World • Oct 28
- \* The Best Travel Discounts • Oct 29

### Art

- Drawing • Sept 19
- Figure Drawing • Sept 17
- Painting • Sept 16
- Watercolor • Sept 18
- Cake Decorating I • Sept 17
- Cake Decorating II • Oct 24
- Gingerbread Houses • Dec 2

### Sewing & Quilting

- Sewing I • Sept 19
- Sewing II • Oct 31
- Quilting I • Sept 12
- \* Four Patch Quilts • Sept 30
- \* Double Irish Chain Quilting • Sept 12
- \* Cathedral Windows Quilting • Sept 13

### Writing with Style

- Greeting Cards • Sept 17
- Calligraphy I • Sept 12
- Calligraphy II • Nov 7

### Personal Management

- Home Organization • Sept 16
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