

# Kleinecke enters twelfth season on a roll

BY SARA DUESING  
THE BATTALION

Motivating, approachable, encouraging — impressive words of praise used by Lady Aggie Tennis players when asked to describe their head coach, Bobby Kleinecke.



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Junior Monica Rebolledo serves one up while practicing at the Omar Smith Tennis Facility.

It is these traits that the Texas A&M players have grown accustomed to from their coach, and the primary reason for the team's 20-6 season last year, and Kleinecke's being named Southwest Conference Coach of the Year.

But Kleinecke is quick to give the same kind of praise to his players.

"It was a great honor," Kleinecke said. "But the players really earn it for the coach."

Heading into his twelfth year as head coach of the women's team, Kleinecke is excited about the new season, describing the team as "a great, fun group to work with."

Kleinecke, who has compiled a career record of 138-121 at A&M, said he has been taught and inspired by great coaches throughout his career. They helped give him the desire and training to be a coach.

"I have wanted to be a coach since I was a sophomore in high school," Kleinecke said. "I had a good coach there (Vince Stiglich) and at West Texas State."

It was at West Texas State where Kleinecke had a stellar collegiate career under the watchful eye of former A&M Men's Tennis Coach David Kent. Kleinecke won five Missouri Valley Conference titles during that time, and his collegiate experience vaulted him into a career in coaching.

It is that experience and know-how that the Lady Aggie coach instills in his players and the reason for his team's success.

"He knows what it is like for us," senior Julie Beahm said. "He can relate to our situation."

Junior Vanessa Rooks said Kleinecke serves as a calming influence.

"He helps us to relax when we get tense on the court," Rooks said.

Kleinecke said he finds it most rewarding to witness a player grow over time on the court.



Pat James, THE BATTALION

1996 SWC Coach of the Year Bobby Kleinecke passes out equipment to his players.

"[It's important to] stress improvement — it's not about winning or losing."

When new players enter the program, Kleinecke said he emphasizes improving talent that is already present.

"It's good to add a little bit [to their game], but

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## New conference, same lofty goals for women's tennis

BY SARA DUESING  
THE BATTALION

When the last match was completed and the results were calculated, the 1995-96 Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team found itself ranked 22nd in the country, two places shy of its original goal of finishing in the top 20.

This season, the Lady Aggies have once again set the same standards for themselves despite joining the new and more competitive Big 12 Conference.

"We've played most of these teams," junior Vanessa Rooks said. "It (the new competition) is not going to be a surprise." Head Coach Bobby Kleinecke said the team is prepared for the new competition and has high expectations.

"We are not as experienced, but we do have the potential to surpass (the ranking) last year,"

Kleinecke said. "Our main goal is to win the conference. That's one we set every time."

The 1996-97 team is young with three freshmen joining the returnees from last season. Senior Julie Beahm and Rooks, who together captured the SWC No. 3 doubles crown last spring, will be returning.

Senior captain Nancy Dingwall said the new faces and youth are not seen as a disadvantage by the team members.

"Since we don't have the experience, we are going to go on pure excitement," Dingwall said. "With a young team, we are going to go out, work hard and have fun." Kleinecke said the coaches are emphasizing camaraderie this season.

"We don't get six star players," Kleinecke said. "We have to strive to be a good team, which includes working together in order to compete well."

Dingwall said the Lady Aggies also plan to concentrate on maintaining an upbeat attitude.

"Individually, we have to keep a positive attitude so that our

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Dingwall

# New men's tennis coach Cass not in rebuilding mood

BY JAMIE BURCH  
THE BATTALION

Tim Cass leaves New Mexico for the greener pastures of Texas A&M.

Texas A&M Men's Tennis Head Coach Tim Cass faces perhaps the toughest task of any coach at A&M this season — replacing a legend.

The former University of New Mexico head coach was hired this summer to replace David Kent, the ninth most winningest collegiate coach in the country, who retired after suffering a mild heart attack on April 1.

Cass has spent the last seven years coaching the Lobos. During his tenure he revitalized a program that had not won a championship in 23 years.

Cass posted a 110-78 record during his stay, and in the last five years he was named Western Athletic Conference Coach of the Year, captured five straight WAC titles and traveled to the NCAA Tournament.

Cass said that because he

built such a strong program in only seven years, it was difficult for him to leave.

"I really hoped that I would come down here and not like it," Cass said.

Cass was not only successful in turning the Lobos into a winning program, but also built a strong fan base and successfully lobbied for a new tennis facility.

However, Cass likes A&M and is now searching for a permanent home in the area.

"I liked everything that I visited, from Cain Hall to the cafeteria food to the professionalism with which they do things, both academically and athletically," Cass said. "I really liked everything."

Unlike New Mexico, A&M does not have a program that Cass must rebuild. Instead, Cass said he has the job of building on the foundation that Kent laid in his 18 years as head of the program.

"It will be a great challenge,"

Cass said. "My dream is to make a team that realistically will be fighting for a national championship."

Cass said he believes his goal is realistic and sees the Aggies attaining the national championship within the next three to five years.

"We're going to recruit the best student athletes that we possibly can," Cass said. "There's no other reason I took the job than to get us into position to compete with the elite groups."

Senior Robbie Krause said Cass has made a good first impression on the team.

"He's very excited to be coming here," Krause said. "He is hard work all the way. That's his style."

Junior Carlos Tori said Cass will definitely make a strong impact on the team considering his extensive knowledge of collegiate tennis.

"He's excited about coming here, about the team and working hard," Tori said. "You can tell he

knows a lot about college tennis."

Krause said Cass' goals and driving excitement has led the players to strive even harder in the off-season and the players are focused and committed to doing what it takes to win.

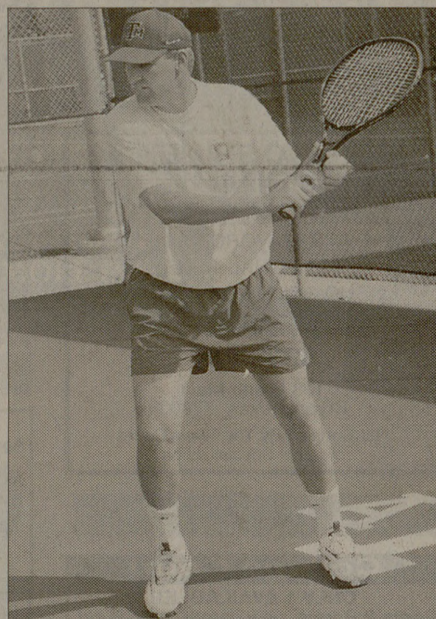
"Everyone is practicing on a consistent basis," Krause said. "No one is complaining or making excuses. They're just getting the job done."

Besides Cass' enthusiasm, the players' excitement stems from the fact that the 32-year-old Cass is one of the youngest Division I head coaches.

"He'll definitely be a player's coach," junior Eric Elek said. "He played not too long ago and knows what we enjoy as players."

Tori said his age is his biggest asset.

"There will be a closer relationship between player and coach," Tori said. "You can talk to him more as a friend."



Pat James, THE BATTALION

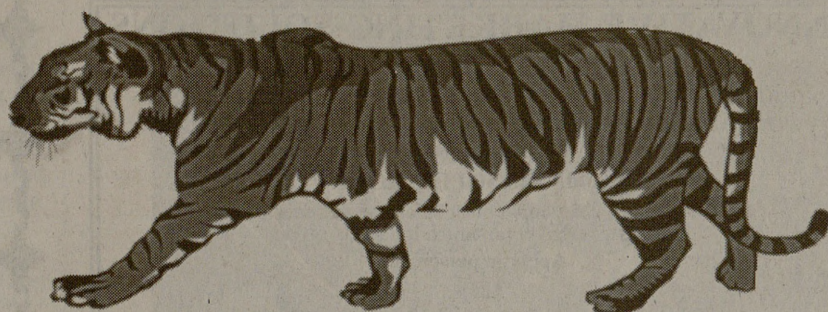
Men's tennis coach Tim Cass works out on the courts on Wednesday.

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