

# Aggie Homecoming

The Lady Aggie Volleyball team opens its home season by hosting the Aggie Invitational

By ROSS HECOX  
THE BATTALION

Click your heels twice and say, "There's no place like home."

After two consecutive weekends on the road, the Texas A&M Volleyball Team is glad to be returning home to host the Post Oak Mall/Lady Aggie Invitational, which will be held at G. Rollie White Coliseum today and Saturday.

"We're ready to be home," A&M Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said. "Travel can really take its toll, and the team is ready to have a home-crowd advantage."

The Lady Aggies will play four teams in the tournament — the University of Alabama (2-5), Illinois State University (4-3), Rice University (2-5) and Sam Houston State University (4-5). Corbelli said the team expects to see strong competition from Illinois State and old Southwest Conference foe Rice, who will carry the rivalry into the tournament.

"Rice always has an attitude about them coming here," Corbelli said. "They know that if they play hard they can beat us, and that would make a huge difference for their program. They have a young and talented team. We're expecting them to be very prepared for us."

"As for Illinois State, I see the results they have had this year, and they're going to be very tough to contend with. They have size and speed and experience. The other two teams have struggled a little, but you never know what can happen."

A&M, which is ranked 21st in the USA Today/AVCA poll with a 4-2 record, has slipped in the polls each week after going 2-1 in both of its tournaments. But the Lady Aggies are not disappointed.

"The first tournament was a good learning experience," sophomore outside hitter Stacy Sykora said. "In the second, we played good volleyball. We're disappointed in losing, but not in how we played."

Corbelli said the losses have only made the team work harder.

"We had two disappointing losses, but we look at them as (indicating) where our weaknesses are," Corbelli said.



File Photo

Junior outside hitter Kristie Smedsrud goes up for the kill in a game last season.

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# A&M soccer returns home after four-game road trip to open Big 12 Conference play

By NICKI SMITH  
THE BATTALION

With four wins under their belt, and every one of them taking place on enemy ground, the members of the Texas A&M Soccer Team are looking forward to some good homecooking and a home-field advantage for the next four games.

After beating the University of Tulsa 5-2 on Wednesday in Oklahoma, the Lady Aggies will face the University of Kansas today at 5:30 p.m. and the University of Missouri Sunday at 1 p.m. at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

Despite the fact that neither opponent is ranked, the Aggies continue to approach each game as if it was the conference championship contest.

"The Kansas game will be our Big 12 Conference opener, so it will be an important game for us," A&M Head Coach G. Guerrieri said. "Since only six teams from the Big 12 proceed to the national championship, they will be playing hard to stay in the top six. If we don't play our best, they do have the ability to beat us."

While the Aggies may worry about starting out on the right foot in the Big 12, they do have a home-field advantage to fall back on in the next four matches. A&M owns an impressive 24-1 all-time home record.

"Worrying about a record is not as important as playing on our own field," junior midfielder Diana Rowe said. "Especially since I am from here (College Station), the home-crowd and family support really helps me out during game time. It's motivating and helps us work together for our supporters."

Even though the team's toughest home games of the year against 1995 Final Four participant Southern Methodist University and the University of Florida will not take place for another week, Guerrieri said defeating Kansas and Missouri will not be easy.

"The Kansas team is very tall and physically strong, and Missouri has one of the best recruiting coaches, even though they are a first-year team," Guerrieri said. "Both teams will have a strong

defense, so we will have to come out strong on our attack. No Big 12 game can be taken lightly."

With that in mind, the Aggies look forward to proving that their No. 1 conference ranking in the Big 12 preseason poll was not a mistake.

"We are very excited, but at the same time we don't want to let anyone down," freshman goalkeeper Melanie Wilson said. "Although we don't know much about either of these teams we will face this weekend, they should be pretty even as far as level of play is concerned."



File Photo

Junior midfielder Sonia Ibanez gets by SFA's Courtney Wiederkehr in a game last season.

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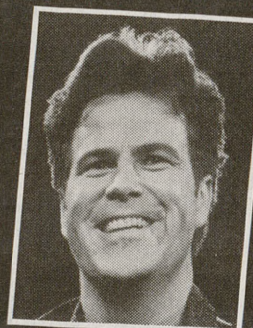
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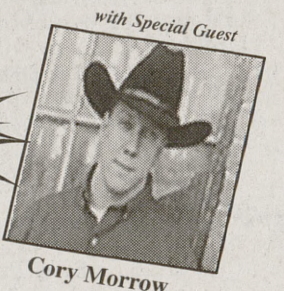
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