

Lady Ags
Looking to
diversify

Despite sweeping through the Post Oak Mall/Lady Aggie Invitational last weekend, the Texas A&M Volleyball team is still trying to fine tune a game. A&M Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said the team is working to diversify its attack by using the middle blockers more. "We're trying to [set] the ball to the middle more," Corbelli said. "We did it a little (in the tournament) at times, but it's too pre-arranged (because) it's going to outside (hitters) all the time."

Taking the Honor
The Lady Aggies still managed to rake in the awards over the weekend. Junior outside hitter Kristie Smedsrud was named Big 12 Player of the Week after hitting .374 in the four matches and tallying 63 kills, a 4.85 average per contest. Smedsrud was also named to the All-Tournament team, her third consecutive honor in as many weeks. She was named to the University Park Holiday Inn Classic on Sept. 1 and the Inttower Invitational team on Sept. 7.

Junior setter Farah Mensik (171 assists, 12 serving aces) and sophomore outside hitter Stacy Sykora (60 kills, .425 average) were also named to the All-Tournament team.

Mix and Match
Corbelli also said she has been hesitant to make substitutions so far this season because of a fear of disrupting court chemistry.

"We do have a lot of talent on the bench," she said. "The adjustment of the other five or six (to a substitution) on the court is important to me. If they can't adjust to a new body on the court it distracts them, and that has happened in the past. It makes me hesitate sometimes."

Still up for Grabs
Despite junior outside hitter Jennifer Wells' solid performance last weekend, Corbelli still does not have a definite starter for the right outside hitter position.

"We're still looking for some right-side strength," Corbelli said. "I think [Wells] has got the experience. (Summer) Strickland is really a left-side hitter, but she's trainable for the right side. Summer is doing a great job, and (junior) Brooke Polak has the size. I think we need to work three players for that spot, and [they] will still be the top three."

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Smedsrud earns crunch-time reputation

By JAMIE BURCH
THE BATTALION



Evan Zimmerman, THE BATTALION
Junior Kristie Smedsrud was named Big 12 Player of the Week.

Mr. Clutch. Texas Rangers first baseman Will Clark is known as the team's go-to guy. All-pro wide receiver Jerry Rice assumes the same role for the San Francisco 49ers.

For the Texas A&M Volleyball Team, that go-to player is junior outside hitter Kristie Smedsrud.

Lady Aggie outside hitter Stacy Sykora said Smedsrud will always receive the ball in a pressure situation for A&M.

"When the score is tied 14-14, you know who the ball is going to go to," Sykora said. "You want to get the ball into Kristie's hands."

Mrs. Clutch herself, Smedsrud, has been the Lady Aggies' go-to player ever since she became an integral part of A&M's offense during her freshman year.

She finished the 1994 season as the most highly decorated freshman in A&M volleyball history. After starting 28 of 33 matches, Smedsrud became the first freshman in Southwest Conference and A&M history to be named to the All-SWC first team by the league coaches.

Smedsrud also received A&M's Best Offensive Player of the Year award, finishing the season with 358 kills, an A&M record for a freshman.

Ranked sixth in the SWC with a 3.21 kill average, Smedsrud capped off her award-winning debut season with SWC Freshman of the Year honors.

Lady Aggie Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said Smedsrud's play on the court is a result of her off-season regimen.

"She worked hard at her improvement," Corbelli said. "It's not just a result of her talent, but a result of hard work."

Smedsrud continued her sophomore campaign in 1995 in a similar fashion. As one of two A&M players to start all 30 matches, Smedsrud posted a team-leading 3.80 kill average, which ranked fourth in the SWC.

After Smedsrud's consecutive record-setting seasons, Corbelli said the Lady Aggie netter continued her off-season trend of working hard on all the aspects of her game.

Her effort has spelled out to even more success through 10 matches this season for Smedsrud. She was named to the All-Tournament team in all three of the Lady Aggie's tournaments this season.

During the Post Oak Mall/Lady Aggie Invitational last weekend, Smedsrud racked up 63 kills over A&M's four victories, and was also awarded Big 12 Player of the Week honors Monday.

Corbelli said Smedsrud's explosive start is no surprise.

"I saw it coming," Corbelli said. "This summer was very devoted to her physical conditioning and mental aspect of the game. She spent a lot of time in the office visiting with coaches and reading books."

Smedsrud's offensive success transcends the court into the



Evan Zimmerman, THE BATTALION
Outside hitter Kristie Smedsrud goes for the dig against Illinois State University in tournament play last weekend at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

classroom. The history major was awarded with the GTE Academic Achievement Award during the last school year. Smedsrud said her primary concern is academics, as her lofty 3.4 grade point average indicates.

"I take academics seriously," Smedsrud said. "The coaches and the rest of the athletic staff stress academics first, volleyball second. It's a challenge balancing academics and athletics, but I think it's very important because someday volleyball will end."

While Smedsrud will earn her teaching certification, she said she wants to continue playing vol-

leyball after college.

"That's who I am," Smedsrud said. "I'm a volleyball player. I can't imagine giving it up. I love it too much."

Smedsrud said she would either play in Europe or on the sand circuit.

"There's a couple of clubs in Europe that [the coaches] have contacts with," Smedsrud said. "I'd love to spend a couple of years over there. I don't know if sand is a possibility, but I definitely do want to continue."

As they shoot for yet another NCAA birth, the Lady Aggies will thrive on Smedsrud down the stretch and in the clutch.

A Family Tradition

A&M junior Jamie Hullett is following in the footsteps of her brother on the golf course.

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

You can count Texas A&M golfer Jamie Hullett among those who subscribe to the "anything you can do, I can do better" philosophy. After growing up watching her brother achieve success on the golf course, Jamie decided she could do it too.

The junior from Mesquite will be a mainstay for the A&M Women's Golf Team this season, as it looks to field its best squad ever.

Watching her brother on the links as a child, Hullett began picking up the game and its intricacies at the age of seven.

"Anything your older brother does, you have to do better," Hullett said.

She continued playing and improving through her teen-age years and later was awarded four straight high school letters, garnering All-State recognition as a senior. Despite the strength of her physical game, her mental game had some flaws.

"I've been working on that part of my game a lot since I got to [A&M],"

Hullett said. "Coming out of high school, I didn't know much about the psychological part of the game."

Since golf is recognized as a mental game as well as a physical game, Hullett said she has a unique way of mentally playing the course.

"I try to stay focused and take in all the factors before I strike the ball," Hullett said. "When I'm through with that shot, I just relax and look at the animals or whatever. If you stay focused for too long, it's real draining. And since you're out on the course for four or five hours, I try to have fun. I stay focused long enough to hit the golf ball."

Hullett's focus has carried her a long way since her arrival at A&M. She exploded onto the scene as a freshman in 1994 by placing first at the Southwest Conference Tournament and posting a scoring average of 78.52, the fifth best all-time mark by an Aggie freshman.

She capped her season by recording her best 54-hole score of the year at the NCAA West Region Championships, tying her for the 25th best score in the nation. But her 225 total was not enough, as she missed a sudden death playoff for an individual berth to the NCAA finals by a mere stroke.

Last year, Hullett was just as impressive playing in all 11 of the team's tournaments. She placed third in the final SWC Tournament and was selected to the All-SWC team. Last August, Hullett gained what she calls her

most memorable achievement — winning the prestigious Broadmoor Ladies' Invitational.

"I just felt real comfortable out there," Hullett said. "I didn't play exceptionally well, but I stayed real calm and just had fun. I think that was the best mental game I've ever played."

Though she stands only 5-foot-2-inches tall, Hullett possesses plenty of power and she rates her tee shot at the top of her list of positive attributes.

"I think my greatest strength is my driver, and just keeping the ball in play," Hullett said. "I get pretty decent (driving) length for a girl my size. I try to keep my driver in the fairway and that makes a big difference. If you can keep the ball in play, you have a good chance of posting a good score."

With only one senior on this year's squad, A&M Women's Head Coach Jeanne Southerland has high expectations for the Lady Aggies.

"We have a unique situation this year in that all six team members can play, and play well every tournament," Southerland said. "I hope we'll be able to spread the success around."

Hullett sees a real synergy among her teammates this year.

"I think we have a great team this year," Hullett said. "Everybody gets along and we have a lot of fun together, which is important because we spend a lot of time together practicing."

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Rachel Redington, THE BATTALION
Junior Jamie Hullett practices her driving at the A&M Golf Course Monday afternoon.

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