

Day of redemption...

Aggie soccer takes on rival SMU

By NICKI SMITH
THE BATTALION

Riding the momentum of a 6-0 overall record and a 2-0 Big 12 conference mark, the sixth-ranked Texas A&M Soccer Team is ready to play longtime rival Southern Methodist University at the Aggie Soccer Complex today at 5:30 p.m.

Although today's game is not a conference game, the Aggies have a lot to contend with at SMU. The 20th-ranked Mustangs swept A&M in three matches last season, and stand ready to test the defeated Aggies. A&M Head Coach G. Guerrieri said the team looks forward to playing SMU in Aggie territory.

"After they knocked us out of the NCAA second round championships last year, our paycheck has become pretty important," Guerrieri said. "However, whether we win or lose is not important because this game can't make us or break us in the Big 12 Conference."

Despite SMU's semifinal finish in the national championship rounds, the Aggies have surpassed the Lady Mustangs in terms of performance this year. "We are ranked above them,

but rankings don't really matter with SMU on game day," Guerrieri said. "We tied them in 1993 and beat them here in 1994. Last year, they beat us, so now it is our turn to play them here with our crowd and a better field."

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G. Guerrieri
Head Coach

The Lady Mustangs lost Danielle Fotopoulos, the nation's leading scorer, when she transferred to the University of Florida, in addition to other key players. SMU enters today's match with a shaky 1-2-1 record.

Senior forward Kristen Koop said the team must put SMU away early. "The level of play will be high because of our rivalry," Koop said. "However, we can't

give them the satisfaction of looking at this game differently from all of the others. We just have to go out there and take it to them and use our experience to our advantage."

Entering the contest, the Aggies are ranked no lower than eighth in any of the national polls, and have the highest individual scorer in the nation — junior forward Bryn Blalack, with 13 goals.

Freshman goalkeeper Melanie Wilson said even though SMU is a tough team, A&M has the defen-



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Junior midfielder, Diana Rowe leaps over a Missouri defender Sunday afternoon.

sive ability to stop anything from going into the goal.

"I don't expect a lot (of action) back at the goal because our defenders are so good," Wilson said. "They do really well with keeping the ball on the other side of the field, which should really help us during the SMU game."

Guerrieri said the philosophy

of not overanalyzing a team, particularly their strengths, only helps the Aggies mentally prepare for the game.

"We know SMU pretty well, but we haven't played them yet this year," Guerrieri said. "A little information could be dangerous, so we just go out and play like it is any other game."

AGGIES

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should be able to hold on to the ball, not throw interceptions and stay disciplined and mature enough to keep the ball."

Whatever the reasons for A&M's recent swandive, sophomore cornerback Shun Horn, who was inserted into the A&M starting lineup last week, said USL's victory was a fluke and that the Aggies have worked hard to improve.

"Don't ever expect that to happen again," Horn said. "I can promise you we will be ready to play this week."

Working in the face of rising

"I can promise you we will be ready to play this week."

Shun Horn

Sophomore cornerback

cepticism surrounding the team and its head coach, Horn said the Aggies must stay tightly knit.

"I've never focused on outside stuff," Horn said. "[The team] is ment because the big nucleus and as long as we stay together, we'll be alright."

Slocum said the outside judgment on him and the team could play a beneficial to the players.

"Sometimes this can have a very positive effect on a football team," Slocum said. "They lose all the outside people and they have rally around each other because in some cases they're not all the popular outside. So they end up, particularly a young team, going through the trials of being to be good and that brings them closer together."

SOFTBALL

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Perez said while the Lady Aggies expect to finish well this weekend, she hopes the media will not base next season's outlook based on this one tournament.

"If we don't do well in the tournament, I hope people will take into consideration the fact that we have a new coach and that it's so early," Perez said. "Instead of making that the rest of our season."

A&M Head Softball Coach Jo Evans said she is not concerned with the outcome this weekend.

"I'm not particularly concerned with the outcome," Evans said. "This tournament will be good because it will give me a chance to see my players in a game situation, how they deal with pressure and who can step up. You can't always see that in practice."

JOHNSON

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"He always told me I gave the defense a good look," Johnson said.

The senior also impressed Head Coach R.C. Slocum. "I remember telling one of the coaches: 'I know the kid can run fast because we timed him and he catches the ball. What else does he have to do to play?'" Slocum said. "To me, it looks like this kid has a chance to be a player."

Johnson remained on the scout team as late as last week. But the receiver finally got his chance to play varsity ball last Saturday against USL when A&M receiver Aaron Oliver was suspended from the team and starter Albert Connell was benched for not attending class.

So Johnson, a former Who's Who Among American College Students who had come to A&M strictly for academics, found himself on the playing field for the Texas A&M Football Team with the game on the line in the fourth quarter.

"I couldn't believe it," Johnson said. "When I went in with just a few seconds to go, I almost didn't want [Stewart] to pass it to me."

And as quick as Aggie fans had noticed the unknown Johnson on the field, he was making a key first-down catch to keep the team's hopes alive of pulling out a victory.

Not bad for a guy who never played high school football.

Smoltz, Braves extend Astros' winless streak

ATLANTA (AP) — John Smoltz became the majors' first 22-game winner, and Ryan Klesko hit a three-run double as Atlanta beat Houston 5-4 Tuesday night.

It was the third straight victory for the Braves after losing six in a row. Atlanta lowered its magic number to seven for clinching its fifth straight post-season berth.

The Astros, who fell to 0-8 on the road this month, lost their fourth in a row and seventh in nine games. They began the night 2 1/2 games behind first-place St. Louis in the NL Central.

Smoltz (22-8) allowed eight hits and three runs in eight innings. He struck out seven, lifting his NL-leading strikeout total to 262.



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