

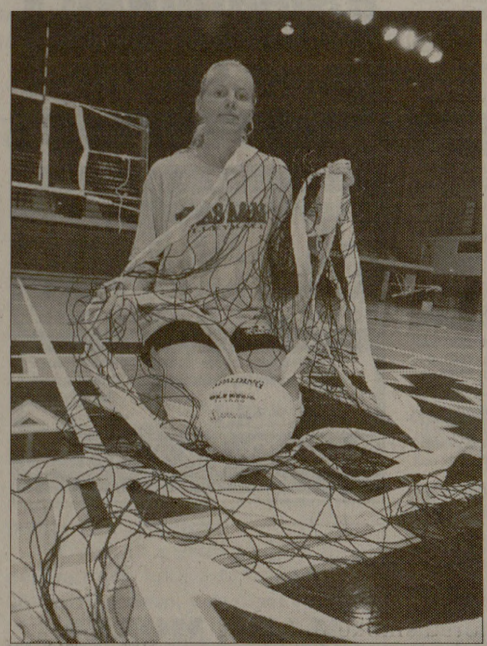
VanderWoude kept on defensive

► The junior middle blocker won A&M Defensive Player of the Year honors last season.

By JAMIE BURCH
THE BATTALION

When eavesdropping on a conversation at an average sports bar, one might hear several fat guys weighing the merits of perennial NBA shot blockers Wilt "The Stilt" Chamberlain and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar over a beer and a stogie.

In a similar setting in Aggieland, the topic of conversation might center around junior middle blocker Cindy VanderWoude, the Texas A&M Volleyball Team's blocking specialist.



Junior middle blocker **Cindy VanderWoude** ranks seventh on the all-time A&M career block list with 296.

VanderWoude began her career as a volleyball player and block specialist in high school after growing up watching her two older sisters play. VanderWoude, a native of Escondido, Calif., was a three-year high school letterman while leading her team in blocks and kills.

In 1993, VanderWoude played for the San Diego Club 17 Red team with current Aggie teammate Kristie Smedsrud. Both players helped lead the team to a regional championship and a fourth-place finish at the UC Davis Festival.

VanderWoude said she enjoyed playing with and against Smedsrud while in high school.

"It was fun," VanderWoude said. "We (myself and Smedsrud) competed a couple of times in high school and then we were together on the club team. It was neat coming (into A&M) already knowing somebody. It helped a lot with the transition into college."

VanderWoude brought her stuffing abilities to A&M the following year. As a freshman, VanderWoude played in all 33 matches, led the team in blocking, and ranked first in the Southwest Conference with a 1.50 block average in SWC matches.

VanderWoude also ranked third on the team and tenth in the SWC with a .242 hitting percentage. Halfway through her freshman season, VanderWoude earned a starting role and went on to start 17 matches. In just her second start of her career, VanderWoude posted 17 kills, including 10 in the first game, versus then No. 21 Duke.

Senior middle blocker Page White said that VanderWoude made vast improvements throughout her freshman year.

"She came in and was already a strong player," White said. "She polished up what she already knew. She improved a lot on her quickness in the middle and on her attack. Her blocking and digging are big aspects of her game. She's done really well."

VanderWoude's role increased last season. She started 26 of 30 matches her sophomore year, playing in 107 of 109 games and was named to the All-SWC second team and All-SWC tournament team.

Leading the team for the second consecutive year and finishing third in the SWC with 1.20 blocks per game, VanderWoude was voted A&M Defensive Player of the Year. She broke into the top 10 of the A&M career records for total blocks, block solos and block assists.

After her award-winning season, VanderWoude took a step backward with a left knee injury. During the offseason, she had surgery to repair the patella tendon of the left knee. Instead of spending time honing her skills on the court, VanderWoude had to devote hours of rehabilitation to strengthening the damaged knee.

VanderWoude said that her knee is not 100 percent.

"It's doing okay," VanderWoude said. "I'm not as strong as I need to be. But it's a different kind of pain. The knee aches rather than stings, so that's good."

Off to a slower start this season, VanderWoude said she worries about the knee. Despite the hindrance, VanderWoude has started every match this season and leads the team in blocking once again with a 1.25 average. Ranked fourth in the Big 12 in blocking, VanderWoude has led or tied for team-high honors in blocks in 7 of 13 matches, and has led the team in digs in three matches.

VanderWoude currently ranks seventh in A&M career records for total blocks (296) and block assists (241) and is eighth in block solos (55).

A&M Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said she feels that VanderWoude's knee has hampered her effectiveness.

"I think it has started her off a little slower," Corbelli said. "She's a little weaker than before, which hinders her offense. I think it's affected her negatively, but she hasn't looked at it that way. She's trying to overlook the pain and weakness. But with that type of injury, you have to wonder 'can I still play at this level?'"

Following the season, VanderWoude will marry her fiancé Rick Lothspeich. Once the fall semester ends, she will have nine days before her wedding on December 28th in California.

VanderWoude said that teammates Smedsrud and Jennifer Wells plan to at-



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Junior middle blocker **Cindy VanderWoude** blocks a spike in a game against Alabama Sept. 14.

tend, along with Corbelli.

For now, VanderWoude said that Corbelli has told her she is not to think about her wedding.

"Coach (Corbelli) said I'm not allowed to think about it," VanderWoude said. "She just wants me to concentrate on volleyball."

When her volleyball and college days are behind her, VanderWoude said she plans to teach special education at the junior high or senior high school level.

"I want to teach adaptive P.E.," VanderWoude said. "I'd like to work with the handicapped. I did some of that with my volleyball team in high school, and that's what got me interested in it."

Smedsrud and White headline week



Ross Hecox
Volleyball Notebook

When the Texas A&M Volleyball Team defeated the University of Oklahoma last Friday, it extended its winning streak to seven matches. In the 100-1 record over the Sooners. When the Lady Aggies dropped their first game against the Sooners, it was only the third time this season they've lost the opening game of a match.

A&M improved its record to 12-2, and is 2-0 in the conference with victories over OU and the University of Texas.

Going for the kill

Junior outside hitter Kristie Smedsrud reached the 1,000 career kill milestone with 23 kills versus Oklahoma. She is only the seventh Lady Aggie to reach the mark and trails all-time kills leader Cheri Steensma by 477.

"It's a really neat accomplishment for me," Smedsrud said. "I didn't realize I was getting close (to 1,000 kills) until the last match."

Force in the Middle

Senior middle blocker Page White was named Big 12 Volleyball Player of the Week for her performance against Texas and Oklahoma. She recorded 13 kills, a .400 hitting percentage, and made four solo blocks against the Longhorns, and 17 kills for a .448 efficiency on Sunday. Over the past three matches, White hit .464 to bring her hitting percentage up to .528 for the season.

Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said White has been more of a

After long playoff drought, Rangers thinking big

After enduring 25 long, grueling and disappointing summers, the resilient Texas Rangers and their playoff-hungry fans have finally made it.

The American League Western Division-champion Rangers, post-season newcomers, open their best-of-five Divisional Playoff Series tonight at Yankee Stadium against professional sports' most successful franchise, the Eastern Division-champion New York Yankees.



Jeremy Furtick
Senior Journalism major

The Rangers, an underrated, overachieving squad, will be making the franchise's first post-season appearance in its 25-year history. The Yankees, winners of 22 World Series championships, will be making their 39th trip to the post-season.

Sounds like a practice round for the Bronx Bombers, doesn't it?

Don't be so sure.

Rough Road

Yankee pitching staff ace David Cone (7-2, 2.86 ERA), after missing four months of the regular season with an aneurysm in his pitching shoulder, will start Game 1 against John Burkett (5-2, 4.06 ERA), the Rangers' late-season acquisition from the Florida Marlins.

This match up does not look good for the Rangers. In addition to their 2-4 record at Yankee Stadium this year, Cone owns a 4-2 lifetime record against the Rangers with a 1.09 ERA.

Game 1 goes to the Yankees, but then things get interesting. Game 2 on Wednesday will be more to the Rangers' liking, featuring probable American League Cy Young Award-winner Andy Pettitte (21-8, 3.87 ERA) and Rangers' right-hander Ken Hill (16-10, 3.83 ERA). The Rangers have dominated left-handed starters this season, going 25-14 while pushing their opponents' ERA to 6.56.

The left-handed Pettitte is 2-1 in three starts against the Rangers this season, but owns a 7.56 ERA. Ken Hill went 2-2 against the Yankees this season, and earned one of their two victories in New York.

The Rangers come away with a victory in Game 2 and a split at Yankee Stadium.

Home, sweet home

The series shifts to The Ballpark in Arlington on Friday, where the Rangers were one of two American League teams to post 50-win home records, including a 5-1 mark against the Yankees this season. The Rangers will start 25-year-old lefty Darren Oliver (14-6, 4.66 ERA) against Jimmy Key (12-11, 4.68 ERA), another left-handed starter who felt the wrath of the Ranger bats in 1996.

Key went 0-2 with a 8.71 ERA in his two starts against the Rangers this season, while Oliver won his only start against New York, giving up two earned runs in eight innings on July 31 at The Ballpark.

The Rangers win Game 3 to set up the series clincher in Arlington on Saturday.

After having his two top lefties roughed up in Games 2 and 3, and also facing elimination, Yankee manager Joe Torre will probably opt to start David Cone on just three

Sportswriter

days rest, rather than let the Rangers take a hack at Dwight Gooden or Kenny Rogers, both of whom have been shelled at The Ballpark this season.

The Rangers will start either Bobby Witt or Roger Pavlik, who, unlike Gooden and Rogers, shut down their playoff foes in the regular season, going 2-0 with a 2.40 ERA and 2-1 with a 3.66 ERA respectively.

The Rangers defeat the Yankees in four games.

Surprising? It shouldn't be. The Rangers are the dominant team.

With the exception of their bullpen, the Rangers are probably in a better position by position.

Behind the Plate

Pudge Rodriguez is the best catcher in Major League Baseball. His defensive domination and potent bat will

Baseball releases his hold on the Yankee faithful, Tino will have to deal with that infamous New York scorn.

Wade Boggs has been generally accepted as the top American League third baseman for the last decade, but Dean Palmer has put up better numbers than Boggs in almost every offensive category this season. Palmer collected 163 hits along with 38 home runs, 107 RBI and 98 runs scored compared to Boggs' 156 hits, 2 home runs, 41 RBI and 80 runs scored.

Boggs has the better batting average, but doesn't he always?

Up the Middle

The Yankees boast the duo of Mariano Duncan at second base and shoe-in Rookie of the Year Derek Jeter at shortstop. Duncan and Jeter rank first and second on the team in batting (.340 and .314 respectively) and have become a steady double-play tandem.

The Rangers field two players that have spent 1996 resurrecting their careers. Second baseman Mark McLemore and shortstop Kevin Elster have both had banner seasons after spending most of the last three years in back-up roles.

McLemore hit .290 while leading the team in stolen bases (27) and committing only 12 errors, a team record at second base. Elster hit 24 home runs and drove in 99 runs, both career highs, while playing stellar defense.

This comparison is a toss-up, but gives a slight edge to the Rangers and their overachieving middle infield.

In the Outfield

The Rangers have the trio of left fielder Rusty Greer, centerfielder Darryl Hamilton and right fielder Juan Gonzalez. The Yankees will field Tim Lincecum, Bernie Williams and Paul O'Neill.

Gonzalez should be the American League's MVP this year. He is personally responsible for getting the Rangers through July alive (winning AL Player of the Month with 17 home runs and hitting over .400) and allowing them to make their playoff run.

Even with Gonzalez, Greer is the heart of the team. His teamwork and sacrifice set the standard his teammates have followed all season. Hamilton finished 1996 without making an error in centerfield, and also led American League leadoff hitters in first inning on-base percentage.

Paul O'Neill (.302, 19 HR, 91 RBI) is a clear understudy to Gonzalez (.314, 47 HR, 144 RBI) in right field and Greer (.332, 18 HR, 100 RBI) is a step ahead of Raines (.284, 9 HR, 33 RBI) in left. The centerfold match up goes to Williams, despite Hamilton's solid defense. Williams has put up career numbers this year, hitting .305 with 29 home runs and 102 RBI.

Designated Hitter

The Yankees will alternate Cecil Fielder (against lefties) and Darryl Strawberry (righties) at DH to combat Mickey Tettleton. This is a draw, with neither team having a dominant player at this position. Be aware though, any three of these sluggers has the potential of blowing a game wide open with one swing.

If the Rangers can get to the Yankee starters early to prevent comeback attempts against New York's overpowering bullpen, the Rangers will wake up Sunday morning in the American League Championship Series.



Texas catcher **Ivan Rodriguez** congratulates pitcher **Bobby Witt** after defeating Milwaukee 7-1, Sept. 8.

probably earn him his fifth consecutive Rawlings Gold Glove and second consecutive Silver Slugger award. Joe Girardi is good, but Pudge is in his own league.

The Corners

At first base, Tino Martinez is still trying to grow out of the shadow of former Yankee great Don Mattingly, while Will Clark has become the Rangers' intangible leader on and off the field. Martinez wins the statistical battle, but until Donnie

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Corbelli said despite Wells' strong
play, she will still play
the right side position
with Wells, Strickland, and junior
Brooke Polak.
"(Which person plays) depends
on the state of the team and
who the opponent is," Corbelli
said. "I don't know that there
will be a definite starter for
the rest of the season."

The Lady Aggies are hitting
.338 this season, averaging 16.60
kills per game and 2.74 blocks
per game as a team, as opposed
to opponents' .159 average,
4.46 kills and 2.22 blocks.
The team's remaining 18
matches are against Big 12 opponents.
The Lady Aggies will play six of their next eight
matches in G. Rollie White Coliseum,
then will be on the road for seven
matches out of their final 18.
A&M is 5-0 at home.

Protects face, eyes and
passes through valves into
chemical and biological agents.
Protects the head. Bubble-bar
vapor and droplets of
and provides a seal for
by restricting movement.
and accessories.
total covering of the body.
Demological Board, AP report

effort and team strategy.
"Early in the season she was a
little nervous about the new
teens (on the team) and the new
teens," Corbelli said. "We have
been trying to get the ball to her
more, and because of her attitude
she's made adjustments
that have worked in the team's
favor. She's worked really hard."

Junior outside hitter Jennifer
Wells, who has been battling
fishman Summer Strickland for
the right outside hitter starting
role, played the whole match
against Oklahoma. She hit for a
33.3 percentage with seven kills,
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