

SPORTS BRIEFS

Braves stay alive with big victory

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Back from the brink, the Atlanta Braves didn't about to go quietly. Spraying hits with a vengeance from the start, the defending World Series champions pulled the biggest rout in post-season history, overwhelming the St. Louis Cardinals 14-0 Monday night to close their deficit in the championship series to 3-2. The Braves silenced the 66,782 that came to see a pitcher with a five-run first inning, then kept attacking in a lightning display that set the St. Louis records for hits and most runs in a game.

Angers' Clark continues recovery

FORT WORTH (AP) — Texas Tech's first baseman Will Clark is recovering at home Monday after surgery to remove bone spurs from his left elbow. Clark underwent the procedure Monday at Harris Methodist Hospital in Fort Worth. He has since been released, a spokeswoman said. Clark should be ready in time for spring training, said doctors who said surgery went as expected.

Basketball teams begin practicing

After ringing in the college basketball season Monday night with the festive Midnight Mania event at G. Rollie White Coliseum, the Texas A&M Men's and Women's basketball teams get to business today.

A&M basketball to hold walk-on meeting

Texas A&M students wanting to try out for the Aggie men's basketball team must attend a mandatory meeting today at 4 p.m. in the Cain Hall room. For more information, contact the basketball office at 455-4531.

Diving head first into a new era

Questions answered about Big 12, season goals, personnel changes

BY KRISTINA BUFFIN
THE BATTALION

With the dawn of a new season and a new conference, the coaches and members of the Texas A&M Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving Teams talk about the changes and goals for a team that is expected to make a splash in the Big 12 Conference.

The Aggies will have an opportunity to test their prowess in their first meet at the Big 12 Invitational in St. Louis, Mo., this weekend.

How will the team compete with the powerhouses of the new Big 12 Conference?

"Texas has won the [Southwest Conference] 17 years in a row now, and Nebraska has won the Big Eight a number of times — plus Kansas. We should be able to challenge them. Last year, we did not win an individual event in swimming, but this year, I think we are determined and can win a lot." — Don Wagner, A&M Women's Swimming Coach.

What are some of the key losses for the team?

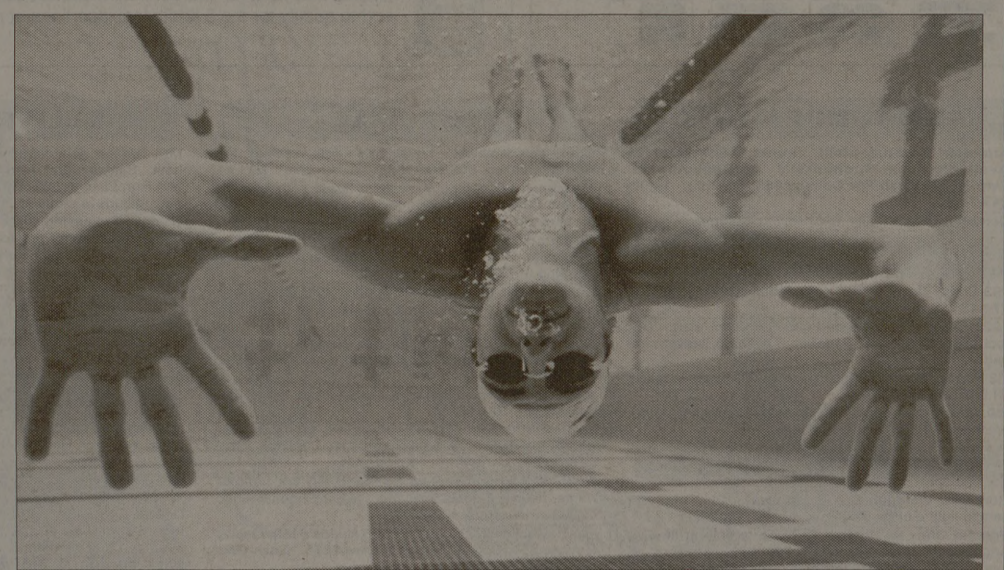
"We lost a kid, an All-American [junior Jarrod Flores] to grades and that was a rough foot to start off on late in the summer. Because it was an unanticipated loss, we need to increase recruiting." — Kevin Wright, A&M Diving Coach.

"In terms of numbers, we gained more than we lost. Scott DeWolf will be missed, but we have signed people who have an awful lot of proven talent and potential." — Mel Nash.

"We lost two good sprinters in Julie Bates and Denean Knapp, but the incoming class will more than offset those losses." — Don Wagner.

What are some key recruiting additions to the team?

"We recruited someone to fill in at Scott's [DeWolf] event — the 200-meter butterfly — in Devon Howard. He made



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Senior Robb Pantano has qualified for the NCAA Championships each of the last three years and has received honorable mention All-American honors in three events.

Senior Robb Pantano is taking a final plunge for the Aggies

BY KRISTINA BUFFIN
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Men's Swimming Team is a crazy bunch and senior Robb Pantano is their ringleader.

"We are very spirited," Pantano said. "There are many personalities, which is good because it never becomes stagnant. Everyone jokes around, but they know there is a time to be serious. It is kind of unique considering the size of the team."

Pantano, who was an All-American in three different events at Creighton Prep High School in Omaha, Neb., has had to adjust to the differences between his home state and Texas. He said the two are like night and day, but he has adjusted and now loves Texas.

"The people are unbelievable," Pantano said. "A lot of that is seen in the team. They are a great bunch of guys. It must be the Texas atmosphere, because everyone is friendly and personable."

Pantano's eligibility will end after this season, but he said he will leave with nothing but good feelings about his experience at A&M.

"It is kind of sad because I spent the last 16 years of my life swimming, and this is my last year competing at this level," Pantano said. "It is a good feeling, just because of the experience I have gained the last three years."

A&M Head Coach Mel Nash said Pantano has experienced nothing but success, and that has added up to a lot of success for the program.

"He epitomizes the person who is hungry and wants to be good — who didn't necessarily have the paper credentials," Nash said. "He has taken a different direction each year."

"First, he worked on his backstroke, and then his freestyle. It has helped him branch out in his swimming and made him more flexible in the relay."

Pantano said swimming is considered more challenging from a mental standpoint than a physical one. He said it is probably the most mentally demanding sport.

"It is like track where it is a very individualized sport," Pantano said. "In track, you can talk to your teammates in races, but with swimming it is you and the bottom of the pool."

Pantano said unless one experiences the sport, one cannot understand the demands and challenges swimmers must face.

"I am tempted to say it is one of the most difficult sports, because 90 percent of it is mental," he said. "You can be talented, but that does not mean you can make it."

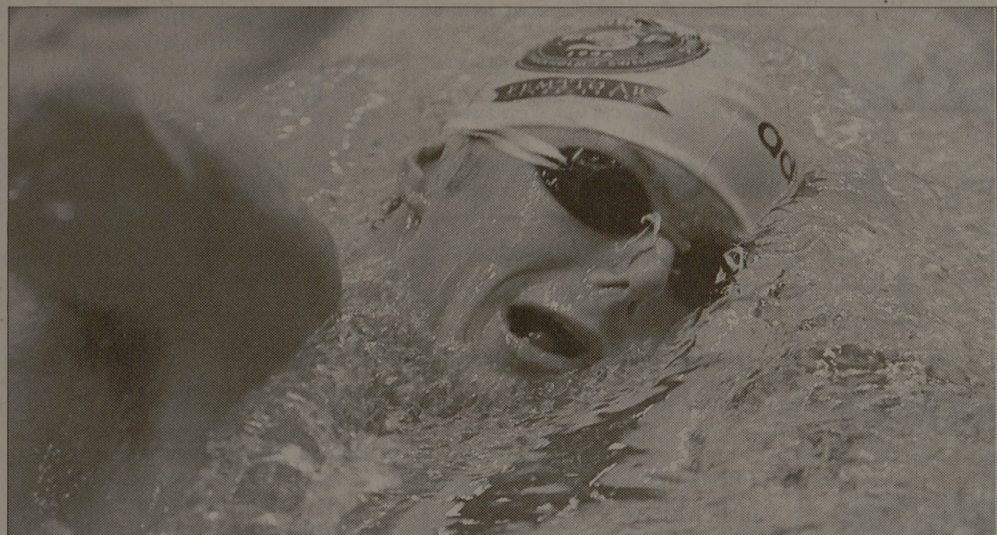
Pantano has definitely made it. He has qualified for the NCAA Championships in each of his three years at A&M, and last year he received honorable mention All-American honors in three events. Pantano was also a part of the A&M 200-meter medley relay team that finished eighth at the Championships — the highest finish of any men's relay team in A&M history.

"We did very well," Pantano said. "We did that well because of the team support throughout the year."

Pantano said he wants to build on last season's success both individually and through the team.

"I would like to be an automatic All-American in both individual events and in relays," Pantano said. "My primary goal is to finish swimming and look back and see a team ready to advance to the next level. I want the guys on the team to learn what it is like to be on the level of the NCAA's."

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Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Sophomore Niclas Egmar swims the freestyle at practice at the Student Rec. Center Natatorium Monday.

"The powerhouse will still be Texas, as it was with the Southwest Conference. It will definitely be a great conference meet. We will face Nebraska (who finished first in the NCAA Championships last year) in not just a dual meet, but a conference meet, and it will be good experience and good competition." — Senior Robb Pantano, backstroke/freestyle.

"[The Big 12] is a whole new animal, and much different from my last 16 years here. We still have Texas, and they'll probably win, but we'll make a run. In the SWC, Texas would finish first with SMU as second, then TCU. In the Big 12, we have Texas, then Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa State — who won the conference last year — and Missouri, who has a new coach. We could swim well and still finish fifth." — Mel Nash, A&M Men's Swimming Coach.

consols at the Olympic Trials and is a blue-chipper. He is the first guy to come in with credentials on paper." — Mel Nash.

"We got Danielle Guenan from Team Orlando. She is a real hard worker and in the top eight in the nation in her age group. On the tower, she is pretty tough." — Kevin Wright.

"We got two kids — Tracy Evans and Monica Stroman. Tracy is versatile from the 200 to the mile. They are a really solid one-two punch."

"Last year, we were not real strong in the 400-meter individual medley, but Monica should help. Both have the potential of qualifying for the NCAA's." — Don Wagner.

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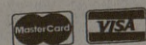
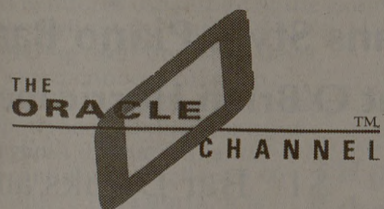


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