

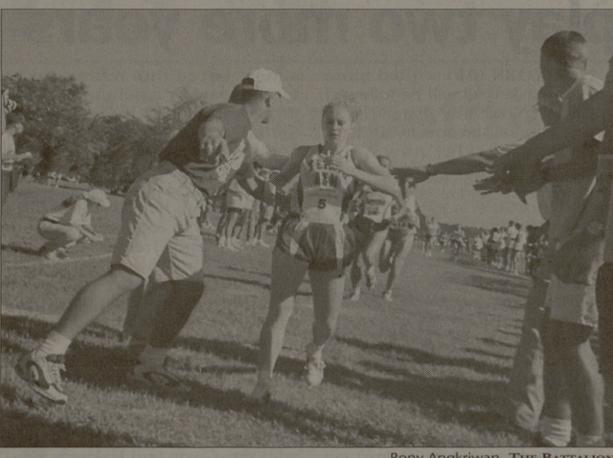
THE BATTALION
SPORTS

Cross Country tunes up for Big 12

By SARA DUESING
THE BATTALION

With one foot after the other, the Texas A&M Cross Country team races into Arlington this weekend for one final non-conference competition before meeting with the Big 12 in two weeks. After facing top-notch opponents the last two weekends, the team faces mild competition on Saturday at the University of Texas-Arlington Quadrangular. A&M will face the University of North Texas, Texas Christian University and the host team University of Texas-Arlington. A&M Head Coach Greg Hinze said he is not putting too much emphasis on this meet. "We've raced really hard the last two weeks," Hinze said. "I'm concerned so much with wins and losses, but just getting a good workout." Because the meet will consist of two- and four-mile races instead of the usual three- and five-mile runs, senior Jerry Snider said the format will be used to tune up for more important meets which will follow. "We don't usually race three weekends in a row," Snider said. "I can use this [meet] to make my legs sharp and to focus on beating TCU."

The men's team has yet to beat the Horned Frogs this season, which remains a standing goal. As for the women, their fortune lies with the North Texas Eagles. The Lady Aggies have come close to defeating UNT several times, but have failed to be victorious. "This will be a challenge," freshman Caroline Kohler said. "But we should do well because this last couple of weeks has been a preview of what's to come. This will be a break from the two big competitions (the North Texas Invitational and the Texas A&M Invitational) we just finished so we will be able to reorganize ourselves." Last weekend, as the Aggies hosted the Texas A&M Invitational, the men's team placed fourth out of 35 universities. Sophomore Scott Lengefeld finished second in the 5-mile race and Snider came in fifth. "I'd like to duplicate this past weekend's performance and help the team out individually," Snider said. The Lady Aggies also recorded a fourth-place finish, as Kohler completed the 3.1-mile race in 18:17, crossing the line 15th. Hinze said he is relatively pleased thus far with his team's standings, but hopes to see improvement on consistency. "I've seen flashes of being com-



Rony Angkriwan, THE BATTALION

Freshman **Caroline Kohler** crosses the finish line at the A&M Invitational last weekend. Kohler placed 15th in the three mile run. petitive, which is important since we're running a young team with many freshmen," Hinze said. "We're not as consistent as I'd like, but the more important competitions are still yet to come." Focusing on team success, Snider said he hopes each athlete shows his full potential. "We haven't had all five guys run well in one competition," Snider said. "I want us all to have a good race, run strong and together." Likewise for the Lady Aggies, Kohler said it is important that the top runners perform as expected. "We want to see a higher rank in the polls," Kohler said. "We all need a real solid race just to focus on getting our performances and also our confidence up."

BRYANT

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"I think what happened last year was there were a lot of expectations for our football team, but a lot of times I put a lot of expectations on myself," Bryant said. "I had a slow start instead of re-gaining, forgetting about it and moving forward, I let it bother me and get to my mental game more than it should have. And this is just a part of maturing on project, especially this game. I've got to learn to accept situations like that." Bryant managed to rebound from a slump at the end of the season, hitting eight of his last nine field goal attempts in his last three games. "After that, the pressure was on and it was just a game to win," Bryant said. "I had the attitude of mind that I needed all the help I could get. It wasn't a life-or-death situation anymore, and that's how I approached it. I just fo-

cused on it being a game and being fun." It was certainly fun for Bryant in the Aggies' 22-20 Alamo Bowl victory over Michigan at the end of last season. He was five-for-six in field goal attempts with a long of 49 yards, and scored 16 of the Aggies' 22 points. Bryant was named Offensive Most Valuable Player for his efforts. "To me that was Kyle Bryant," Bryant said. "That's what should have been happening all along. Unfortunately it didn't, and I was glad to get back in the groove." Bryant has been in the groove this year as well, nailing eight of 11 field goals with only two misses inside of 50 yards. He ranks third in the Big 12 and 20th nationally in field goals per game. "You can't be intimidated by the situation, the distance, or the weather factors," Bryant said. "It all goes back to enjoying what you're doing. You've got to love the sport and love your position to approach it 100 percent."

"Kicking is 90 percent mental, and if you go out there with even one negative thought in your head, it can mess you up."
Kyle Bryant
Junior placekicker

Dallas Stars off to best start in franchise history

DALLAS (AP) — Aggressive personnel moves in the offseason and a bolder style on the ice have pushed the Dallas Stars to their best start in the franchise's 30-year history. Dallas improved to 6-0 Tuesday night with a 3-1 victory over the Detroit Red Wings, the longest winning streak at the start of a season since the Pittsburgh Penguins went 7-0 to open 1994-95. "We can't fall in love with ourselves, but we're not making the errors at key points in a game that we were making last season," coach Ken Hitchcock said. "The new guys have helped, and we're getting effort from everybody."

These are points that are going to pay dividends in April." The Stars missed the playoffs last season, but they begin their fourth year in Texas as the league's only unblemished team. Free agent additions Pat Verbeek, Dave Reid and Arturs Irbe have made major contributions. Sergei Zubov, acquired in a trade with the Pittsburgh Penguins for Kevin Hatcher, has upgraded the defense and quarterbacked the power play. And the holdovers from last season have elevated their games. Dallas has received at least one goal from 13 players.

LECHLER

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"What we're trying to do with him is be more consistent," Special Teams Coach Shawn Slocum said. "I think that will come with practice. He's growing as a punter. He's had the good ones (kicks), but what we had to do was eliminate the bad kicks. On those long kicks the other day, he had a lot of pressure. He had a fast tempo and got the ball off."

Despite his success as a punter, Lechler leaves no doubt as to what position he would rather play. "I prefer to play quarterback," Lechler said. "When I was in high school, I played a lot of positions. But when I came here, all they wanted me to do was punt. It all comes down to when you're watching the game, you can't really do anything. You just have to wait for your turn to punt and that's about it."

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