

Aggies stay on even keel as Texas comes calling



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

BY NICKI SMITH
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Soccer Team may be scheduled to play its final Big 12 Conference game of the season against the University of Texas today at 3:30 p.m. at the Aggie Soccer Complex, but the old cliché "saving the best for last" does not necessarily apply.

The Aggies were originally slated to take on the Longhorns Aug. 30, which not only would have been the first match of the season for both teams, but it would have been the first ever Big 12 Conference game.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature had different things in store with heavy rain and a flooded playing field, which forced the teams to reschedule the game.

A&M Head Coach G. Guerrieri said the two-month wait will have an effect on the advantages both teams take into the game.

"It's like a double-edged sword," Guerrieri said. "Had we played them in August, we would have had more of an advantage, but now they have 14 games under their belt and more rest time. Whereas, we just came off a tournament and one day of rest."

In looking at records, the Aggies clearly have the advantage.

The team has an overall record of 15-2 and a No. 7 na-

tional ranking. In addition, they are ranked second in the Central Region with a record of 7-1 in the Big 12.

Texas is 6-6-2 overall, has a 4-4 record and sixth place standing in the Big 12, and is currently un-ranked in any national poll.

However, Guerrieri said the Longhorns are more talented than their record shows.

"They are solid at all positions, are well-coached and organized," Guerrieri said. "They don't have any weaknesses, so if we are not at the top of our game, they can beat us."

Texas comes into the game with a three-game losing streak, and the last time they won a Big 12 game was Oct. 5 when they defeated the University of Colorado, 1-0.

Senior forward Yvette Okler said staying above [the Longhorns'] level of play will be the biggest challenge for the Aggies.

"We know we have to come in strong and play like we know how," Okler said. "We have to concentrate on not playing down to their level, even though they are a good team."

"We are excited to play them in our last regular season game."

The Aggies will keep an eye on Texas junior forward Carol Finch, who leads the team with nine goals and five assists, and junior goalkeeper Jaime Strong, who leads the Central Region in 1995 with 196 saves and 1,980 minutes of play.

The Longhorns return 15 letterwinners and 10 starters from last year.

Guerrieri said the team will approach today's match against the Longhorns like any other game.

"We are going into the game with a lot of confidence," Guerrieri said. "We are sitting in a good position, so all we have to do is approach this game like we do every other. We have a style based on strength that works well for us."

Although the Aggies lead the series with the Longhorns 5-0, and have scored an average of 4.2 goals a game, Guerrieri feels that the rivalry between the two teams will make the game more challenging and exciting.

"We know that Texas does not like Texas A&M," Guerrieri said. "It doesn't matter what our records are or the score, both of us are out to get each other and

"We know we have to come in strong and play like we know how."

Yvette Okler
Senior forward

On the Upswing

Palmer tries to live up to great golfing name

BY DENNIS RAMIREZ
THE BATTALION

"Palmer" is a last name that strikes chords in the souls of golf fans around the world, a name as synonymous with golf as Babe Ruth is with baseball. But now the same name can be found on the Texas A&M Men's Golf Team.

Although Palmer came to A&M as a transfer student from North Texas State University, while Palmer has not accomplished the feats that golfing legend Arnold Palmer has, the sophomore prefers to focus on his own accomplishments and smiles at the thought of his last name.

"I don't think about my last name too often," Palmer said. "One time while playing with Lee Trevino's son, Matt, in the final group of a tournament, it was neat. People were saying 'What a group, Trevino and Palmer,' but I just laughed and played my game."

After playing for a year and posting a 75.6 average at North Texas State University, a slot opened on the A&M team and Palmer was able to transfer and land a spot on the squad.

Senior Jeff Brown credits Palmer with making a smooth transition from North Texas to A&M.

"Being a transfer student myself, I know it's tough to play your best when you transfer because you are worried about adjusting to school, the team, and trying to prove yourself," Brown

said. "Ryan did a good job in adjusting and has done well to fill in the shoes. He plays with a lot of maturity and has done a good job contributing to the team and proving himself."

Maturity came to Palmer at an early age.

"My dad taught me everything I know about golf, including responsibility and maturity," Palmer said. "I was 9 when my dad first took me out to the golf course. He taught me the discipline of the game while I was growing up, and it has made me a better person."

While growing up in his home town of Amarillo, Palmer made quite a name for himself. While playing for Amarillo High School, Palmer led his team to four district championships, and a second and third place finish at the state tournament his junior and senior years respectively.

Individually, Palmer finished first, second and third at regional meets, and second at the U.I.L. state meet. He also won five amateur championships in the Amarillo area.

"Ryan has great talent and attitude," A&M Head Coach Bob Ellis said. "He has a great work ethic and gets along great with the team. Although he got off to a slow start, he just finished seventh last week."

At the Red River Classic in Dallas, Oct. 13-15, Palmer shot a three-day total of 70-67-71—208 and finished an Aggie-best seventh place.

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Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Sophomore **Ryan Palmer** was the top Aggie finisher at the Red River Classic in Dallas, Oct. 13-15.

Aggies gain mixed results through three fall events

BY MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

There are no sure things in the world of sports, but one would be hard pressed to find a game more bittersweet and unpredictable than golf.

"Golf is such a cyclical game," A&M Men's Golf Coach Bob Ellis said. "Sometimes you can do no wrong, and other times you can't find anything to do right."

The Aggies have experienced both this season. After finishing a disappointing eighth place at the ReliaStar Intercollegiate Tournament in September, the team finished an equally unimpressive ninth in the Missouri Bluffs Intercollegiate Tournament three weeks ago.

"We started out in our first tournament in Minnesota and played a very demanding course and were rusty," Ellis said. "We did not play well at all. The golf course was intimidating and we did not hit the shots we needed to, and if you don't do that, your score goes up immediately — on any kind of course you play."

However, the men's golf team finished eighth last Tuesday at the Taylor Made Red River Classic at Dallas Athletic Club. The prestigious invitational included 11 ranked teams among the 17 invitees.

In addition to finishing No. 8 overall, the Aggies finished second among the four Big 12 schools playing in the event. With a three-round total of 852, they were topped only by third-ranked Oklahoma State University, which finished sixth.

"It gives us a lot of confidence to know that there's not a team out there any better than us," sophomore Ryan Palmer said. "We had a rough start in the first two tournaments, and I think playing well in the last tournament really boosted our confidence."

The Aggies outplayed fourth-ranked University of Texas, No. 13 Southern Methodist University, and No. 18 Georgia Tech. Every team that finished higher than the Aggies was a ranked team.

In individual play, sophomore Ryan Palmer tied for seventh place overall with rounds of 70-67-71—208, while sophomore teammate Ty Cox tied for 10th at 69-69-72—210.

As well as the Aggies played, Ellis saw room for improvement, especially considering that the level of competition demanded almost error-free golf in order to place well.

"The finish did not exceed or even meet my expectations, but our score did," Ellis said. "We putted well, but nothing fell, or we could have scored a lot lower. When you're just seven shots out of second, if we just putt a lick that last round, we finish second. And when you're playing in a field like that, one or two shots

are just huge as far as placement is concerned."

Ellis said the standout play of the underclassmen has been the most impressive aspect of the team thus far in the season, a sentiment echoed by senior Jeff Brown.

"I think some of our younger players have stepped up and played really well," Brown said. "[The low scores] give some of our younger players confidence that they belong."

That confidence will come in handy next week as the Aggie hackers travel to Hilton Head, S.C., to play one of the deepest, most talented collegiate fields anywhere, as well as one of golf's most storied courses.

"We're going to need it because this next tournament will have the strongest field we play until the NCAA," Ellis said. "So we're going to need that confidence."

The Hilton Head Tournament will end a fall season that serves mainly as a preparation for the spring season, where Ellis will count on his best players in every tournament.

"The whole season is a tuneup to prepare for the conference championship, the regional championship and the NCAA championship," Ellis said. "In the fall, what I like to do is play as many players as I can. It gives you a feel for the team and it also helps create a 'bench.' This is the type of thing you find out in the fall, and that helps your knowledge-wise in the spring."

Brown said the solid play last Tuesday and a good showing at Hilton Head will pay great dividends during the spring season.

"This next tournament is pretty important to set the tone for what we're going to do the rest of the year," Brown said. "In golf, the spring is really where it starts counting."

"In the fall, you just kind of feel everyone out and see who's going to be good and who's not. So I think anytime you play well in the fall, it can only help give you an edge."

Ellis is making no predictions, but does admit that with the right preparation, the future could hold great things.

"I never like to go ahead and say we're going to be great," Ellis said. "But if you put out a consistent effort every day and you're knowledgeable in your effort, and you have the proper attitude of that effort, then I think you're going to be successful if you have the talent."

For right now, though, Palmer said the team's focus is on Hilton Head.

"If we can go into that tournament, play well, and beat some good teams, I think we'll move up in the rankings and go into the spring with high confidence," Palmer said.

Brown draws strength from family, religious beliefs

BY JEREMY FURTICK
THE BATTALION

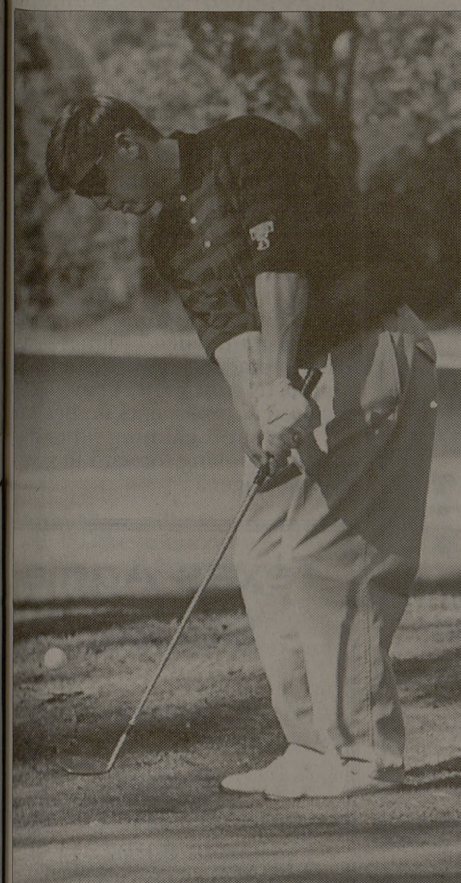


Photo Courtesy of A&M Sports Information
Senior **Jeff Brown** provides leadership on the Aggie Men's Golf Team.

It is a warm fall Texas day. The blue sky is spotted with wispy clouds and a warm southerly breeze is barely noticeable. Standing in the tee-box and looking out over the lush green fairway lined with tall oak trees, most golfers would say they were in heaven. But Jeff Brown, a senior on the A&M Men's Golf Team, has a completely different vision of heaven.

"The most important aspect of my life is my relationship with Jesus Christ," he said. "I know who I am and what I'm here for. My Christian beliefs help me put golf and everything else in perspective."

Brown grew up moving from city to city and state to state with his family. Finally, during his sophomore year in high school, his family moved from Houston to Lafayette, La. But Brown still traveled back and forth from Lafayette to Houston to compete on a select soccer team, finally moving in with a friend in Houston and leaving his family behind.

"If there was one thing all of our moving did, it was make our family stronger," Brown said. "I was being pulled away from my family to

play soccer, and I couldn't handle that."

So Brown moved back to Lafayette and left soccer behind. "My dad wanted me to play golf," Brown said. "He had always supported me in everything I did, so I decided to start. That's when doors started opening up for me and my career."

A family friend was at Brown's house in Lafayette one day mowing the lawn, he said, and the rest is history.

"I truly believe that God had a hand in the start of my career," Brown said. "The man that cut our grass that day became my coach and helped me onto the path else that led me here."

Since transferring to A&M from Southwestern Louisiana State in 1994, Brown has taken his place as a leader to his teammates on and off the course.

Texas A&M Head Coach Bob Ellis said Brown has qualities that cannot be coached.

"Jeff possesses the integrity, commitment and dependability it takes to be a strong leader," he said. "These types of intangibles can't be coached."

Ellis gives Brown's background the credit for his leadership skills.

"His whole attitude is a

product of his family's influence," Ellis said.

Sophomore Ryan Palmer said Brown is a vocal leader.

"Jeff offers great leadership when Coach Ellis isn't around," Palmer said. "He gives great pep talks that help keep us positive."

Brown said although his leadership on the course is important to the team, he hopes that his influence can affect his teammates individually.

"I try to give them an example of how to live with Christ in their lives," he said.

Ellis said Brown's honesty makes the rest of the team trust him.

"Jeff expects the best from himself, his team and his coaches," Ellis said. "The team knows they are getting 110 percent from him on the course and in their lives."

Palmer said Brown goes out of his way to help his teammates.

"Jeff is always willing to help us not only as a team," he said, "but as individuals also."

Brown said he hopes his influence goes much deeper than golf.

"I might not see it happen, but I hope that my teammates will all come to have a relationship with Christ as strong as mine," Brown said.