

## Same rivalry, different conference



### With little time to thaw, Aggies prepare for Texas

By MATT MITCHELL  
THE BATTALION

Fresh off their extended stay in Lincoln, Nebraska, the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team returns to Aggieland to find a thawing campus and an archrival Texas waiting for them. Neither prospect is very pleasant.

The Aggies will tip-off the first game of the new semester at 8:00 Wednesday night against the Longhorns in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

"We really ran into some bad weather and were stranded for two days," A&M Head Coach Tony Barone said. "It creates a bit of a problem for you because your kids are conditioned and we didn't have a chance to work out. Hopefully, the emotion of playing Texas will get us back to where we need to be."

The Aggie cagers are coming off a disappointing stretch that has seen them lose six straight games after starting the season 6-1. Texas rumbles into College Station fresh off a 104-68 pounding of Kansas State Sunday, totalling a record of 8-4 and a Top 25 Ranking. Three of those losses have come against highly-regarded teams, however, including Kansas, Providence, and Arizona.

"They're a well-coached team that plays an up-tempo game, and you really have to contain their perimeter guys and not let them get a lot of easy baskets," Barone said. "We don't want to turn the ball over against them, because they're pretty good at turning turnovers into baskets."

Because of their four-day hiatus in Lincoln, the Aggies have been able to practice only once in real preparation for tonight's game.

Barone says this lack of preparation is certainly undesirable, but certain fundamentals are the key against Texas.

"It hurts you from the standpoint of not having more than one workout," Barone said. "But the reality is that you have to do some things against Texas, whether you practice them or not, that take place during the game. You've got to get back on defense, you've got to guard their three-point shooters, you've got to contain (senior guard Reggie) Freeman. All those things are things you have to do."

Texas' up-tempo, run-and-gun style is triggered by a swarming, trapping defense that forces opponents into turnovers, resulting in easy transition baskets for the 'Horns. Freeman has posted All-America numbers this season, averaging over 20 points a game. A&M Freshman guard Jerald Brown, himself a notable scorer of late, will draw the assignment of guarding the explosive Freeman most of the game.

"I'm looking forward to playing against him," Brown said. "NBA status or whatever, I look at it as another man in a rust-orange jersey to go out and beat."

But Freeman is only one of a bevy of talented players on the Longhorns' roster, each capable of shooting lights the out on any given night. Case in point: senior swingman Al Coleman, who nailed a school record 10 of 14 trifectas against K-State.

The Aggies have been heading in the opposite direction of late, losing close games to Baylor (69-66) and Nebraska (74-72). But Brown says the team has not gotten down on itself, despite their recent string of bad luck.

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A&M point guard Derrick Hart bangs up against Texas' Brandy Perryman last year.

### Lady Aggies hope to cure turnover ails against Texas

By KRISTINA BUFFIN  
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Women's Basketball Team (6-7, 0-3) has shown flashes of brilliance in its current four-game slide, but inconsistent play and turnovers have quickly extinguished those sparks.

The Lady Aggies travel to Austin tonight to face the University of Texas Longhorns (8-3, 2-1) in hopes of collecting their first Big 12 Conference win of the season in the annual grudge match.

A&M's loss to the University of Nebraska Saturday night was in a large part due to turnovers. The Lady Aggies turned the ball over 39 times — a season high.

Senior guard Lana Tucker said although some of the turnovers are due to the players attacking the basket more, unnecessary turnovers are still occurring.

"It has been mainly our turnovers in the last six games,"

Tucker said. "We are also getting no shot opportunities and making turnovers. Even against a bad team, we cannot afford to make as many turnovers."

A&M was 1-2 against Texas last year, but its sole win was in the semifinals of the Southwest Conference Tournament. The Lady Aggies went on to capture the SWC crown.

Tucker said Texas is always a tough team to play, especially in Austin.

"The main thing is that we are taking it one game at a time," Tucker said. "We also want to improve our 0-3 conference record."

"Texas always plays hard on defense and playing away will be tough."

The Lady Aggie freshmen have stepped up their play. Center Jennifer Burrows and forward Amy Yates each had nine points against Nebraska.

"It is obvious they have improved, but the main thing is adjusting to the physical pace of the game," Tucker said. "They have improved each game, but they have to realize that a game is 40 minutes long and there is no time to rest."



Tucker

### Quiet Davis creates loud impact

By JEREMY FURTICK  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M's entrance into the Big 12 was seen as an opportunity to improve its recruiting in every athletic program. Increased visibility and competition were expected to lure talented players away from other schools and other conferences.

So far, the plan has worked. Sophomore forward Calvin Davis was part of the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team's inaugural Big 12 recruiting class — those first players to sign with the Aggies after the school's decision to join the new super-conference.

Davis, a top-seven prospect in Texas from Killeen High School, was named district MVP twice and all-state as a senior. Despite being recruited by several outstanding colleges including Arizona, Oklahoma State, Colorado and Texas, there were several factors that drew Davis to A&M.

"A&M had everything the other schools who were recruiting me did," Davis said. "Before joining the Big 12, they didn't, but that plus building the new (Reed) arena made their future look just as good as anybody's."

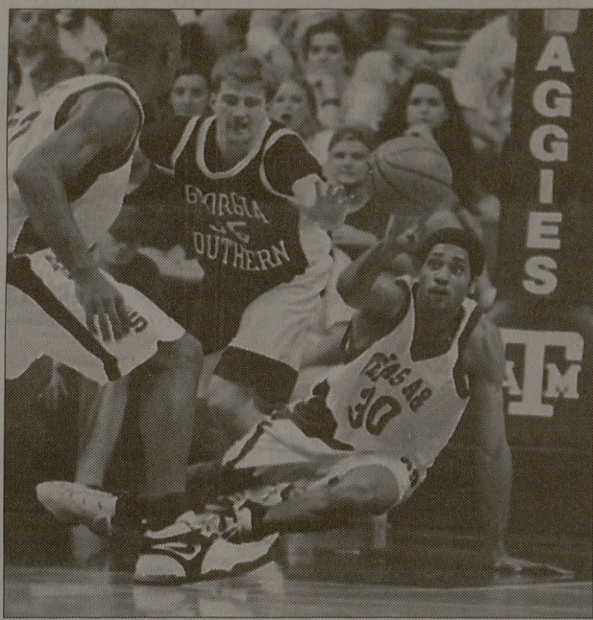
Davis said being from Killeen, just northwest of College Station, also had an impact on his decision.

"I could be closer to home while playing the same level of basketball as I could out-of-state," he said.

Davis signed with A&M accepting the challenge to compete against the combined powerhouses of the old Big 8 and Southwest Conferences.

Head Coach Tony Barone said Davis quickly learned his biggest challenge would be adapting to the physical play of the college game.

"Calvin's biggest problem was learning to take the banging," Barone said. "Especially on defense."



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Sophomore forward Calvin Davis steals the ball from a Georgian Southern player Dec. 10.

Division I basketball is a big jump from high school, but he's learned to use his quickness to counter the physical play.

Davis said the nature of college basketball was totally different from what he expected.

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### After knee injury, Alexander begins first season playing hard

By JEREMY FURTICK  
THE BATTALION

Freshman Kera Alexander sums up her daily motivation in one statement — "One play could end it all."

Alexander, a 5-foot-11-inch forward on the Texas A&M Women's Basketball Team, earned all-area and all-district MVP her sophomore and junior year at Whitesboro High School, earned a first-team all-state accolade as a junior and was on her way to completing a phenomenal four-year career.

However, after signing with A&M in November of her senior season, tragedy struck.

Alexander, who was averaging more than 25 points and 13 rebounds a game, suffered a complete tear of the anterior-cruciate ligament in her right knee.

The A&M coaching staff was genuinely concerned, but Lady Aggie Head Coach Candi Harvey said the concern was for Alexander, not the Aggie's basketball future.

"I was very disappointed for Kera," Harvey said. "I felt for her

because she wouldn't get the opportunity to fulfill the hopes and dreams of her senior year (in high school).

"At that point, her ability to fight back and rehab never crossed my mind."

But Alexander did have her career in mind.

"I was scared at first," Alexander said. "Some people were telling me it would be two years before I could play again. But the people I really trusted encouraged me and said I could make it back sooner if I worked hard enough."

A&M referred Alexander to a private physician who arranged her surgery and the rehab program.

"When something like this happens to one of our players, we make sure they get every opportunity to work back," Harvey said.

Alexander said the support she received from the school surprised her.

"A&M was always very positive about the situation," Alexander said. "I had coaches calling all the time asking how I felt and if I was OK. Even at the point when I couldn't run they were there to



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Freshman Kera Alexander prepares for a free throw.

pick me up and encourage me. They never let me be negative."

Although the athletic department arranged Alexander's surgery, Harvey said the ball was in Alexander's court — she was the only one who could bring herself back to the game.

"Kera had a dream to play college basketball," Harvey said. "And after the surgery she committed herself to the rehab program she was given."

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