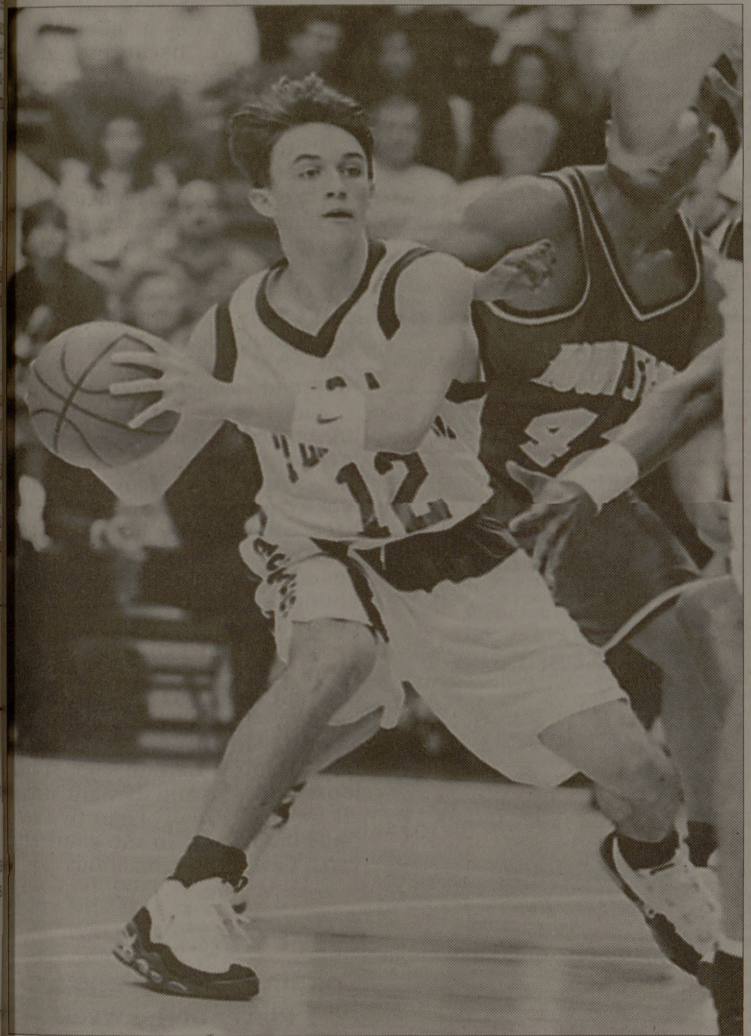


Aggies look to avenge early season loss to Sooners

Barone overcomes potential career-threatening injury to lead Aggies



By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

By CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

Brian Barone always knew Dec. 15, 1995 would be one of the most memorable days of his life. It was a day he looked forward to because it was his eighteenth birthday. But it is also a day he will always remember because it was the day his basketball career almost came to an end.

Barone, then a senior guard at A&M Consolidated High School, tore his anterior cruciate ligament while trying to convert on a layup. The events surrounding his injury remain as clear to him today as they were on his birthday.

"There were about five minutes left in the game; we were up by 15," Barone said. "I just went up and my friend gave me a pass. I bobbed it a little bit, and I went up — I missed the layup.

"As I missed it, I was in traffic and I got twisted. My head was facing one way and my body was facing the other. And I was upset because I missed it and then as I landed, just right then, I knew, I could hear it (the ligament tear)."

Happy birthday Brian Barone. Barone, now a freshman guard for the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team and son of Head Coach Tony Barone, can now look back at the injury and see a silver lining.

"Even before I was hurt, I knew I could play at this level, but I wasn't sure that I was ready," Barone said. "There was stuff I was going to work on over the summer and my senior year of high school. But once I got hurt, I think I almost spent more time working on what I needed to do to get better."

Barone said his injury also forced him to realize his capabilities as a basketball player.

"I'm a better player now," Barone said. "I don't try to do as much. I know my limitations and try to concentrate on the fundamentals instead of trying to be a little more athletic."

Coming off the bench, Barone has played a key role for the Aggies in his first season. Oftentimes, his basketball skills are overshadowed by his hustle on the court.

Barone ranks second in the Big 12 Conference in the assist/turnover ratio but is perhaps more recognized for diving out of bounds to save loose balls.

"I know that I'm not as athletic, not as strong, not as big, so I have to do all the little things," Barone said. "Plus I want to win, and when you want to win, you see that ball out there and you just go for it."

His father and coach, Tony Barone, said Brian's impact has been evident.

"His emotional impact is pretty obvious," Tony Barone said. "His effort impact is pretty obvious."

Barone has been around A&M basketball since the 1991-'92 season when his dad took over the program — but coming to A&M was not a cut-and-dry decision.

Born in Chicago, Barone entertained the notion of playing up North, but in the end decided to continue the Barone family tradition of playing at A&M. His brother Tony Jr., played at A&M from 1991-'94.

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The last time the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team played the University of Oklahoma, the Sooners spanked them by a score of 78-59 in what A&M coaches have called the team's worst performance of the season. It was the fourth loss in what would eventually become an eight-game slide that has left the Aggies with a 2-6 conference record.

The Aggies get another shot at OU tonight, as they travel to Norman to take on the Sooners at the Lloyd Noble Center. Tip-off is scheduled for 8:07, and the game will be televised locally by Creative Sports.

A&M Head Coach Tony Barone said although a win over the Sooners would help even the score after an embarrassing home loss to Oklahoma, revenge should not be the motive for a win.

"Revenge is never an issue if you're going to play better," Barone said. "I think it's a negative emotion. We clearly did not play well against Oklahoma, and our kids know that."

That may be a bit of an understatement. In the Jan. 5 game, the Sooners limited the Aggies to just 32 percent shooting, including 0-for-nine from three-point range. The Aggies were outplayed and out-hustled from the opening tip, and trailed 40-23 at half time.

"It was like we were impostors," Barone said. "Somebody else was on the court — I don't have any idea who that was. That won't happen this time. We'll play with more ag-

gressiveness and we'll play, I think, more intelligently."

Oklahoma should not have any problem with aggressiveness. The Sooners (12-6, 4-4) are coming off an impressive win against the then 23rd-ranked Texas Longhorns. The Sooners have been virtually unbeatable this season at home, posting a 10-1 record, with their only loss coming against 22nd-ranked Texas Tech.

"They're going to be fired up because they beat Texas, but we've had a good last three games, so I think our confidence is pretty high," junior center Dario Quesada said. "We know they are playing better than they (the Sooners) were, but we are playing better as well."

Playing well includes good bench play, something the Aggies have found to be in short supply of late. Senior guard Tracey Anderson is still plugging along with a strained groin, and junior forward Larry Thompson is still recovering from a broken nose suffered during the Kansas game two weeks ago.

"We're still depleted," Barone said. "Larry's about 40 percent right now in terms of what he can do on the court."

Barone said Thompson will shed the mask he donned against Iowa State because he finds it uncomfortable.

"You can't see sideways, and sometimes peripheral vision comes into play in basketball," Barone said. "If you can't see the ball coming from that side, then you have a problem catching the ball."

"We clearly did not play well against Oklahoma, and our kids know that."

Tony Barone
A&M head coach

Freshman point guard Brian Barone looks to pass the ball off in Iowa State traffic in a game at G. Rolie White Coliseum Feb. 1.

Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

See BARONE, Page 6

From off the bench to on the court, Linder becomes a leader

By LARA L. ZUEHLKE
THE BATTALION

Metamorphosis is another word for transformation, and anyone who has seen the recent play of junior Kim Linder, a center on the Texas A&M Women's Basketball Team, can see a metamorphosis.

Linder has jumped off the bench and sparked the Lady Aggie's inside game. She has contributed a total of 55 points in the last four Big 12 conference games, including a career-high 18 points against Kansas University.

Linder said her lack of playing time and her ill health limited her performance earlier in the season.

"This is the first time I've been really healthy all year, and I think you lose a lot of confidence when you're sitting on the bench," Linder said.

The 6-foot finance major from Amarillo has elbowed her way through the paint grabbing a total of 61 rebounds in 19 games, giving her an average of 3.8 boards per contest. Linder also recorded a career-high 10 re-

bounds against Oklahoma State University. Senior guard Melissa Rollerson said Linder's contributions have helped the team when they were in a bind.

"We have more confidence in Kim and we know what she can do," Rollerson said. "That's really helped us, because we know we can rely on her now."

Linder's soft-spoken voice and easy-going disposition also have changed, and she has taken reigns of the team, along with the senior leadership of Rollerson and guard Lana Tucker.

"Kim has more confidence in her game and she's much more talkative," Rollerson said. "She's become more of a leader."

This newfound leadership has earned her the title of co-captain, along with Tucker.

A&M Head Coach Candi Harvey said Linder has played well and exemplifies the qualities of a good player.

"Last week I named her co-captain because I felt she exhibited all the traits that we're looking for in a player," Harvey said. "She's become more verbal and I felt it was a good time to do it because she will be the lone senior on the team next year."

"We have more confidence in Kim and we know what she can do."

Melissa Rollerson
Senior guard

Although Linder has been blazing the courts lately, she said the team as a whole has to step forward, instead of just one player.

"I think any time you can come off the bench, score double figures and rebound well, it's going to help the team," Linder said. "But we need everyone to do that, because it's not just one player. (In) every game someone different needs to step up."

Linder has seen an overhaul on the Lady Aggie squad in her three years on the team, losing four seniors last year and senior Marianne Sevin to back problems earlier this season.

After a season which ended in a Southwest Conference Championship, Linder said she is not discouraged because of the trying season.

"We know we are a young team, but we know that we have a good team," Linder said. "We knew coming into this year that it would be hard, but we haven't given up."

Linder said she enjoys the competitive nature of the game and the sense of the accomplishment that comes along with playing well, but also stresses that winning is important.

"I've regained my confidence in my game again, and I'm just having fun with it," Linder said. "The only thing that would make it better was if we were winning."



Junior center Kim Linder has exploded off the bench in the last four Big 12 games.

She has a total of 55 points, which includes a career-high 18 points against Kansas.

Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Lady Ags ready for season opener

By SARA DUESING
THE BATTALION

It may be the beginning of February, but spring is definitely in the air. And to kick off the spring season, the Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team will face the University of North Texas at 1:30 p.m. today at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

For three weeks, the Lady Aggies have been practicing and conditioning, prepping themselves for the regular season. Head Women's Tennis Coach Bobby Kleinecke said the team has been working on confidence and control.

"Everyone is ready to go and is in good shape," Kleinecke said. "We've been working hard to get more consistent and aggressive doubles."

Although the Lady Aggies are favored to beat North Texas, senior Julie Beahm, who won the Southwest Conference No. 6 singles crown in 1996, said it is important not to take any team lightly.

"We've usually dominated and done pretty well in the past," Beahm said. "But they (UNT) have some new players so we have to be prepared."

After finishing the fall season in the No. 23 spot, according to the Rolex Collegiate Rankings, A&M is prepared to face stiff competition in the Big 12 Conference after finishing in a tie for second place in the Southwest Conference last season.

Hoping to start off on the right foot for 1997 against the Lady Eagles, Kleinecke said the first match of the season can still be scary.

"North Texas is a steady team, and they have improved over the last couple of years," Kleinecke said. "They're the type of team that may not beat you, but will put you in the position to beat yourself. We're just going to put it on the line and see what happens."

Beahm said the team is both excited and anxious to finally get to play and is looking to gain confidence and momentum. Kleinecke said he wants to get rid of any first-match jitters and find what needs to be worked on during practice.

"We're tired of practicing with just each other," Kleinecke said. "It's been tough to stay motivated, and it's time to get up and play."

Individual players stepping up games

Men's Basketball



It's been a busy week for the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team, with two high-profile programs visiting the Holler House. University of Missouri and Iowa State University may be gone but here are some precocious passages to quell those pre-exam anxieties.

Keeping Up with Jones ... Somewhat lost amid the plays of his more heralded freshman teammates, sophomore forward Shanne Jones is quietly having a terrific year and making a strong bid for Big 12 Newcomer of the Year Award.

In Big 12 play, Jones leads all conference newcomers in scoring 15 points a game, and is averaging 12 points overall for the season. He also has nine three-point plays. There is an intelligent, mature look to Jones that showcases an outstanding work ethic, belying his relatively young age.

"People look at him and think he must be a senior — but he's only a sophomore," A&M Head Coach Tony Barone said of Jones. "He demands a tremendous amount from himself. I never, ever, ever question Shanne's attitude, effort or his desire to play hard."

Strength Training for Davis ... After a recent string of excellent games in conference play, fans might be wondering why sophomore forward Calvin Davis was not able to play at such a high level of consistency earlier in the year.

The A&M coaching staff says that

the reed-thin Davis lacks the physical strength to be a true inside banger and is sometimes getting out-muscled under the boards.

"He still has to get stronger, and I think when you see him having a problem physically, it's because of a lack of strength," Barone said. "Not a lack of effort — he usually give us the effort. But again, the physical thing is something he's got to get better at."

Never was that more evident than Saturday night. Iowa State's Kelvin Cato was able to jockey for inside position time and again to grab 10 caroms. Though Davis finished with a flurry, his skying for rebounds and assortment of inside moves were rendered largely ineffective by the imposing center.

See MITCHELL, Page 6

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