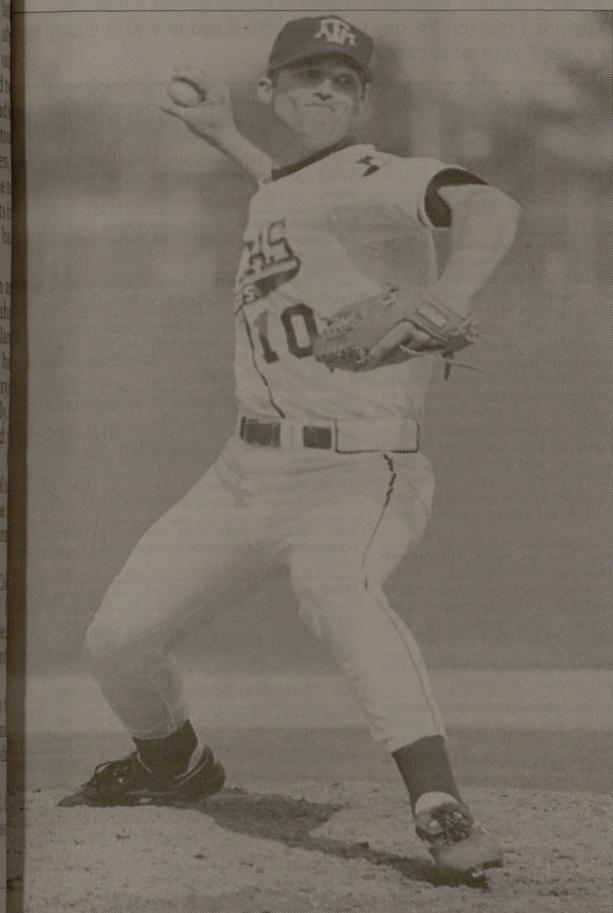


Aggies continue homestand against Cougars



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Senior pitcher **Scott Barrett** hurls one against Arizona.

By CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Baseball Team (8-4) will entertain the Washington State Cougars (1-7) at Olsen Field as the teams compete in a weekend series.

A&M will look to build on an emotional come-from-behind victory against Nevada-Reno in which the Aggies, trailing by one run going into the ninth inning, rallied and won the game on a grand slam by senior Johnny Hunter.

Washington State is beginning a Texas road trip which will also stop in Fort Worth for a one-game set against Texas Christian. It will try to get back on the winning track after losing its last game to the University of Pacific. Prior to splitting with Pacific, the Cougars had lost six straight.

The Aggies see this weekend as a chance to improve.

"We're working on our game," Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "It doesn't matter who our opponent is. By Sunday, we want to be three days better."

The players are hoping this weekend will be a breakout series.

"We haven't really come out and

played an all around great game yet this year," Hunter said. "We're just ready for it to happen. It could be tomorrow, and hopefully, it will be."

Knocking in base runners will be a major focus for the team.

"Right now our average is not very good with runners in scoring position," Johnson said.

The Aggies will look to get their bats healthy against a Cougar pitching staff which has compiled an 11.72 ERA and has opponents batting .339 against them.

Johnson said Washington State's pitchers are better than they have shown so far.

"Some guys don't hook up well early in the season," Johnson said. "A lot of things can happen to make guys get off to a slow start. They'll be better this outing, much as I anticipate our pitchers to be better this outing."

WSU will send Burdette Greeny (0-2) and his team-high 10 strikeouts to the mound for today's game.

The Aggies will counter with freshman Casey Fossum. Fossum has struck out a team-high 20 batters and has averaged six innings per outing in his three starts this season. Despite posting a 1.00 ERA, he is



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Junior second baseman **Brian Benefield** tags Arizona's **Diego Rico** out during the second game at Olsen Field.

winless at 0-1.

Fossum and the rest of the Aggie staff will have their hands full with a young group of WSU batters.

Cougar freshman left fielder Brad Phillely is the team's leading batter with a .500 average. Phillely is one of six underclassmen in the Cougars' starting lineup.

The Aggie batters have shown signs

of life in the past few games after getting off to a slow start.

Three batters, junior catcher Scott Sandusky (.485) and outfielders William Gray (.455) and Jason Tyner (.453) are batting over .400. A&M as a team is batting .340.

A&M was also able to capitalize on clutch hitting situations down the stretch in the win over Nevada.

Softball hosts Aggie Mini Invitational

By NICKI SMITH
THE BATTALION

With a week of playing time under its belt, the Texas A&M Softball Team (2-4) is prepared to settle in and enjoy some time at home as it hosts the first of two Aggie Invitational Tournaments, making its home debut this weekend at the Lady Aggie Softball Complex.

Aside from the Lady Aggies, Colorado State University, Creighton University and Sam Houston State University will compete in a double round-robin tournament beginning today at 12.

Head Coach Jo Evans said Colorado State will be the Lady Aggies' toughest competition.

"Colorado is probably the best team we will be up against," Evans said. "They have a really great pitcher who has a nice drop and

change-up and a really talented shortstop. Not only will we have to play well to beat them, we will have to play our best to beat them."

So far, A&M has winning records against all three teams in the tournament. It has a 5-0 series record against the Lady Rams, a 7-6 all-time record against Creighton and 51-13 overall record against Sam Houston, the second-most common opponent in the history of the A&M program.

Freshman second baseman Angie Long said the Lady Aggies are excited to finally play at home.

"We are really looking forward to having some Aggies root us on," Long said. "So far, all of our games we haven't had a lot of fans because we have been out of town. All of the teams will be tough competitors, but, with the home field and home crowd, we have nothing to lose."

Although A&M will not take the field until 4 p.m., when they face in-state rival Sam Houston State, Colorado State and Creighton will kick off the tournament at noon.

Four games will be played both on Friday and Saturday at 12:00 p.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m.

On Sunday, the tournament will begin at 9:00 a.m. and will conclude with A&M playing Sam Houston at 3:00 p.m.

Evans said even though the team

was not able to play its double-header against the University of Texas-San Antonio because of rain, the Aggies still have a good chance of winning all of their games.

"We know we have the home advantage, which is a plus for us," Evans said. "None of the other teams has been able to get outdoors because of the weather. With that, we feel we have a good chance to get our team chemistry going and hope to improve on some things we have been having trouble with the past week."

The Lady Aggie pitchers have allowed only five earned runs in six games, but are coming off a three game losing streak.

Colorado State (2-0) has a two-game winning streak after blasting the University of Colorado 13-0 in five innings, Sam Houston (4-4) is riding on a four-game losing streak, and Creighton will be making its season debut with seven returning starters.

Senior pitcher Lori Gioco said this tournament will help the Aggies improve on their concentration.

"We are going to have our parents and regular fans there supporting us," Gioco said. "We will want to play well in front of them and we know our field very well. This should allow us to become more cohesive and get more games in."

Aggies face Baylor in final home game at G. Rollie

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

It was supposed to be the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team's final game in G. Rollie White Coliseum. But thanks to some unfortunate delays in the construction of Reed Arena, it will merely be the final home game of a trying and often disappointing season for the Aggies when they take on the Baylor Bears Saturday at 7 p.m.

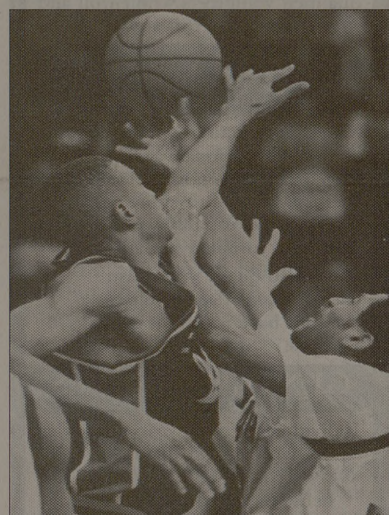
The meeting will be the second of the season between the two teams. Baylor won the first in improbable fashion, 69-66, as the Aggies set a season-high for turnovers with 28.

The Bears (17-9, 5-8) are coming off an impressive 71-60 win over Nebraska Wednesday night and need a win over the Aggies to keep their NCAA Tournament aspirations alive. The Aggies (8-15, 2-11) are looking to rebound from a 72-55 loss to Oklahoma State Wednesday and break a five-game losing streak. "I think the kids have really han-

dled the tough losses in a very positive way," A&M Head Coach Tony Barone said. "We're trying to bring out of these games things that we did well, and at the same time identify things that have caused us some problems. We're not trying to write off or rationalize whether we win or lose, but we have to learn from each game."

The growing pains the Aggies have experienced this year are nothing new to several members of the team, notably freshman guard Jerad Brown, who toiled on mediocre teams at Alidine High School before meeting with marked success.

"My freshman year in high school, we didn't have the most successful season," Brown said. "It was a building process that took time. We had a young team in high school and we had to learn how to get over the hump, and that's what we have to do here as a team, try to fight through that wall." But as difficult as such situations may be for Brown and his teammates, he said better times are ahead. "It's frustrating to lose, don't get



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Sophomore forward **Calvin Davis** battles Tech forward **Gionet Cooper** for the rebound at G. Rollie.

me wrong," Brown said. "I hate to see the guys go through the season like this, but you have to keep in mind that we're young and we're going to get to that point where we're going to beat teams. Instead of losing by two, we'll win by two, if not more."

A look back at one of the Lady Aggie's greatest



Jamie Burch

record five blocks. Rollerson was 12 of 21 from the field and six of nine from the free-throw line.

Head Coach Candi Harvey said Rollerson provided a much-needed support over the past week.

"This team has been searching for that kind of performance all year long," Harvey said. "She was the total player. We have to hope she's going to sustain this. Her career is coming to an end and I want her to feel she has contributed."

Sophomore guard Stacy Sykora said Rollerson was unstoppable. "She was amazing," Sykora said. "The ball would go in no matter what she did. She couldn't miss."

Lana Tucker: A Look Back

Senior guard Lana Tucker's basketball career ended a little sooner than she had hoped. Early in the second half of the Lady Aggie's game against Colorado Feb. 8, the co-captain tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee. While Tucker will try to rehab her knee without surgery, the severity of the injury will force her to miss the remainder of the season.

The catalyst of the young team, Tucker led the squad in scoring (13.8), steals (3.7), free-throw shooting percentage (81.4), and minutes played (30.0).

In a press release, Harvey said

she appreciates all the sacrifices Tucker made for the team.

"The biggest compliment I can give a player is that she has my ultimate and total respect," Harvey said. "In 17 years of coaching, I have never had a player respond and work as hard as Lana. She has always gone above and beyond her best."

"I hate losing this game (Colorado), but in the big picture, I am sad that I will never coach this kid again."

Tucker, the only Lady Aggie player to start all 21 games this season, played in 113 games in her A&M career, starting the last 88 consecutive contests. The ironwoman guard missed only one game in her career because of injury.

Looking beyond the injury, Tucker said she wants to do whatever she can to help the team.

"It's not how I pictured it to end," Tucker said. "But I want to look at the positives and how I can help my team without being on the court. It's still about being a leader, just in other ways."

Throughout her four-year career, Tucker posted impressive numbers, solidifying her place in A&M history.

Tucker, who ranks as the seventh all-time points producer at A&M (1,045), is only the 12th Lady Aggie ever to exceed 1,000 points.

She ranks as the eighth-best three-point shooter (32.9 percent) in school history.

From the charity stripe, Tucker's 72.4 shooting percentage ties her for seventh all-time in the Aggie record books. She also has posted 154 career steals, ranking seventh all-time, and has dished out 236 assists good for 10th.

Tucker said she considers herself fortunate to have played for so long.

"It's disappointing that I didn't get to finish it out," Tucker said. "But then again, it could have happened five games into the season. I feel really fortunate to have played this many games with my sister (Natalie) and this team."

"I've enjoyed playing with this team probably more than any I've ever played on. We all got along so well. That's something I'll remember more than my injury."

Tucker said looking back over her career, her most memorable moment was winning the 1996 Southwest Conference tournament.

"It's the last conference tournament and the last SWC trophy," Tucker said. "Beating Texas and Texas Tech in two days was a great accomplishment for our team. We pulled together when we needed to and just got it done."

A&M looks to send Bears into hibernation

By JAMIE BURCH
THE BATTALION

With three games remaining, the Texas A&M Women's Basketball Team (9-14 overall, 3-10) makes its final road trip of the season Saturday afternoon to Baylor University (11-12 overall, 4-9). The Lady Aggies, 2-7 on the road this season, are coming fresh off of a 94-84 overtime victory last Saturday over Oklahoma State University.

Head Coach Candi Harvey said she was thrilled with the team's resiliency against OSU.

"This is one of my most memorable wins as a coach at A&M," Harvey said. "The players finally understood about dealing with adversity. For the first time we felt like, as a team, they grasped a lot of the things we've been working on all year long."

A&M lost to Baylor 82-67 at G. Rollie White Coliseum Jan. 8 in the first meeting of the home-and-home series. A&M trailed by just four at the half, but was outscored by 11 after the intermission. The Lady Aggie defense

allowed four Lady Bears to post double figures in scoring in addition to losing the battle of the boards, 47-36.

Sophomore Stacy Sykora, who was not with the team for the first meeting, said the Lady Aggies are a different team now.

"The team is definitely different without Lana," Sykora said. "Lana's leadership as a senior and a captain is not there for us now. Baylor did beat us by 15, but we're a new team with a new look."

A&M will have to once again combat the same offensive attack from Baylor. Sophomore center Kacy Mofitt, who torched A&M for 10 points, five boards and one block in the team's first meeting, leads the Lady Bears in scoring (10.5) while grabbing 4.1 rebounds per game.

On the defensive side, junior forward Tasia Wright, who posted 11 rebounds against A&M in the last meeting, is averaging a team-leading 6.1 rebounds per game. Sophomore guard Toya Ellis leads the Lady Bears in steals with 49 on the season.

A&M freshman guard Natalie Tucker said confidence is the key to beating Baylor.

"Our confidence is on the rise," Tucker said. "We know we can beat Baylor. We've just got to go out there and play with confidence — the way we know we can."

Ya Know She's Butter Cause She Was on A Roll

Senior forward Melissa Rollerson was named Big 12 Conference Player of the Week for her explosive play over the last week.

Rollerson carried the Lady Aggies to victory against Oklahoma State, scoring a career-high 30 points. The 6-foot-1 senior from Paris played 39 minutes, grabbing seven boards and swatting an A&M single-game