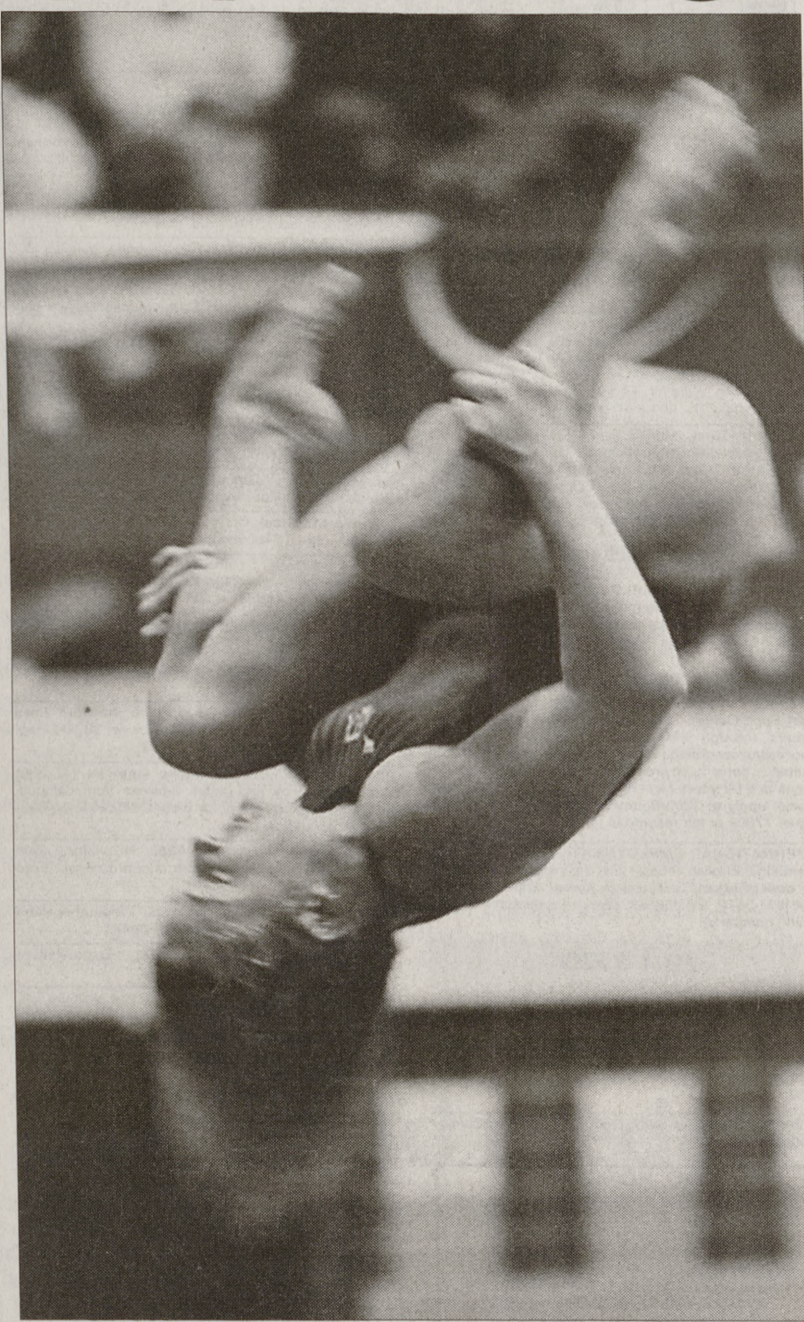


A&M cannot keep up with Big 12 powerhouses

Lady Aggies miss third place by one event, finish fourth



Junior **Jodi Janssen** finished third in the one-meter springboard and made the finals in the three-meter springboard and the ten-meter platform.

By COURTNEY LYONS
THE BATTALION

The team bronze medal in the women's Big 12 Swimming and Diving Championships came down to the last race of the meet, the 400-yard freestyle relay.

Unfortunately the Lady Aggies pushed too hard, and disqualified themselves, opening the door for Kansas University to take third place in the team standings.

Although the Lady Aggies ended the meet in fourth place as a team,

which included several nationally ranked competitors. Karnes came into the race in eighth place after the preliminaries, and took the win at the top of the pool in lane one.

"I did not do well in the preliminaries, but I had time to think about it all day," Karnes said. "I could see my teammates cheering for me near the end, and it got my adrenaline going."

Karnes' time of 2:22 automatically qualified her for the NCAA National Meet next month.

Another Lady Aggie, freshman Monica Stroman, turned in an excellent race midway through the meet on Friday night, placing second in the 400-yard intermedley race. For much of the race, Stroman was behind Texas' Ariadne Legendre, but when the two swimmers began the freestyle stint, Stroman pulled ahead.

"I could see her (Legendre) underwater going into the breaststroke," Stroman said. "That motivated me, I really wanted to get her."

The Lady Aggie divers also had an excellent meet. Junior Jodi Janssen placed third in the one-meter springboard, and finished in both the three-meter springboard and ten-meter platform. Her teammate, freshman Danielle Guaneri, finished on the one-meter springboard and then took the bronze in both the three and ten-meter.

"I was hoping to final in all three events," Guaneri said. "I was not expecting to do that well on three-meter."

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"It (being named Big 12 Women's Newcomer of the year) is such an honor."

Tracy Evans
Freshman freestyler

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Individual bests place Aggies third behind Texas, Nebraska

By COURTNEY LYONS
THE BATTALION

Defending national champion Texas and a Nebraska Cornhusker team full of foreign athletes were too much for the Texas A&M Men's Swimming and Diving Team this weekend.

The Aggies had to settle for third place in the team totals at the Big 12 Championships, edging out Kansas University in the last relay on Saturday night.

The Aggies started the meet Wednesday night with a first-place finish on the one-meter springboard from sophomore Mark Naftanel, and the team competed solidly from that point.

"After the prelims, I studied all of their (the other finalists) splits," Howard said. "I knew I would be in fifth or sixth place after the breaststroke, so I'd have to run them down in the freestyle."

Howard gave an all-out sprint in the last 100 yards and took second in the race.

Fellow freshman Tim Campbell turned in an outstanding performance in the one mile on Saturday, winning the bronze in 15:20, a time that is a personal best by 29 seconds.

"We're in a good place going into NCAAs. I'm really proud of where we are."

Robb Pantano
Senior backstroke

Thursday night brought a bronze medal for sophomore Jerrod Kappler in the 50-yard freestyle, an event normally dominated by Longhorns. In an extremely fast race, Kappler split the Longhorns up, beating four of the six that competed in the finals.

"I've been trying to break 20 seconds for a while," Kappler said. "It's not a mental block for me anymore."

Kappler's time was fast enough to automatically qualify him for the NCAA National Meet in Minnesota.

Friday morning began with freshman Devin Howard making the cut to the finals in the 400-yard intermedley. This race was new for Howard, and at the beginning of the season he was not sure if he would swim it at conference. However, Howard did make the finals and spent the rest of the day figuring out a way to win a medal.

"I was looking at (Texas') Younghouse most of the time," Campbell said. "I was trying to pass him."

Campbell did pass Younghouse near the end of the race, coming in three seconds ahead of him.

He was not the only underclassmen who was able to medal for the Aggies. Senior Robb Pantano closed his last meet at home as a member of the bronze-medal winning 400-yard freestyle relay team. Pantano also finished third in the 200-yard backstroke. In a race where Texas' Neil Walker burned the rest of the field, Pantano had a smooth, solid swim.

"I had already made the NCAA consideration cut in the morning, so I had no pressure," Pantano said.

It was no surprise Naftanel was voted Big 12 Outstanding Male Diver by the coaches, since he swept first place on every board. Despite a performance on the 10-meter tower that was less than spectacular, Naftanel still beat Texas' David Clark by almost 100 points.

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A&M's Kappler qualifies for NCAAs with career best time in 50-yard freestyle



Sophomore **Jerrod Kappler** pumps his fist in excitement after realizing he qualified for the NCAAs.

By DENNIS RAMIREZ
THE BATTALION

"If you don't believe it, you are not going to do it and if you have any seeds of doubt, they will grow up and kill you."

These were the words of sophomore Jerrod Kappler, after he qualified for the NCAA Championships this weekend in the Big 12 Swimming and Diving Championships.

Kappler, a sprinter on the Texas A&M Swimming Team, recorded a career-best time of 19.80 in the 50-yard freestyle.

"At the beginning of the year, I set high goals for myself, and one of them included breaking 20 in the 50-yard," Kappler said. "As far as the 100-yards is concerned, I was looking for a faster time, but it was the third day of the meet and it still was a best time and good enough to qualify."

His time in the 50-yard enabled Kappler to reach his goal and automatically qualified him for the NCAAs.

Teammate Robb Pantano acknowledged Kappler's great performance and offered the secret to Kappler's success.

"He (Kappler) did phenomenally, his times were great, especially for somebody who had solid times in high school, but are nowhere near to where they are at now," Pantano said. "His times are the top in the country and compete with the top four at NCAAs. He has been able to accomplish this through hard work and discipline and his willingness to improve."

Kappler is always willing to learn something new on his stroke and make the necessary adjustments.

Head Men's Swimming Coach Mel Nash said this drive, coupled with his experience at last year's NCAAs, will push him to new heights.

"As focused and conscientious as he (Kappler) is in his training, he is real aware of the process of what he needs to do to prepare for the big meet," Nash said. "That will stand him well going into the meet, especially because he was there last year and he has some experience swimming in it. He was the highlight at this meet, and because he has matured, he will only continue to get better and better year in and year out."

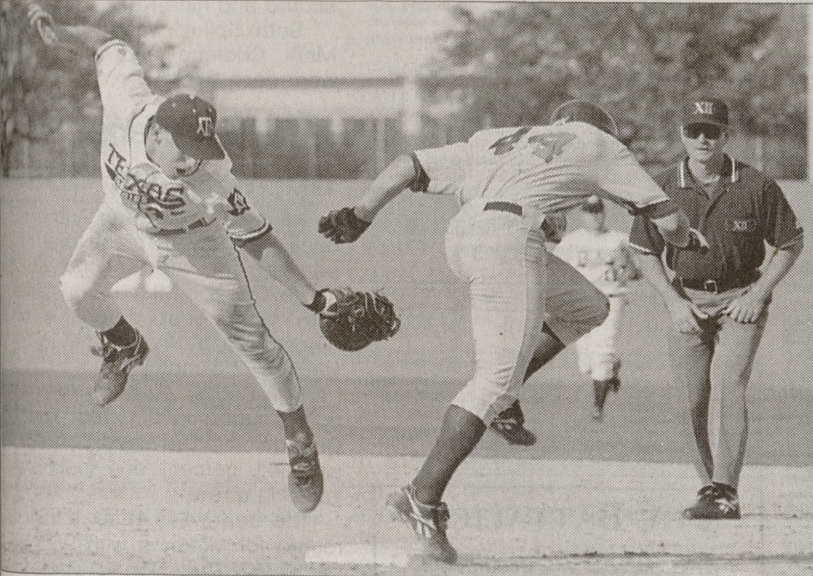
As far as Kappler is concerned, he remains enthusiastic about NCAAs, enjoys where he is and is taking control of the mental aspect of the sport.

"I like being in this position going into the meet and I just want to do better than what I have done so far," Kappler said. "On Tuesday night, I had a dream that I swam 19.8 in the 50, and when I finished, that is what I swam. That is the whole mental aspect of the sport — believing in yourself and knowing that you will be successful — then good things will follow."

Based on a relatively short period of full-time swimming, four-and-a-half years, Kappler has shown his talent.

See **KAPPLER**, Page 9

Bears claw their way back in bottom of ninth inning, 11-10



Sophomore first baseman **Steve Leonard** just misses tagging Baylor's **Jeff Moore** at first base at Olsen Field Saturday.

By JEREMY FURTICK
THE BATTALION

If you tripped on something in your front yard this morning when you left for class, chances are you stumbled over a game ball from the Aggie Baseball Team's (12-6, 1-2) three-game weekend series with the Baylor Bears (7-5, 2-1).

The two teams combined for a sickening 60 runs on 75 hits, including 16 home runs and 14 others for extra bases — totaling a batting average of .330 with a .608 slugging percentage. Needless to say, it was a long weekend for the 19 pitchers who fell victim to the shelling and even longer for the Aggies who lost the bookend games to start Big 12 Conference play with a 1-2 record.

The fireworks started in Waco Friday night with the Bears' first at bat and ended Sunday at Olsen in their last. Freshman phenom Casey Fossum (1-2, 3.14 ERA) took

the mound against Baylor's Kris Lambert in the series opener and fell behind 3-0 after facing the Bears' first three hitters. Fossum hit Baylor's lead-off man and gave up home runs to the next two batters. Seven-and-a-half innings and 12 runs later, the Aggies dropped their Big 12 opener, 10-5.

There were a few bright spots for the Aggies during the loss. At the plate, junior catcher Matt Garrick blasted two home runs and a single, and collected three RBIs, while senior outfielder Johnny Hunter added a solo shot. Junior pitcher John Sneed finished the final three innings of the loss by striking out seven and not allowing a run.

The series shifted to College Station Saturday with over 3,500 fans in attendance cheering on the Aggies in their first Big 12 home game. Junior Ryan Rupe (3-0, 3.86) was on the hill for A&M with Michael Bradford pitching for Baylor. The Aggies jumped on

top 5-1, with four runs in the second inning highlighted by senior shortstop Rich Petru's two-out, RBI double that drove in junior second baseman Brian Benefield.

A&M added a run in the fourth to go up 6-1, but Baylor came storming back with three runs in the top of the fifth, an event which would become a reoccurring theme during the weekend. But the Aggies responded with another big inning in the bottom of the fifth.

Freshman leftfielder Steven Truitt ripped a one-out triple and scored on sophomore centerfielder Jason Tyner's double. After Tyner scored on a Petru fielder's choice, senior third baseman Jason Stephens singled to set the table for Hunter, who smashed a three-run homer to right-center.

The teams traded single runs in the sixth and it seemed the Aggies were comfortably rolling into the final innings of the game, when Baylor struck for six more runs includ-

ing a two-out, three-run shot from shortstop Preston Underdown.

That was all the Bears would be able to muster as junior pitcher Robert Keens shut the door in the last 2-1/3 innings. Keens earned the Aggies' first save of the season after escaping a bases-loaded jam in the ninth.

Aggie Head Coach Mark Johnson gave credit to Baylor's resiliency. "Every time we would get comfortable, they would put more runs up and force us to keep scoring," he said. "I wanted to stretch Rupe as long as I could and stay out of our bullpen, but we finally had to pull him."

The Bears used five pitchers in the loss, something Benefield said had to be done.

"It was important for us to get into their bullpen today since they only used two guys [Friday] night," Benefield said.

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