

Hot Aggies look to improve in conference

► **A&M will host Iowa State University this weekend at Olsen Field.**

BY MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

After seeming to bottom out after the loss to Lamar University March 18, the Texas A&M Baseball Team has quickly turned its season around, winning eight of their past 10 games.

The resurgent Aggies will look to continue their good play when they take on Iowa State University in a three-game series at Olsen Field this weekend. The Aggies and Cyclones will lock horns in a doubleheader, starting at 4 p.m. Saturday with the rubber match Sunday at 1 p.m.

"This is definitely a key weekend for us," freshman outfielder Darren Heinrichs said. "We have a nine-game homestand, which is key because we only have 15 conference games left. If we can take these games at home, and we should win at home, it will definitely set us as far as the postseason is concerned." The Aggies' prospects for postseason

play are significantly brighter than they appeared just a few weeks ago, and their recent success on the diamond is reflected in renewed optimism in the clubhouse.

"The mood of the team is obviously up because we've been playing well lately," Heinrichs said. "Everything has started to come together, and everyone has started to contribute like we thought they would."

"We changed the lineup a bit, which seemed to put people in more key hitting spots, added speed to the lineup, and also put some people where they could see better pitches."

Whatever happened, it has worked. The Aggies' overall record stands at 24-14 and 7-8 in conference play after pounding Sam Houston State in a home-and-home contest earlier this week.

Having played seven of their past 10 games on the road, the Aggies are staring at their first extended home stay in what must seem like forever.

"We've had two weekends on the road, and we've won both of those series," A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "We've had to show we can win on the road and then go home and try to make hay. And so we've set this as our goal, that this would be our run time."

"We're looking at nine games in a row at home, which is something we haven't had. Seven of them are conference games, so we're in a position, if everything falls into place, to get on a roll."

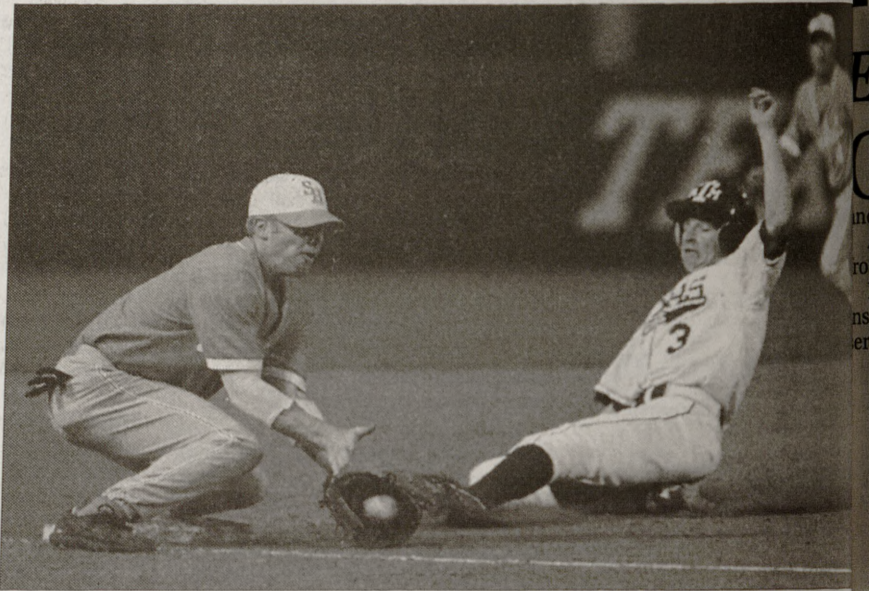
That roll will need to start against the Cyclones, who will carry a less-than-sterling 11-16 record into Aggieland after being saddled with a 10-4 loss to intrastate rival Northern Iowa Wednesday night.

"I think it's going to be a typical weekend," Johnson said. "So I would anticipate an Iowa State team to come in here and play very well. They've got a couple of pitchers that pro scouts will be coming to watch. Apparently, the pitching is very good, and they've got some outstanding hitters."

The ace of the Cyclone pitching staff is junior righthander Ryan Seifert, who boasts a 2.50 ERA in just under 40 innings.

As far as firepower is concerned, ISU is led by junior first baseman Shawn Leimbek, who leads the team with a .400 average, 42 hits, 25 runs and 22 RBIs.

"I anticipate nothing less than a battle," Johnson said. "That seems to be what we face every week. So we're looking forward to playing a real tough team."



Sophomore outfielder **Jason Tyner** steals third base against Sam Houston State Tuesday night at Olsen Field.

Ags look to get back into swing of things

BY DENNIS RAMIREZ
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team will continue its Big 12 Conference play today when they face the Texas Tech University Red Raiders at 5 p.m. at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

The Aggies, 6-9 overall and 2-2 in conference, are coming off of a disappointing but confidence-building loss to Kansas University Saturday night. The loss was the sixth 4-3 loss for the Aggies, but Assistant Coach Kel Lange said the match turned a lot of heads.

"Despite the loss, we competed very well against an excellent Kansas team," Lange said. "It was a close match and we didn't execute, so that is what cost us another close match. But the guys saw that we could play and compete well against Kansas and the team morale is very good right now."

While the Red Raiders will try to gun their way to victory, the Aggie netters have something else in mind for them. Because Tech has had a similar disappointing season, the Aggies expect another close match.

"This is an opportunity for them (Tech) to come in here and do something special for themselves," Lange said. "It's been no secret the way things have been going for us, so we are looking at this match the same way. It's two very similar teams talent-wise, so we just need to execute better."

Senior Robbie Krause is expecting a fired-up Tech squad full of emotion, but looks at the Kansas match as something to fall back on.

"They (Tech) have a lot of new guys, but we expect them to be just like the coach — fiery," Krause said.

"We are expecting a close match and very tough competition. As far as our game plan, though, not much has changed. The Kansas match gave us a lot of confidence and you shouldn't expect any big surprises, just everybody going out there to win."

Junior Eric Elek affirmed the morale and confidence the Aggie netters will take into the match. "We have had a tough season, but it is good for us because we are now in a situation where we have to win," Elek said. "We are pretty confident because we have played well and competed well. Tech is a solid team and we

know what we have to do, so we'll be ready for them."

The match should prove to be close, and will provide the Aggies either another figure in the win column or something to build on.

Lange said he is looking for the team to stake their claim, and he looks for community support.

"We have been practicing hard and competing well, so now we have to be ready to play hard," Lange said. "We are playing at home so we should have a home court advantage, and you need it when a team like Tech comes into town because of the in state rivalry. Hopefully when five o'clock rolls around we'll get some students and people from the community out to support us and give us an edge."

"This field is a tough one and last year when we went, it was the first or second time we had faced a tough field," Sutherland said. "But this year we've been facing them every week, and I don't think we are intimidated

any more about competing. "It used to be that we weren't in the top 10 and didn't play them (the top teams), but now we are in the top 10 and play them all of the time."

A&M is coming off a three-week break since placing sixth in the Betsy Rawls Longhorn Classic in Austin. Sutherland said the Aggies needed the break to regroup and rest.

"I think they needed a mental break, because we've been at it pretty hard," Sutherland said. "I hope that it will help them. It's a hard thing for a coach to do, though, because you feel like you are losing a little bit of control."

This weekend's 54-hole tournament will be the last opportunity for A&M to brush up its skills before the Big 12 Championships April 21-23 in Lawrence, Kan.

Sutherland said the team is learning with each tournament.

"The last group of tournaments gave us a chance to sit down and look at statistics to see where our strengths and weaknesses are," Sutherland said. "Hopefully, in the last couple of weeks they've been working to improve them."

Rosberg said the Lady Aggies will surprise people at the tournament and she expects them to play better than they did last year.

"It feels like the team is getting better with each tournament, and we are getting everything together now," Rosberg said. "I feel really good about this tournament."

Lady golfers head west for Invitational

BY LARA L. ZUEHLKE
THE BATTALION

The 10th-ranked Texas A&M Women's Golf Team will tee off against the nation's best golfers today in the PING/Arizona State Invitational in Tempe, Ariz.

The Lady Ags will face some of the fiercest teams in the college ranks, including No. 1 Arizona State, No. 3 University of Arizona and No. 4 Stanford University.

Representing the Aggies will be senior Wendi Wight, juniors Jamie Hullett and Isabelle Rosberg, sophomore Jennifer Emmons and freshman Anna Becker.

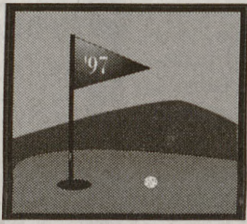
Rosberg said the tournament will provide A&M some of the toughest competition it has seen this year.

"We know it (the competition) is going to be just as good as regionals," Rosberg said. "Since ASU is hosting it, all of the good teams will be there. It's going to be a good field."

The Lady Aggies finished 11th at the Invitational last season, but are looking to fare better this weekend.

A&M Head Coach Jeanne Sutherland said the Ags are more experienced this year, giving them more confidence in their game.

"This field is a tough one and last year when we went, it was the first or second time we had faced a tough field," Sutherland said. "But this year we've been facing them every week, and I don't think we are intimidated



Lady Aggies set for Big 12 battle

BY NICKI SMITH
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Softball Team (22-19) had its first look at the Big 12 Conference last weekend against the University of Nebraska and Iowa State University, but this weekend will prove to be a tougher test for the Lady Aggies as they face two top 25 teams on the road.

Tomorrow, the team will travel to Lawrence, Kan. to face the 25th-ranked Lady Jayhawks of Kansas University. They then will play the 12th-ranked University of Missouri Sunday in Columbia, Mo.

The Lady Jayhawks are 22-12 overall, while the Lady Tigers lead the Big 12 with a .345 batting average and a .499 slugging percentage. Both are undefeated in the Big 12.

Assistant Head Coach Joy Jackson said the Lady Aggies know they will have to be at their best to defeat Kansas and Missouri.

"Both of these teams have a lot of tenacity and really get after it," Jackson said. "In the Big 12, there are no teams you can look past because teams are getting better and the athletes are getting better. We

know these games are going to be no piece of cake."

The Lady Aggies currently hold a Big 12 record of 2-2, a .249 batting average and a team ERA of 1.18.

Freshman Jamie Smith leads the team with a .314 batting average, while junior Trina Solesbee leads the team with five home runs and a .314 slugging percentage.

Freshman second baseman Angie Long said the Lady Aggies need to improve on some things if they want to win this weekend.

"We need to work on making less errors," Long said. "It was great that we beat Nebraska, which is a pretty good team."

but we don't want to split double headers anymore."

Jackson said defeating two powerful teams in the Big 12 should boost the Lady Aggies' hopes.

"It is going to be a tough weekend for us on the road, which means we will have to be more focused," Jackson said. "We know we can't beat these teams because both Missouri and Kansas have lost to teams that shouldn't have. But we still know we are doing something right, so we have to keep that in mind."

"We need to work on making less errors."

Angie Long
Freshman second baseman

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