

## Aggie tennis looks to improve conference record

By DENNIS RAMIREZ  
THE BATTALION

This weekend, the Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team will pack up its bags and head out of Dodge to travel to Oklahoma in hopes of salvaging its conference season.

With an overall record of 7-9 and a Big 12 record of 2-2, the Aggie netters are up against the wall. After an inopportune weekend which found the squad having to postpone their match against Texas Tech University be-

cause of Mother Nature, the Ags came back against the Rice University Owls Sunday.

"We played one of our better matches against Rice and beat them 5-2 on the road," Head Coach Tim Cass said. "This weekend, as we head out on the road once again, we face two very similar teams, and we hope that this past weekend's experience helps us out."

As Oklahoma University and Oklahoma State University await the team, the Aggies remain confident that they can pull off the

sweep and come out on top.

Junior Carlos Tori said while both Oklahoma squads are fine teams, the Aggies' confidence level should help pull out the win.

"They are good teams and important matches for us because by winning both matches, [we have] a chance to save our conference season," Tori said. "We are really solid right now and the guys are playing very well. We are playing the best tennis of the year and that is in large part due to our confidence level—we won't lose anymore 4-3 matches."

This level of play is exemplified by the Aggies' convincing wins in two of their last three matches. Right now, as conference play is winding down, the Aggies look for momentum at the conference championships April 24-27.

"I do believe that we can beat both of these teams and get a winning streak going," freshman Tony Young said. "As the season is finishing up, these are two good matches for us to play and win. Everybody's got to come out and play as well as they can

and get something going as we head into the conference tournament."

As the Ags head out for unknown territory, their hopes of salvaging a below-season remain high.

"Since the beginning, we have been going to focus our year on taking care of our own selves, putting together our game and playing with our hearts," Cass said. "I still believe that this is the case and I really believe that if we can do that on a trip like this, we can come out of it with

## Horan, Young have become partners in crime

► Sophomore Brent Horan has had to step it up a few notches this year.

By MATT MITCHELL  
THE BATTALION

It has been a tale of two seasons for Brent Horan. A sophomore on the Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team, Horan has had to make the transition from observer his freshman year to heavily dependent-on contributor.

"I've had to step up this year because we lost three of our top four players from last year, and that put me in a position I've never been in," said the 6-foot-2, 180-pound Lake McQueeney native. "I've played four (this season), and last year I was seven. I played a few matches of five and six, but this is great experience. I've gotten to play everything, and I think the more I play the better I'll get."

First-year Head Coach Tim Cass is counting on that, as Horan has moved from the seven spot into the middle of the Aggies' rotation.

"Brent has done a good job and pretty much consistently played anywhere from three to five," Cass said. "In a realistic fashion, he's shown some real bright spots and taken a couple of lumps. But all in all, I think he's really matured a lot since the beginning of the season."

Part of Horan's maturation undoubtedly began last season, when he was most commonly known as the younger brother of former two-time Southwest Conference individual champion Eric Horan, who lettered for the Aggies from 1993-1996.

Horan said playing with his older brother afforded him insights which have proved invaluable as he has accepted a larger role on the team.

"It was good because I got to watch him play all the time, and

got to see how he acted and reacted to all the players," Horan said. "I'd seen him before, but now I could see how he was with the team, so that was different. He was older and he'd gone through it."

Horan's forte is churning out powerful ground strokes with his somewhat unusual playing style. Horan uses a two-handed grip on both his forehands and his backhands, a trait he admits is uncommon, but works for him.

"It's pretty rare—there aren't too many pros that do it," Horan said. "The big advantage is power. I think sometimes I can hit the ball harder with two hands on the racket. The disadvantage would be (lack of) reach because you can't get a full extension. When you have two hands on both sides, your swing is real compact."

Horan's unusual swing has been employed full-time this season. He has posted an even 12-12 record in matches this season, splitting both dual (8-8) and tournament (4-4) matches. Horan has won his last four matches, though he says being prepared for

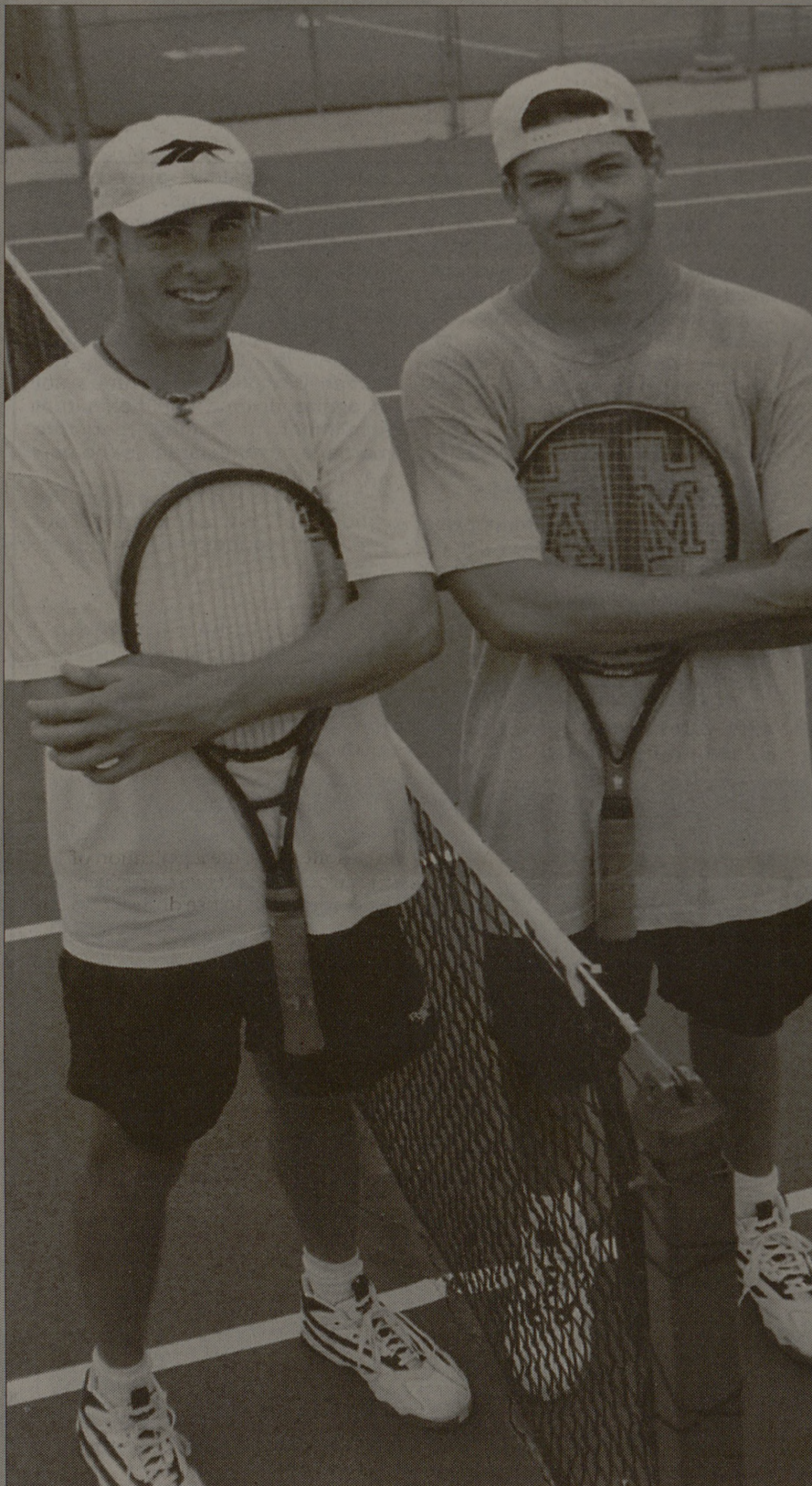
each match can be a struggle.

"You have to be ready to go out and play every time," Horan said. "There's only 20-something matches you get to play, and that's hard to do. But it's something you see the mature guys and the guys that have played a lot do."

"Now that I've started playing regularly, I'm seeing what Coach [Cass] wants from me, and what I have to do to win every time. I think the key is just to go out and play the way I have the last four matches."

Continued success would be a huge boost for Cass, who says he's seen a maturity from Horan that bodes well for the future.

"This season has been good for him," Cass said. "He's probably worked harder and more consistently than he has in the past, and I think it's showing as far as results go. He's becoming a guy that people are turning to as a leader, and that's going to be more and more important as our team develops."



Derek Demere, THE BATTALION

► Improved freshman Tony Young makes an impact on young team.

By DENNIS RAMIREZ  
THE BATTALION

While most freshmen Texas A&M University are busy trying to land a decent GPR, freshman Tony Young is trying to land a seat on the Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team.

The 6-foot-3 Young is an example of what can be accomplished in a year simply by learning and sticking to fundamentals. Through improvement and increased experience, Young said he has been able to become a better player.

"I have definitely improved a lot since the beginning of the year," Young said. "I credit that to playing and practicing with solid players every day and to the coaches doing an excellent job and understanding how I want to play tennis."

Young has been playing the sport since the tender age of 10, but it was the competitive aspect of the game which allowed him to concentrate on tennis at the age of 13.

"I started off playing with my mom just for fun, but before I knew it, she had me signed up and I was playing tournaments when I was 11," Young said. "I chose to dedicate myself to tennis because it was the one sport which I was winning and I really liked that aspect."

From Indianapolis, Ind., Young was always ranked among the top players in the state and was used to being the top dog.

Young now carries that same competitive edge to the courts, and that edge is what has pushed him to a winning percentage above .500 and the No. 3 slot on the tennis squad.

"Coming into the season this year I was very anxious, but I was just looking to play in the top six," Young said. "I always try to be as competitive as possible on the court, and that has helped my game throughout the years. Although I might have some off days, and while it is hard to bring out the same enthusiasm every day at this level because I want to be the best I can, I push myself to do it."

Head Coach Tim Cass said that although Young is only a freshman, he has certain distinctive characteristics which will help him accomplish his goals.

"Tony has a very unique competitive drive which allows him to relax but be competitive at the same time, and that will help him grow and develop even more," Cass said. "He has shown the most improvement of anyone. At the beginning of the year he was questionable as to whether he'd be a top six and now he has been playing strong at the No. 3 position."

Junior teammate Carlos Tori said Young has been put in a unique position. "Tony is a very talented player with one of the best serves I've seen in college tennis," Tori said. "While the matches and experience have allowed him to improve, the fact is that he picks tennis up quick and is able to absorb what the coaches teach him as added fuel to his game. He is a hard worker and loves the game of tennis."

Young's work ethic and vast improvement has not gotten to his head. His humble goals and winning attitude are evident when watching him work out. Young holds his future here at A&M in high regard with hopes for the best.

"In the next couple of years, we see the coaches trying to build the best program possible and bringing home a conference championship," Young said. "A conference championship is a goal of mine, but even to be a part of a 10 team would be great. It is a goal of mine, though, to go to college tennis I just want to become the best player possible."

Young certainly has been able to establish himself as a solid freshman standout with his attitude. As we look into the crystal ball to see what the future holds for Young here at A&M, the one thing observed is a big, strong man with a screaming serve.

Cass said as time moves on, Young will be looked toward for leadership and consistency on and off of the court.

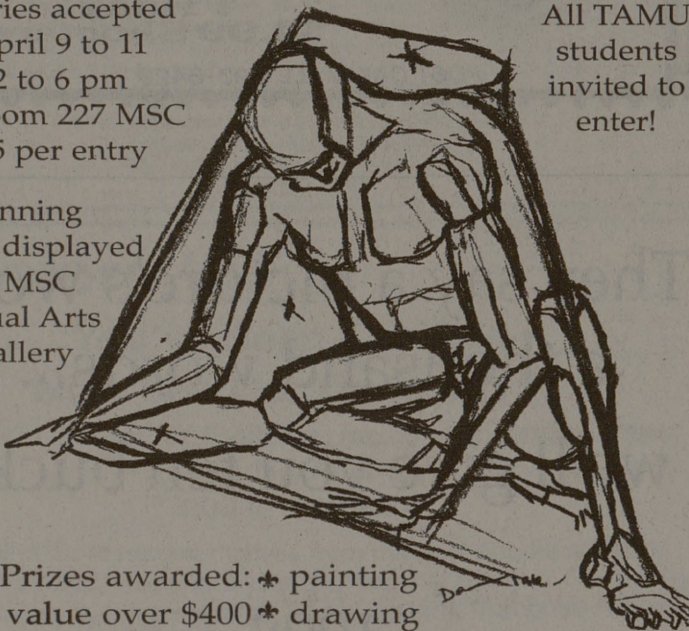
"He has come a long way in a very short period and his potential is very good," Cass said. "Time moves on, he will be looked at as a leader, and we hope that he is able to keep his work ethic in and day out and doesn't lose sight of success."

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