

Men's Golf Big 12 Championship

Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

A&M peeking in time for conference tourney



Chris Ferrell

The Texas A&M Men's Golf Team is heating up at just the right time. With the Big 12 Tournament set to kick off Monday, A&M is playing its best golf of the year. The Aggies have finished in the money at their past three events, tying for third at the Louisiana Classics, winning the Border Olympics and finishing second at the All-American Intercollegiate.

The rest of the country has taken notice of what Head Coach Bob Ellis and his boys are doing. Last week the Aggies entered the Golfweek/Taylor Made rankings for the first time this season at No. 27.

The past three tournaments have been a vast improvement over the fall season, which saw the Aggies finish no higher than eighth in any competition.

Winner by committee

A key to A&M's success has been the ability of different players to step up. All five Aggie golfers have led the team in scoring at least once this season. Sophomore Ryan Palmer paced the Aggie golf team in the spring's first event in Monterrey, Mexico, finishing fifth overall with a one-under-par 215.

At the University of Texas-El Paso Intercollegiate, junior Miguel del Angel led the charge with a two-round total of 147. Freshman Lee Reed took his turn atop the leader board with a sixth-place

finish at the Louisiana Classics in March. Sophomore Ty Cox made his best showing of the season at the All-American Intercollegiate, finishing second. Jeff Brown, the team's lone senior, has led the Aggies in scoring twice this season, first at the Taylor Made Big Island Intercollegiate and then placing first at the Border Olympics.

Ellis said he would not be surprised to see any of the five battling for the Big 12 title.

Home course advantage

As the Aggies head to the Prairie Dunes Country Club in Hutchinson, Kan., they will find themselves at a bit of a disadvantage. The course played host to the final seven Big 8 championship tournaments, a factor which will give the former Big 8 schools an edge.

Ellis said the course is different from many in this area.

"I played the course once in college and I think they had six trees on the course," Ellis said. "I think they have eight trees now. It's an old Perry Maxwell course, and Perry Maxwell is just a great golf architect. His golf courses are awesome. I'm looking forward to playing it."

The fast greens are going to make putting a priority.

The forecast calls for...

Weather will once again be a factor for A&M. April in Kansas is traditionally a windy time of year and next week should not be any different. However, it is nothing the Aggies have not seen before. If A&M has learned anything this year, it's how to handle the climate. The team has had to battle Mother Nature all season. Over the season, the A&M has played in wind, cold, and rain. The previous conditions may prove to be good practice for the Big 12 Tournament.

Aggies look to stay hot at Big 12

By CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

To say the Big 12 Championship is coming along at the right time for the 27th-ranked Texas A&M Men's Golf Team is a major understatement.

After a sluggish start, the Aggies have caught fire and finished in the top three in their past three tournaments.

A&M is coming off a second place finish at the All-American Intercollegiate in their last outing. Head Coach Bob Ellis said his team's performance at the All-American was encouraging.

"Hopefully we'll be able to get everyone going well," Ellis said. "I was glad to see [sophomore] Ty [Cox] put together a good tournament at the All-American. He's starting to play more the way he's capable of playing. [Senior Jeff] Brown's (Brown) played consistently. He didn't start out well, but he finished strong the last 27 holes. [Junior] Miguel [del Angel] started off slow and then came back well."

"Everybody seems to be playing well. The last three tournaments you can see some

marked improvement and that's what your looking for."

After the event, the team checked into the national rankings for the first time this season.

Ellis said while the rankings are nice, the team is not paying too much attention to them.

"The most important ranking comes at the end of the season," Ellis said. "What those show is that you've been doing well and your moving up in the polls. What they show is we're going in the right direction."

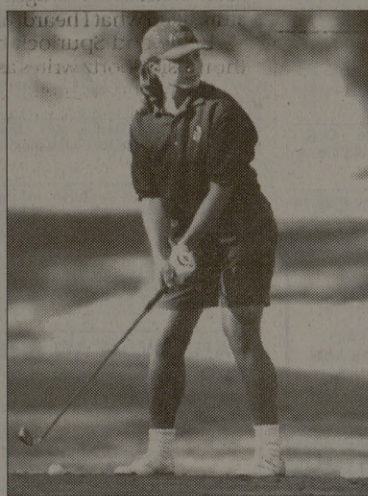
The Aggies will look to continue their current run against a solid field of opponents.

While the current crop of teams does not contain as many golf powerhouses as the former Southwest Conference, Ellis said there are some very strong teams in the field.

Beside 2nd-ranked Oklahoma State University and the 11th-ranked University of Texas Longhorns, A&M is the only other nationally ranked team in conference.

Ellis said OSU is the team to beat.

"They are a very highly ranked school and going to provide the toughest competition," Ellis said. "They're going to be well-prepared, especially with this being the first year of the new Big 12."



Junior Aurora Kirchner prepares to shoot for the green.

Kirchner brings spark to Lady Ags

By LARA L. ZUEHLKE
THE BATTALION

Junior Aurora Kirchner, a member of the Texas A&M Women's Golf Team, was destined to play golf. Growing up in a family full of golfers, it was inevitable she would play the game.

Kirchner began playing as a nine-year-old under the watchful eye of her father, who played golf at the University of Illinois.

The Klein High School graduate said her parents convinced her and her sisters to start playing golf.

"They definitely had a big influence," Kirchner said. "My parents did push us, but I was always real motivated to do it. I know it was harder for my sisters, because they would get angry sometimes when they didn't want to practice."

Kirchner said she has always been willing to practice and improve.

"I loved it from the start, so it was never really hard for me to go out to the golf course (to practice) in whatever weather," Kirchner said. "I knew I wanted to get better."

Kirchner's countless hours on the golf course have paid off. She is fourth on the Lady Aggie team, with a 81.33 average and tied for 16th at the Big 12 Championship.

A&M Head Coach Jeanne Sutherland said she has seen Kirchner's game improve since she first came to A&M.

"Aurora's learned a lot over the past three years," Sutherland said. "Her game has improved a lot since she came in. I'd say the areas she's improved on the most are her short game and her course management."

Sutherland said Kirchner brings an upbeat atmosphere to the A&M team.

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