

Monday • July 14, 1997

Brave warriors

A&M hosts 30 teams at the Hottest Rugby Tournament

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

With temperatures soaring into the upper 90s Saturday, only the heartiest of athletes braved the scorching heat. But what else would one expect, as the Texas A&M Rugby Club hosted the Hottest Rugby in Texas Tournament?

A total of 30 teams, including four youth teams, made the trip to Agriland, and the summer brand of 7-7 rugby, as opposed to the 15-on-15 played during the school year, was fast and furious.

The tournament is the largest in a four-state area, and although the A&M contingent lost in the semifinals, the Aggies dominated their opponents in the round-robin qualifier.

"We qualified as No. 1 going into the final, with the best point differential," said team captain and senior pre-med major Gavin Loftus, who had three hat tricks and scored a total of 68 points. "We only had 10 points scored against us, and we scored about 180 points. It's been damn hot, but it's also been a lot of fun."

Even with a steady breeze blowing across the polo fields for much of the day, many players and spectators sought refuge from the heat by huddling under scant groves of trees or cramming inside makeshift tents with lawn chairs and Igloo coolers strewn about.

But as hot as it was outside, the action on the field, from the driving tackles to the perfectly-timed laterals, was just as hot.

The thought of rugby conjures images of burly, gap-toothed behemoths hell-bent on dismembering opponents in the most brutal displays of violence this side of a Tyson fight.

Rugby is, in actuality, a game of strategy as well as physical prowess. The most obvious comparison is to American football, and the two games have their share of both similarities and differences.

"The best way to describe rugby

“It's been damn hot, but it's also been a lot of fun.”

Gavin Loftus
Senior pre-med major

is to imagine a football game where one team is down by a touchdown with a minute left," said Steve Reinhardt, a senior ocean engineering major. "The other team kicks you the ball and time runs out, and you don't want to go down with it because then the game is over, so they lateral it right before they are tackled. That's rugby."

A rugby ball is an oblong spheroid that is bigger and lighter than a football, with a lot of bounce to it. As a team runs down the field, players can pass the ball backwards or kick it forwards, but they can't make a forward pass. As in football, to score, a player runs into the end zone, but in rugby, the player has to be in control of the

ball and set it down to score.

To score in such a manner is called a try, and like football, extra points are tried for by kicking the ball through the goal posts. This kick is no gimme, though, because of one catch — whoever is kicking must drop-kick the ball in a straight line out from the spot in the end zone where he scored the try.

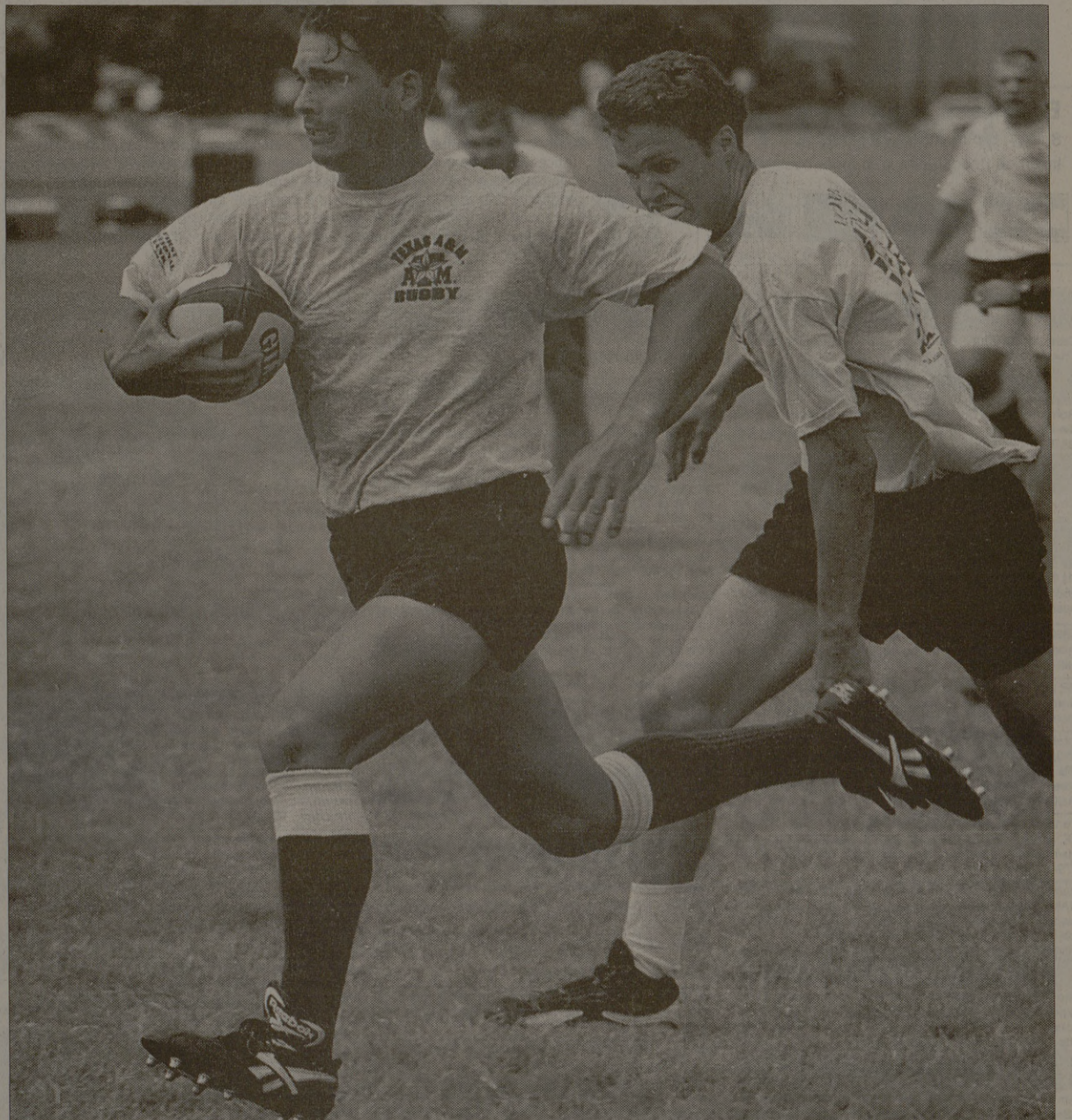
"It matters to score in the middle," Reinhardt said. "If you have three scores over on the sideline where he won't make the kick, that's six points, which is worth more than a try. So it's a challenge."

As in football, there are different positions. Big men that act much like linemen are referred to as props, and backs are the fast guys that are comparable, as one might suspect, to running backs in football.

The quarterback is known as a scrum half, and is in charge of getting the ball from the scrum, a makeshift huddle and initiating the ensuing action. The only time play stops is when the ball goes out of bounds, making rugby arguably as non-stop a sport as soccer.

Despite all the constant action and excitement, Reinhardt expresses the opinion shared by many of his colleagues, that rugby is often unjustly viewed as a brutal pastime.

"Rugby gets a bad rap because people are going to get hurt, yes," Reinhardt said, "but people get hurt in every sport. Just because we don't wear pads doesn't mean people get hurt more, because tacklers won't go for a knee with their helmet because they aren't wearing a helmet. They'll go for around your waist to take you down."



PHOTOGRAPH: Stew Milne
A&M's Carson Hickson runs from a Victoria Rugby Club defender Saturday at the A&M Polo Fields. A&M advanced to the semi-final round.

High school students shoot high at tourney

By TRAVIS V. DABNEY
THE BATTALION

The cities of Bryan and College Station have become the center of the women's high school basketball world over the last week. Over 150 women's basketball teams from Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas have descended on the twin cities area for the 11th annual Whataburger Southwest Shootout.

Gordon Loucks, who began this tournament 11 years ago and runs it today, started the tournament with eight teams in Corpus Christi and has seen it grow every year since. "The amount of growth that we have seen in this tournament has been just

great," Loucks said.

The tournament has all the aspects of major preseason basketball tournaments with the exception that the determination of a tournament champion is not the prime objective.

"The objective is to not only have fun playing basketball, but to allow colleges from all over the country to view some of the better talent from the four state area, and allow these girls to showcase some of their talent to these coaches," Loucks said.

The gyms that were hosting these games were filled with college coaches. Coaches hail from the University of Texas, Texas A&M, TCU, the University of Miami and Ohio State University, just to name a few.

"There are college recruiters from one end of this country to the other here at this tournament," Loucks said.

While the tournament benefits the players and coaches, Loucks said the impact on the community is enormous.

"The community receives a one to two million dollar impact," he said.

The tournament has become a real success because there is no end to its benefits. The effects run all the way from the players themselves; the coaches, who have all the players in one place to evaluate at one time; and the community, who receives tourist revenue. The tournament moved from Corpus Christi to Bryan-College Station three years ago to gain more exposure.

"Lynn Hickey [senior associate athletic director] of Texas A&M was crucial to the move of this tournament, and it would not have happened without her help," Loucks said.

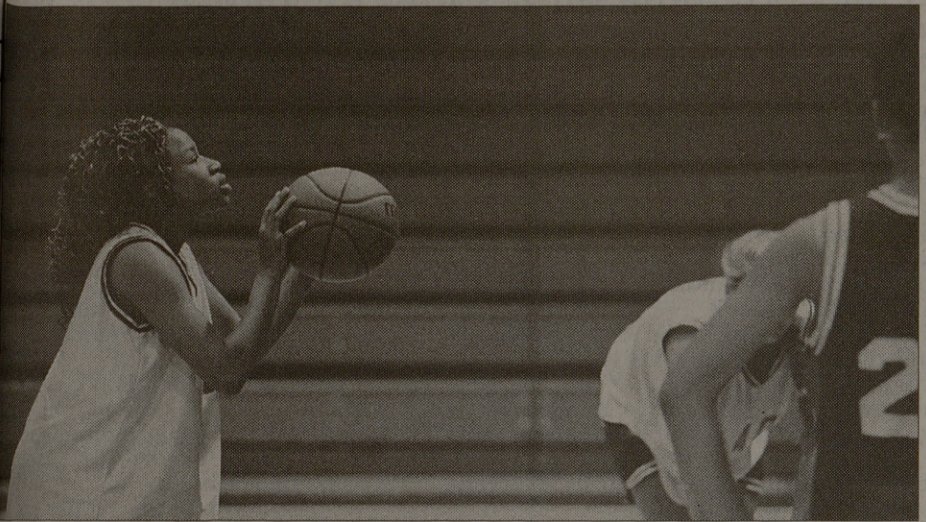
One of the major reasons for the development of the tournament was the rule changes. Previously, the University Interscholastic League, which governs Texas high school athletics, did not allow more than three players from one high school team to participate on the same summer league team. The rule was changed to allow the whole team to participate together, and success has followed as the number of teams has skyrocketed.

Like many individuals, who work with young people, Loucks takes great satisfaction in this tournament. Loucks spends countless hours putting together this tournament, yet he gains nothing financially. He spends from November until mid-March traveling all over the state scouting these high school hoopsters.

"We do this tournament because we want to help everyone involved, and I think that we do that," Loucks said.



PHOTOGRAPH: Rony Angkriwan
A member of the East Texas Magic dribbles the ball upcourt against the Lady Rockets at the Whataburger Southwest Shootout this weekend.



PHOTOGRAPH: Rony Angkriwan
The East Texas Magic play against the Lady Rockets at the Whataburger Southwest Shootout this weekend.

A taste of SUMMER

This Week at the MSC

Wed. 16th, 12-1pm	MSC Town Hall: Listening Party—free CDs!	Rec Center Pool (A&M I.D. Required)
Wed. 16th, 4pm	MSC Political Forum: "Political Ethics and Open Government"	MSC 230
Thu. 17th, 8:30pm	MSC Film Society: <i>Animal House</i>	MSC 201

free admission to all events!

Your Student Union 845-1515

WHAT'S IT LIKE AT THE PLASMA CENTER?

To the staff of the Plasma Center,

I would like to start by saying thank you to each and every employee for making the past three years enjoyable in a professional, efficient and courteous environment. As a donor since 1993, I have been more than satisfied with every aspect of your operation, which allows myself and others to contribute what we can to community service, all the while being serviced by diligent, but relaxed, workers. Everyone at the Plasma Center, from those behind the front counter to the phlebotomists to the supervisors, have made great efforts to insure that each donor feels hygienically safe, as well as keeping the atmosphere light.

Like most, I started coming to the Plasma Center for monetary reasons, but I soon developed acquaintances that appealed to me almost as much as the original need for money, enabling me to look forward to each donation, not only for my wallet's sake but also to see my friends. Like I commented to someone recently, talking to people at the Plasma Center was like getting mail from a far-off friend that you don't get to do much with, but who you can talk to as often as you write. For those acquaintances and for your continual services. I would like to thank all of those I've come to know and appreciate over the past three years - Emily, and Tracy, Heath, and Marty, Ada and Josie, etc... more I can't remember or those who have gone on to better things.

So, as I graduate from this great University, I bid you all a fond farewell and strong commendations on such a successful blend of quality medical practice and friendly service. Thank you all and have a great summer. Thanks, C.F.

WESTGATE BIOLOGICALS
THE PLASMA CENTER

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