

Mensik fills team's void

By Travis V. Dabney
Staff writer

Unlike the quarterback in football and the point guard in basketball, the setter in volleyball rarely gets the same accolades and recognition that the aforementioned players receive. Yet the setter in volleyball is certainly as important, if not more important than any command individual in any sport. No set, no spike, just that simple. Texas A&M volleyball team setter Farah Mensik took over the setter position in the 1996 season from Honorable Mention All American Suzy Wentz and did not look back. Mensik got her start in sports at an early age, as her parents were avid softball players. "I really kind of grew up on the volleyball field with my parents and that was what led me to sports," Mensik said. When Mensik entered junior high she began what would turn out to be a very successful career in volleyball. In high school, Mensik was hitting time between volleyball and track, and realized a decision would

have to be made as to which sport would get her full devotion. "I saw that my talents were really suited towards volleyball, so that is what I did," Mensik said. After playing three years on varsity in the Houston suburb of Katy, Mensik was faced with the recruiting process. "I was recruited by most of the old Southwest Conference schools but it really came down between A&M and Arkansas," Mensik said. "I was told by several people to go to a place where if I was injured and could no longer play volleyball that I would want to go to anyway." "Plus the school spirit is so strong here and that is really what drew me to A&M." As the Aggies move forward this season with so many expectations, Mensik still looks at some of the more abstract details of playing volleyball here at Texas A&M. "The feeling that you get walking out onto the court at G. Rollie White is just tremendous, I love it," Mensik said. "Volleyball is really growing here and the support that we receive from the students and community has really been great."

While Mensik is a very team centered player and is reluctant to talk about personal goals, there are definitely some that exist. "Sure I would like to be in the top three in the Big 12 in assists, and I would also like to get some type of all conference recognition in the Big 12, but it is all about the team," Mensik said. When Coach Laurie Corbelli was asked about Mensik and her position with team, it is evident Corbelli and the rest of the team are depending on Mensik a great deal this season. "She is certainly one of the most critical players on the team this season; she is going to have to make a lot of plays and key decisions," Corbelli said. "She really sets the pace for our offense." Off the court, Mensik has proven herself in the classroom with the same type of success as on the volleyball court. She is a three time GTE Academic All-American as well as a member of the dean's list. "Farah is a very driven young lady and some what of a perfectionist," Corbelli said "Yet, at the same time she is a very mellow, low-key individual."



RONY ANGRIWAN/THE BATTALION
Senior setter Farah Mensik looks to lead the Aggies to new heights this season.

McGuire signs three-year deal

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The St. Louis Cardinals have signed Mark McGwire for at least three more seasons, and he did not have to tear up the team to keep him. McGwire, who joined Babe Ruth last week as the only players with consecutive 50-homer seasons, signed a three-year, \$28 million deal Tuesday. The deal includes a \$1 million signing bonus and a fourth season at McGwire's option that

The deferred money and below-market salary will allow the Cardinals to attempt to re-sign pitchers Andy Benes and Todd Stottlemyre. Benes, who is 28-17 in two seasons with the Cardinals, has a player option on his deal. The team has an option on the contract of Stottlemyre, 26-20 in two seasons with the team.

"We fully expect him (McGuire) to finish his wonderful career in St. Louis."

BILL DEWITT
CARDINALS EXECUTIVE

"There's a lot of money being passed around, a lot of questions about how much guys are being paid and people looking for the last dollar," general manager Walt Jocketty said. "I can assure you that Mark McGwire did not do that. We're trying to structure it so we can keep everybody." The Cardinals had a \$44 million payroll without McGwire. They're counting on a healthy increase in season-ticket sales to help bridge the gap. "We've got a pretty high payroll relative to baseball and relative to a marketplace this size," DeWitt said. "But this city can support it because it's such a great baseball town." McGwire also is donating \$1 million a year to establish a charitable foundation to benefit sexually and physically abused children. McGwire had trouble keeping his composure describing the foundation, pausing for a half-minute at one point. "Let's just say children have a special place in my heart," McGwire said. "I just really believe a guy in my position can really help out." The Cardinals acquired McGwire, 33, from Oakland on July 31, the trading deadline. On Friday, he said he thought he and the Cardinals

were a perfect match, and that there was a good chance he'd be back. McGwire thinks the Cardinals, injury-riddled and 69-80 heading into the final weeks, should be back in the postseason next year. The fans who show up at Busch Stadium two hours early to watch his tape-measure shots in batting practice also played a part in him staying. "I tell you what, it makes me float every time I come to the ballpark, to play in this stadium and play in front of these fans," McGwire said. "I'm overwhelmed. I'm going to say that probably for the rest of my career." It did not hurt that McGwire is playing for his longtime Oakland manager, Tony La Russa. La Russa has an option for the next two seasons and it is all but certain he will be back. "I'm not speaking for him, but I don't think I would have signed if he wasn't coming back," McGwire said. Then he turned to La Russa and said, "All right?" McGwire has 51 home runs, 17 with St. Louis, and needs one to tie his career best set last year. He entered the day one home run behind Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr. for the major-league lead. Before he came to town, McGwire was said to prefer the West Coast because his 9-year-old son lives in southern California with his mother. Matthew McGwire gave the Cardinals a thumbs-up after a recent visit and had two words for his dad when the deal was announced: "all right!"

ings the total package to nearly \$40 million. One of McGwire's agents, Bob Cohen, said the bigger could have commanded at least another million per season on the free-agent market. Instead, he wanted to stay so much he not only agreed for less, he agreed to defer about 25 percent of the money until he retires. The negotiating process took only a week or so and the deal was finalized late Monday night. "We fully expect him to complete his wonderful career in St. Louis," said Bill DeWitt, head of the Cardinals' ownership group.

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BATMAN & ROBIN (PG-13)	7:05 9:40
STONE FISHING (PG)	7:30 9:45
SPEED 2 (PG-13)	7:10 9:50
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