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Aggies look to boom Sooners

BY JAMIE BURCH
Staff writer

Texas A&M senior defensive end Zerrick Rollins' long journey began at the University of Oklahoma, five years ago under then head coach Gary Gibbs. But playing for the Sooners as a true freshman was not Rollins' biggest concern.

His father, who lived in Houston, was diagnosed with cancer the same year. Rollins was forced to decide between staying in Norman, away from his father, and the possibility of losing a year of eligibility if he transferred. Rollins chose to be closer to his dad.

Rollins switched to A&M in 1994 but had to sit out the year due to NCAA transfer rules. He went on to letter his sophomore season as a backup and played in all 12 games in 1996.

Following his junior season, Rollins' world fell apart. His dad lost the long, grueling battle with cancer and passed away in May. Rollins fought through the pain and the turmoil to reestablish himself as a presence on the Wrecking Crew.

After the Aggies' 7-2 start this season, things have come full circle. The Aggies are set to play the Sooners tomorrow in Norman. It will mark Rollins' first time back since he packed his bags and left. The visit will give Rollins the opportunity to reconcile the past.

Rollins said he is not sure how the emotional return to Norman, a place filled with excruciating

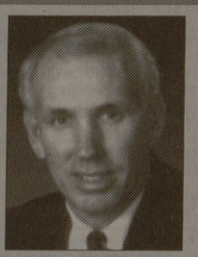
memories, will effect his play.

"I really won't know until I get out on the field," Rollins said. "I will definitely be more emotional. That's natural. But we're just going to go up there to take care of business, not to have fun."

The Aggies have plenty of business on the agenda. A win moves A&M one game away from a spot in the Big

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A&M COACH



12 Championship. A loss could jeopardize the teams chances of earning a shot at the south championship.

Despite the Sooners losing record (3-7, 1-5), they present problems defensively for A&M. Oklahoma runs an option style offense utilizing a shuttle system at quarterback and a big play threat out of the back field. Oklahoma will test A&M's often exposed run defense.

Defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz said he real-

izes how difficult it is to stop the option.

"(De'mond Parker) will be the best back we've played," Hankwitz said. "[The two quarterbacks] Eric More and Brandon Daniels are extremely fast in a system designed to get quarterbacks the ball. It's something you can't always simulate in practice. Your quarterback is not an option guy and your scout line are not 300-pound linemen."

Through nine games this season, Parker has carried the ball 194 times for 1,143 yards, an average of 5.9 yards per rush, ninth best in the nation.

Daniels made his first start at quarterback last week against Oklahoma State. He guided the Sooners to a 7-0 lead with two minutes remaining in the first quarter, but six turnovers erased any hope for a victory.

A&M junior quarterback Brannon Stewart said he recognizes Oklahoma is a good team once they eliminate the mistakes.

"They have the potential to not turn the ball over and all of a sudden they're as good as team as we've played all season," Stewart said.

Combine all this with 70,000 plus hostile Sooner fans and it appears the Aggies have an uphill battle in store. A&M coach R.C. Slocum said the team is very aware of the challenge of playing on the road.

"I'd much prefer to play at home," Slocum said. "But you can't win championships by playing all home games. At some point you have to go on the road and play at some of those places."



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Sirr Parker and the Aggies will look to close in on San Antonio.

Soccer team has something to prove as SMU comes to town

BY STEPHEN BOUDREAU
Staff writer

For the third consecutive season, the Texas A&M Soccer Team (18-2) will be making a run for the national championship in the NCAA postseason tournament.

Sunday afternoon at 1 p.m., the Southern Methodist University Mustangs (16-4-1) will ride into the Aggie Soccer Complex looking to upset the third-ranked Aggies.

"It's going to take what it has taken us throughout the whole season to come out on top," Big 12 Rookie of the Year Claire Elliott said. "Everyone has to play as a team, be on their game and stay focused. Of course we have had our slumps, like every single team, but when we get out there and play like we can play, we are unstoppable."

Earlier this season, the Aggies defeated the Mustangs in a physically and emotionally exhausting 1-0, overtime game in Dallas.

"Home field advantage against SMU is a huge edge for us. The game we played in Dallas was a very physical game, it was marked by a lot of fouls," said Coach G. Guerrieri. "They are a very physical, hard defending team. We are going to have to be technically quicker than them and play balls off before we get knocked off our balance and out of our rhythm."

The Aggies hold a 3-3-1 career series record against the Mustangs. In the second round of the 1995 NCAA tournament SMU outscored the Aggies 4-2 in overtime.

"It's going to be another tough game. We are lucky to be playing at home in front of our big crowd who loves to come out," Elliott said. "This team is ready to play. It will be even better since we will have the fans on our side in a big game like this."

A&M holds a 1-2 record in NCAA tournament play. Last season, the then fifth-seeded Aggies were upset by the University of San Diego in the first round at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

This season, despite being ranked third in the nation, the Aggies were not seeded for the tournament and will have to play a much more difficult schedule on their way to a potential national championship.

"I think (not being seeded) just shows that no one respects us yet in the nation. I think that needs to be something that motivates us going into the playoffs," senior All-American Bryn Blalack said. "We need to gain respect. We can't focus on the negative, we've got to turn it into something positive. I think we are all going to go for it all and try to prove some people wrong. We can't complain about the seedings if we don't come out and produce and win games."

But produce the Aggies have. Despite being ranked third for a large part of the season, in the top ten for the duration of the year and winning both the Big 12 regular and post-season titles, the Aggies were overlooked for the seedings.

"I think the team was offended by the seedings, but like we've said all along, we can only worry about the things we have control over," Guerrieri said. "To the players' benefit, they have control over how they play on the field. Our performances have been strong all season, which is evident by



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

Texas A&M All-American Bryn Blalack heads a ball in the Big 12 Championship game against Nebraska. Despite being ranked third in the nation, the Aggies are not seeded in the NCAA Tournament.

our championships. We're going to have to go out and prove ourselves every single game.

"It is motivation for us that we were overlooked. There is nothing we can do but go out and play our best."

The seeded teams were, in order, 13-time and defending national champion North Carolina (22-0-1), last year's runner up Notre Dame (20-0-1), Connecticut (19-3), Santa Clara (17-2-1), Duke (15-5), Virginia (13-4-2), Portland (14-4-0) and Maryland (12-8-3).

The winner between the Aggies and Mustangs will go on to play the winner of Portland vs. UCLA game, with the site being determined based on results of the two contests. The Aggies could potentially face Notre Dame in the third round.

"We are going to have to beat those teams at some point in the tournament if we want to come out on top, so we might as well get them out of the way in the beginning," Elliott said.

Tickets for Sunday's match will be \$8 for reserved seats, \$7 for adults and \$5 for students and children. Prices are set by the NCAA.

Senior harriers make final run at NCAA meet

BY JEFF WEBB
Staff writer

The Texas A&M Cross Country team will make its way to the NCAA District VI Championships November 15 in Denton, Texas. The Aggies are looking to clinch a NCAA berth with a second place finish for an automatic bid. Coach Greg Hinze says he feels the Aggies can make a strong showing despite the competition.

"This is it," Coach Hinze said. "This is the meet we've been striving for. You've got one slot. There are three or four teams fighting for the second automatic bid and they're all within 20 points of each other. It all comes down to who runs well that day."

The Arkansas Razorback team is currently the second-ranked team in the nation and will almost certainly qualify for the first automatic spot. For the seniors on this year's squad, this will probably be their final time to run for the Aggies.

"I feel pressure," senior Kari Wyatt said. "I've put pressure on myself. I don't feel any pressure

from anyone else. We want to have fun and do well for ourselves. I want to end my career on a good note."

The practice schedule for the Aggies has tapered off in lieu of the big meet this weekend. Mileage has been reduced much to the pleasure of the athletes.

"The practices now are better than doing 80 miles a week," Scott Lengfield said. "I'm at 50 miles a week, so the workouts aren't as long. I have more energy in class now."

Coach Hinze will probably be coaching his seniors for the last time this weekend and applauded the effort given throughout their careers.

"The group of seniors I have, I can't say enough good things about them," Hinze said. "We have to use some track scholarships for this team, and most of our students don't get scholarships. They do it because they want to. These other teams emphasize cross country, but if you put them on the track with us, our team might beat them every time."

Although the Aggies don't look likely to knock off Arkansas, they have a better than average chance to qualify for the second automatic bid. If that happens, the Aggie seniors will get to enjoy the feel of competition one last time.



Hinze

Golfers set for Hilton Head

BY JASON WHITCOMB
Staff writer

The No. 30 Texas A&M Men's Golf Team will close out the fall season this weekend at the infamous Palmetto Dunes Invitational in Hilton Head, South Carolina. This tournament will consist of the most competitive group of collegiate golfers outside of the NCAA postseason tournament in the spring, including the top 10 teams in the nation.

In preparation for this tournament, each Aggie golfer participated in the "Aggie Cup," a replication of the Ryder Cup, this past week.

"We broke the guys up into two teams and it really worked out well," said Coach Bob Ellis. "We got a lot of good responses

from the players. The level of competition was real high and it was particularly beneficial because it had been so long since our last tournament situation."

The course at Palmetto Dunes has traditionally benefited experienced players who have had the opportunity to play on it before. Last year, the Aggies played for the lead throughout the tournament, except for two disastrous holes that pummeled them to end of the pack. This year, however, the Ags will have three golfers that have played the course before and know when and where to avoid any mistakes.

"Our experience will definitely improve our chances to have a good tournament this year," Ellis said. "It is a demanding course as far as game management is con-

cerned. It has some long holes, but, in the most part, consists of short hole golf. We just need to avoid the two mistakes we made last year."

The Aggies are hoping to end the fall season with a strong performance and send a message to collegiate golfing world that they are a contender. Their five-man lineup will consist of senior Miguel del Angel, junior Ty Cox, sophomore Lee Reed and freshmen Clay Fullick and Ryan Tull.

"Last year we finished 17th and the challenge then was putting it behind us," Ellis said. "This year, we are hoping to finish higher, but it will not be detrimental if we do not perform well. I believe that a strong showing here could give us a big boost into the spring season."

The Battalion's 1997 Staff Picks

The Match-Ups	Chris Ferrell	Paul Mitchell	Jeremy Furtick	Kristina Buffin	Jamie Burch	Matt Mitchell	Stephen Boudreau	Travis Dabney	Margaux Harris	Len Callaway	Jeff Schmidt	Jeff Webb	Jason Whitcomb	Consensus
#18 Texas A&M (-14) @ Oklahoma	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M: Two wins for South title
Iowa St. @ Nebraska (-43)	Iowa St.	Nebraska	Nebraska	Iowa St.	Iowa St.	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Iowa St.	Nebraska: Huskers on fire for this one
Colorado @ #10 Kansas St. (-10)	Kansas St.	Colorado	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Colorado	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.: Last beat Buffs in 1984
Texas Tech @ #24 OSU (-6)	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU: Tech is finished
Baylor @ #25 Missouri (-16)	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri: No dramatic finish this week
Kansas @ Texas (-6.5)	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Kansas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Kansas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas: KU's the only worse team in Big 12
#1 Michigan (-15) @ #23 Wisconsin	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Wisconsin	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan: No Ron Dayne, no problem
#6 Penn St. (-6) @ #19 Purdue	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Purdue	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.: Playing for Big 10 pride now
#16 Auburn @ #7 Georgia (-7)	Auburn	Auburn	Georgia	Auburn	Auburn	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Auburn	Georgia	Georgia	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn: Tigers take bite out of Dogs
#13 Washington @ #9 UCLA (-2)	Washington	Washington	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	Washington	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA	Washington	UCLA: This one's for the Rose Bowl
Redskins @ Cowboys (-6)	Redskins	Redskins	Cowboys	Redskins	Cowboys	Cowboys	Redskins	Cowboys	Redskins	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Redskins	Cowboys: Every week crucial for Dallas
Broncos (-3) Chiefs	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos: Elway owns Schottenheimer
Last Four Weeks	9-3	8-4	10-2	7-5	8-4	8-4	8-4	5-7	8-4	8-4	8-4	5-7	8-4	Last Week: 100-56
Cumulative	67-50-3	60-57-3	67-50-3	59-58-3	60-57-3	61-56-3	63-54-3	56-61-3	58-59-3	35-23-2	41-41-2	53-64-3	61-56-3	Cumulative: 782-704-38

NOTE: The Battalion Staff will be picking against the betting line this semester. We in no way encourage any illegal wagering with the use of these betting lines, they are presented solely for entertainment purposes.