

## BIG WEDNESDAY

### Aggies prepare for February 4 signing day

By CHRIS FERRELL  
Staff writer

As the Texas A&M Football Team comes off its first Big 12 South title, it knows the championship was not won overnight. There were hours upon hours spent in the weight room on the practice field. There were countless sessions and scouting reports. But even more important, the foundation for the title was laid over the years through the recruiting effort of the school.

If the Aggies are to remain at the top of the Big 12 and climb towards the upper echelon of college programs, the next two weeks will be very important.

Coming off the Big 12 South title and an impressive showing in the Cotton Bowl against Texas Tech, A&M figures to once again compile one of the nation's top recruiting classes.

The team's top priority for the '98 recruiting season has been the offensive line where A&M lost three of its five starters. All-Big 12 center Steve McKinney, center Koby Hackradt and left tackle Chris Ruhman must all be replaced, which is a major reason the Aggies are looking to sign four linemen, as opposed to one or two at all other positions.

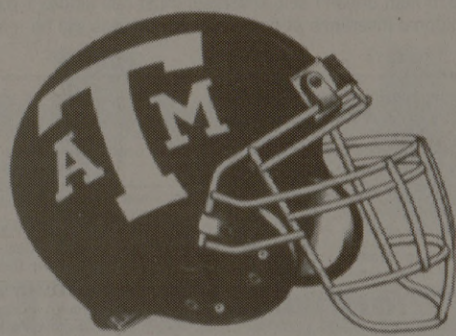
The countdown is rapidly approaching

signing day on Feb. 4, and A&M has received oral commitments from three linemen including 6-foot-8-inch, 285-pound Chris Montgomery, a state top-100 player on most lists. Montgomery is from Euless and played at the same high school as current A&M linemen Semisi Heimuli and Moses Vakalahi. A&M has also received oral commitments from Taylor Whitley a 6-foot-5-inch, 315-pounder from Sudan and Mike Mahan from Homer, La., who is also an imposing figure at 6-foot-7-inches, 310 pounds.

Tight end is also an area the Aggies are trying to build for the future. All-Big 12 tight end Derrick Spiller and tight ends Daniel Campbell and Matt Mahone are all entering their senior seasons. After they depart, Rodrick Broughton, who will be a sophomore next season, will be the only remaining tight end on the roster after 1998.

For the past two seasons A&M has been the Big 12's youngest team. Next season the Aggies will return 17 starters going into either their junior or senior seasons, a number which makes a strong recruiting class even more important.

Director of Football Operations Tim Cassidy said the large number of returning starters should not scare away any blue chip recruits



who want a chance to play early.

"Typically the top players which we recruit from are not concerned with depth charts," Cassidy said. "The best players like the competition."

All oral commitments are non-binding. A player is not obligated to a school until he signs a national letter of intent, a fact the Aggies have already experienced this recruiting season. The Aggies have already lost a player to Tennessee and Texas All-State running back Victor Ike changed his commitment from A&M to Texas, according to a report in yesterday's Austin-American Statesman.

## Texas A&M travels to Lincoln for dual meet

By COLBY MARTIN  
Staff writer

The Texas A&M Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving teams are not afraid of good competition. The Aggies have gone to the top of the nation's top dual meets already this month, and it is not getting any easier this week as the Aggies travel to Lincoln, Neb., to face the Minnesota Golden Gophers and the Nebraska Cornhuskers in a dual meet.

All three coaches stress winning these dual meets is important for confidence, but the main focus is improvement.

"We look at it as a funnel effect, where we want to get the feeling of competition, but winning a dual meet is not our main focus," Division Coach Kevin Wright said.

The 20th-ranked men's team defeated the 13th-ranked Miami Hurricanes last Saturday in Miami. The Aggies took first place in 10 of the events, including a sweep in the

100-yard breaststroke with Kyle Marden taking first, Matt Rice second and Chris Sandt finishing third. The Hurricanes won the diving events by default because the Aggie diving team did not compete.

"I have been pleased with our effort in practice and meets," Men's Coach Mel Nash said. "We have great leadership and hard workers from top to bottom."

Nash said, considering the competition, he is excited about how his team has stepped up to the challenges.

"Nebraska will be swimming in their home pool, and Minnesota has some experienced international swimmers, so it does not get any easier," Nash said.

The team will also be swimming in their best events, which is something that they have not done yet. The men will probably have to compete without Marden, who broke his hand after the meet in Miami.

The women's team has also stood up very well to the early

competition.

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**"The most important thing for our team (members) is to gain confidence in themselves, and they do this by competing against tough talent and doing well."**

DON WAGNER  
WOMEN'S SWIM COACH

tough talent and doing well," Women's Coach Don Wagner said.

In the women's last meet, Stacie Karnes won the 200-yard freestyle with a time of 1 minute, 49.59 seconds,

which was a season-best for A&M. Kelly Bolton aced the competition in the 100-freestyle with 51.42 seconds and Tracy Evans had a season-best 4:52.22 to win the 500-freestyle.

"I'm excited with the effort of our team," Wagner said.

Wagner said he felt his team measured up very well with both Nebraska and Minnesota and is up for the challenge.

The diving team will be at a disadvantage in Lincoln because platform diving, the Aggies' strong point, is not an event included in dual meets, but Wright said the meet is important nonetheless.

"The dual meets are just part of the process of getting to where we need to be," Wright said.

The main focus for the swimming and diving teams these next few weeks will be to improve as individuals in each event. These meets will be used as stepping stones to the teams' national title hopes.

## AGGIE SPORTS BRIEFS

from staff and wire reports

### Sykora earns All-American honor

Stacy Sykora, the 5-foot-10-inch junior outside hitter on the Texas A&M Volleyball Team, was named to the Volleyball All-American honorable mention team.

This is Sykora's second All-American honor handed to her this season. In December she was named to the American Volleyball Coaches Association All-American second team.

Sykora, from Burleson, lead the Aggies to a No. 13 final ranking, the highest in school history, and a

26-8 record.

Sykora was named to the NCAA East Regional All-Tournament Team after posting career highs in kills with 28 and digs with 25 in the Aggies' five-set, season-ending loss to No. 5 BYU in the semifinals of the NCAA Championship East Regional.

Sykora joined Demetria Sance from Texas, Fiona Nepo and Lisa Reitsma from Nebraska and Patrice Arrington from Oklahoma as the Big 12 representatives on the team.

## SPORTS BRIEFS

from staff and wire reports

### Cowboys' Jones meets with Seifert

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Dallas owner Jerry Jones said he met with former San Francisco 49ers coach George Seifert for several hours Thursday to discuss the Cowboys' head coaching vacancy.

"We probably spent three hours talking today," said Jones, in town for the Super Bowl. "George and I spent a lot of time on the competition committee together, so we know each other pretty well."

Seifert is the first known candidate to interview for the position, which came open when Barry Switzer resigned Jan. 9. The Cowboys are coming off a 6-10 season that was their worst since going 1-15 in 1989.

Jones has been uncharacteristically tight-lipped about the search for a replacement. He reportedly has a short list of between three and six candidates.

One of the others is Green Bay offensive coordinator Sherman Lewis, whom Jones can't speak with until after Sunday's game. On Thursday, Jones said he will interview Lewis on Sunday night or Monday, depending on Lewis' schedule.

Lewis has been the Packers' offensive coordinator since the 1993 season. He was their receivers coach the previous season, and he spent the nine years before that as a position coach in San Francisco.

"It has been my intent all along to visit with him," Jones told The Dallas

Morning News. "I would point out what happened in Green Bay this season as a logical reason for why I would want to talk to him."

The Packers drubbed the Cowboys 45-17 in November, beginning a winning streak that has led them to their second straight Super Bowl. Dallas missed the playoffs this season for the first time since 1990.

Another apparent candidate for the job is former UCLA coach Terry Donahue. Although Jones hasn't confirmed meeting with Donahue, the ex-coach's agent, Bob Rosen, told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram the pair met Saturday through Tuesday.

Other reported candidates include Broncos offensive coordinator Gary Kubiak and former Cowboys defensive coordinator Butch Davis, the head coach at the University of Miami.

Jones also is believed to be interested in hiring Minnesota offensive coordinator Brian Billick for the same job in Dallas.

The Vikings blocked Jones from speaking with Billick by promoting him, but Billick reportedly is considering quitting, which would allow him to freely negotiate with any team.

Jones' interest in Billick was piqued by another former 49ers coach, Bill Walsh, who recently wrote a book with Billick.

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AS GOOD AS IT GETS (PG-13) 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:55 12:45  
FLUBBER (PG) 12:05 2:20 4:35  
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GOOD WILL HUNTING (R) 11:20 1:45 4:35 7:20 10:10 12:45  
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HARD RAIN (R) 11:55 2:30 4:55 7:25 9:50 12:20  
JACKIE BROWN (R) 8:10 11:30  
MOUSEHUNT (PG) 12:00 2:15 4:35 7:05 9:20 11:35  
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TITANIC (PG-13) 1:00 5:00 9:00  
TOMORROW NEVER DIES (PG-13) 12:00 4:00 8:00 11:55  
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