

# Improved facilities, more depth put A&M in winning position

By **AARON MEIER**  
Staff writer

While students are just getting into the daily schedule for the spring semester, the men and women of A&M's Swimming and Diving Teams have been in swing over the winter break preparing for the Big 12 Championships which are less than a month away.

## You Build It ...

After years of being housed in antiquated facilities, swimming and diving teams are finally reaping the fruits of the new natatorium in the Student Recreation Center.

Men's Coach Mel Nash, who had a hand in designing facilities, said the new pool has been a helpful factor in recruiting.

"We kind of hit a glass ceiling in the late '80s and into early '90s," Nash said. "I think we had gone as far as we could go with the old facilities. Now we have been able to rocket with the new pool."

Women's Coach Don Wagner said the pool represents the university's dedication to the swimming program.

"I think people see the pool and recognize the commitment of the university to see the program grow," Wagner said. "We have tremendous support from our athletic department and they want to do everything they can to develop a top-five team, which is good compared to schools that don't commit to the non-revenue programs."

Nash said he believes the Student Recreation Center Natatorium houses one of the three fastest pools in the nation.

in the nation.

"Most people seem to agree that it is at that level," he said. "We've had meets here with people going their best times."

## Becoming a Leader

Even though the majority of swimming events are individual in nature, leadership and team spirit are essential components to building a nationally-ranked team.

Nash said this year's team captains as well as other members of the team have offered solid leadership during the season. Senior Kyle Marden's experience as a three-time All-American and junior Jerrod Kappler's focus in the pool has brought out the strengths in the team.

"More than just the captains, the whole team has stepped up," Nash said. "I mean some of the freshman are leaders on the team either by example or just encouraging other guys on the team."

Wagner said he has worked on building a solid base of leadership since becoming women's coach three years ago.

"We try to recruit leadership," Wagner said. "Our underclassmen are doing a good job of assuming that responsibility."

## Quiet Waters Run Deep

With the opening of the Rec Center Natatorium and several quality recruiting classes, the Texas A&M Swimming Teams are developing something they have been lacking in past seasons — depth.

Wagner said the increase in quality is especially preva-

lent this year.

"We've got good people in every event, and that hasn't always been the case," he said. "Last year and the year before we had some big holes and this year, we have done a lot to fill in those holes."

Wagner said with four or five women demonstrating strong potential in the backstroke, his medley relays have potential to excel at the women's Big 12 Championships in Austin next month.

The backstroke is a competitive area for the men's team as well. The loss of Rob Pantano to graduation, Nash said five men are vying for the chance to compete on the 200- and 400-yard medley relay teams.

"I'm not one for predictions, but whoever takes the challenge can have a place on the relay," Nash said. "We could easily have a different backstroke on the 200 medley and 400 medley."

The bonus of a deep breaststroke field with Marden, sophomore Matt Rice and freshman Chris Sandt and three good butterfly fliers leaves the prospects for the medley relays high.

## Breaking the Surface

The Texas A&M Men's and Women's Diving Teams have been experiencing success in the water also, but starting from a higher vantage point.

The women have two experienced divers with senior Jodi Janssen and sophomore Danielle Guarnieri returning to the team. They are joined by freshman diver Sarah Law.

Diving Coach Kevin Wright said the team competes



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Senior **Stacie Karnes** will lead the women into the water.

against each other.

"The depth of having the girls that are competitive with each other drives them on," he said.

Although the women are enjoying a recent acquisition of depth to the team, the men are still left with only one competing diver, Mark Naftanel. The freshman diver Jessie Even had to redshirt due to a broken vertebrae.

Despite this lack of numbers, Wright said Naftanel is holding up under the pressure and will be at the Big 12 Championships to defend his titles, especially in the 10-meter platform.

"He will be real hard to beat on the platform," Wright said. "I would be surprised if he didn't win that (at the conference meet)."

# Aggies limp into tonight's game versus Colorado

Texas A&M forwards Calvin Davis, Aaron James out of action with injuries against struggling Buffaloes

By **JEFF SCHMIDT**  
Staff writer

The Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team (10, 0-6) will take on the Colorado Buffaloes (8-8, 2-4) tonight at 7 at G. Rollie White Coliseum. The Aggies are coming off a 1-62 loss in Stillwater to Oklahoma State, while the Buffaloes fell to Kansas State 78-62 in their last outing. Colorado has a 2-0 record in the all-time series but has lost seven straight games on the road this season. The Aggies are still looking for their first conference win of the season.

Colorado is led by senior forward Ronnie Gray and junior guard Kenny Price, who comes off the bench. Price leads the Big 12

in three-point field goal percentage at nearly 45 percent. Price also leads the team with a 13.5 points-per-game average. DeGray is the team's leading rebounder at 7.4 a game and also chips in 12.7 points per game.

If the Aggies are to win, they are going to have to do it without their top two power forwards. Calvin Davis is still out with an injury and Aaron Jack strained a leg muscle in practice Monday. Sophomore point guard Brian Barone also

has a broken thumb but will still play against Colorado.

To combat the Buffaloes' athleticism, the Aggies will start a quicker, shorter lineup with both Brian Barone and Steve Houston at the guard spots and Michael Schmidt and Shanne Jones at the forwards. Larry Thompson will make his 22nd consecutive start at center.

"We're just trying to find somebody with enthusiasm that might get us off to a good start," Coach Tony Barone said.

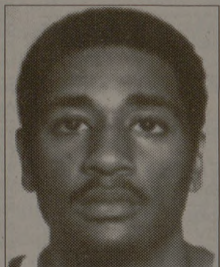
Colorado has had to fill holes this season that have opened due to graduation and defection to the NBA. The Buffaloes began this season without Martice Moore, who graduated, and Chauncey Billups, who was

the third overall by the Boston Celtics last year, the highest selection ever for a Colorado player.

"You had to gear a lot of things towards him (Billups) and when you do that, he made other players better," Barone said. "Without him, there's a huge void in their lineup and it's tough to replace him."

Other keys to the Aggies' victory hopes are being able to beat the Colorado press and stay sharp the whole game, and not getting into the doldrums that have plagued the team this year.

"You have to handle their press. They're very up-tempo in how they guard you. We have to get 40 minutes out of our team. That's been the issue for us," Barone said.



Davis

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