#### unior Mark Naftanel a big splash for Aggie Diving Team

Staff writer

Mark Naftanel is not afraid to dive in head-first, and is not worried about hitting the board, either. I think it's something you stop worrying about af-thappens a couple of times," Naftanel said. aftanel, a junior at Texas A&M, started diving

at 11 years ago, after he decided it was time for to switch sports. I was in gymnastics, I was

rible, and the only thing I d to do was floor," he said. "My t-door neighbor was in a swimming gram at Texas Aquatics down at UT, so my

m talked to his mom and found out there sa diving program down there too.' Naftanél immediately enjoyed diving and been doing it ever since. He said his parents vencourage him in his diving. He looks to em for direction, but they never hamper him mmaking his own choices. Naftanel said the

Naftanel chose Texas A&M over the Univerof Texas and Stanford. He said he chose to Aggie out of a sense of loyalty and what was

er divers in his program at home also served

My brother and sister came here in the '80s. I hooked on the traditions and the football ekend experience," Naftanel said.

Headded that the opportunity to be at such a great ng facility with a great coach also helped to lure here, despite the diving team being fairly new. Twas kind of excited about coming in and sort arting a new tradition," he said.

aftanel is currently the only male on the g team, due to an injury to red-shirt fresh-Jessie Even. Naftanel does not like being the

male competing. esse's a great teammate and he's awesome," Naf said. "I can't wait until next year. It's killing him; diving, and it's killing me not having him dive." Naftanel said although he is the only male diver, he

gets support from the female divers and the men's swim

team, even though they compete in different events. Coach Kevin Wright said he sees Naftanel as an asset to the other divers despite being the only male. He said Naftanel's strengths tend to set a precedent for the other athletes.

'He's a good all around student athlete and he's a really hard worker," Wright said. "That in itself keeps the environment good around here.'

Naftanel's focus has improved from the last two years now that he is more seasoned to the competition. He said he is gradually learning to put away outside distractions when he is on the board.

He even attended all his classes last year during conference competition. "I used to get

real uptight about it, get butterflies in my stomach and get real nervous, but now I've sort of learned to take it like a normal day," Naftanel said.

There are still times when he gets down on his performance, but he and Wright are

'It can get frustrating, working on such minor things and little techniques," Naftanel said. "Just pounding and pounding and trying and you can't do it, but you realize it's part of the process.

Wright said a strong point for Naftanel is that he takes criticism well and does not take it as a personal attack.

"He has the capacity to be honest. If I tell him something that he needs to improve upon, as far as a mental outlook, focus or something like that, instead of taking it personally and considering it to be an insult, he'll listen, evaluate, and communicate about it," Wright said.

Naftanel said he has hopes that his swimming career will continue after he finishes college. He is shooting for the 2000 Olympics, but he will not stick around for 2004.

"I'll give it my all up to that point, but I have other goals and I'll want to move on," Naftanel said.

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on two occasions last year, once in the regular season, 8-1, and again in the NCAA tournament, 5-4

'The second match (in the NCAA tournament) was more indicative of the way a Rice and A&M match is usually going to go," Kleinecke said. Sophomore Lisa Dingwall said today's match is important for her because Houston is her hometown and she would like to have a strong showing there.

"I want to go out there and show them (Rice) that I'm a good player, especially since I don't go to school down there (in Houston)," Dingwall said.

Despite the close match with Rice in the NCAA tournament last year, Dingwall said she is not concerned heading into today's match.

"I have total confidence in our team this year," Dingwall said. "Treally do believe that we can go out there and dominate."

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us for the match at Rice.

Coach Bobby Kleinecke said the

match was a good learning ex-

Ifeel like we learned an awful lot

eLSU match," he said. "It was our big road match," and it should

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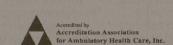
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