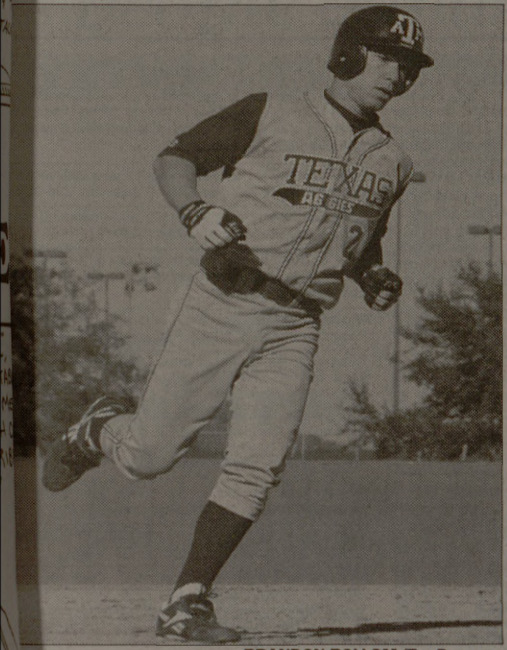


## Texas A&M takes 2 of 3 from Red Raiders

By **CHRIS FERRELL**  
Staff writer

Let the games begin. After battling their way to a No. 11 national ranking against the likes of Arkansas State and Al Roberts, the Texas A&M Baseball Team (13-



**BRANDON BOLLOM**, THE BATTALION

Junior **Craig Kuzmic** rounds the bases after his run in the second game of the Tech series.

3, 2-1) opened Big 12 play this weekend by taking two of three from defending conference champions Texas Tech (11-7, 1-2) at Olsen Field.

The Aggies got off to a strong start on Friday with a career-high 12-strikeout performance by senior pitcher Ryan Rupe as A&M defeated the Red Raiders 5-4.

Saturday, however was a different story as Tech evened up the series with a 6-5 victory in 10 innings. But Sunday, there was never a question.

A&M jumped on Tech starting pitcher Jesse Cornejo with five runs in the third inning and continued to tattoo the rest of the Red Raider staff on their way to an 11-2 win in the rubber match.

"This was a good weekend for us," Coach Mark Johnson said. "I told the guys we're going to look back at yesterday (Saturday) and say, 'I wish, I wish, I wish,' but that happens in baseball. This was a good game for us. It was a great finish to our weekend for us to come back after a heartbreaker yesterday. Those things can take something out of you, so to come back and finish strong today was good."

Johnson said he was glad the young Aggies were able to open up Big 12 play at home.

"I think there's always more pressure on the road," he said. "I'm more comfortable. Our players are more comfortable. Our fans come out. When you're at home you have to make it happen. When we get into April and we're out on the road every weekend it will get tough, so when you're at home you feel like you can't give a series away."

Junior third baseman Craig Kuzmic led the Aggies' offensive attack, going four-for-four with three RBI.

A&M also got three RBI from sophomore left fielder Steven Truitt, including two on a two-run

home run in the sixth inning. Junior center fielder Jason Tyner and sophomore shortstop Steve Scarborough each drove in two runs.

But as has been the case all season, it was the Aggies' starting pitchers who continued to turn in impressive performances.

Along with Rupe's 12 strikeouts, sophomore Casey Fossum went eight innings on Saturday. Fossum struck out eight batters and allowed two earned runs as he took a no decision in the team's extra-inning loss. Sunday, junior pitcher Matt Ward joined Rupe and Fossum by picking up his third win of the season with a complete game victory.

"I thought all three of our pitchers gave us a chance to win and that's all we can ask them to do," Johnson said. "In the age of aluminum bats it's hard to keep the scores down. You want to have a chance. You can't have a pitcher give up big innings. [He has to] keep it close and give us a chance to hit. Today, we had some good production."

Tyner shared his coach's sentiments. "We have a really good pitching staff," Tyner said. "It doesn't matter, one-two-three, we're going to be tough to beat on every day of the weekend. I'd take our staff over anyone in the country."

Most importantly, the series victory sets the pace for a tough Big 12 schedule.

Along with the fifteenth-ranked Red Raiders, Baylor, Oklahoma State and Texas will all be in the running for the title. Johnson said the competitive nature of the league is going to be evident at the end of the season once the postseason tournaments start.

"It's going to come down to the regional committee saying, 'the Big 12 is pretty good,'" Johnson said. "Because we're going to beat each other up."

## AGGIE SPORTS BRIEFS

from staff and wire reports

### Men finish No. 2 at Big 12 Indoors

At the Big 12 Indoor Track Championships this weekend, seniors Billy Fobbs and Larry Wade turned many heads in the Aggies' direction.

The Texas A&M Men's Track and Field Team surprised many when it took Nebraska down to the wire for first place in the competition. Wade destroyed the rest of the field in the 55-meter hurdles to win in 7.09. His time is a Big 12 meet record and a NCAA automatic qualifying mark.

Fobbs enjoyed some success of his own by winning the 55m dash in just 6.22 seconds. In the 200m dash, Fobbs led from start to finish and garnered a NCAA automatic qualifying time with a Big 12 meet record time of 20.92.

Junior Mike Lowrance won the Big 12 shot-put title with a heave of 58-11 1/4, which is a NCAA provisional qualifying mark.

The women did not fare as well despite some outstanding individual performances. The Aggie women finished ninth in the 12-team field with a score of 44. Senior Adrien Sawyer won the Big 12 Championship in the long jump on Friday and came back to finish second in the 55m hurdles in a NCAA automatic qualifying time of 7.67. Sophomore Chimika Carter was fourth in the 55m hurdles with a time of 7.82, a NCAA provisional time.

### Women lose at Baylor, 91-76

The Texas A&M Women's Basketball Team lost to the Baylor Lady Bears 91-76 Saturday night in Waco.

A&M led the game early, 8-6, as it connected on its first four shots. Later in the half, Eliss hit a three-point shot to ignite a 10-0 run and put Baylor up 34-26. A three-point play by sophomore forward Kera Alexander tied the game at 43, before Webb hit a three-point shot to give the Lady Bears a 46-43 lead at intermission.

Baylor picked up its defensive intensity in the second half, forcing 13 Aggie turnovers and put the game away with a 14-4 run.

The Bears were led in scoring by Webb who had a game-high 32 points, while Moffitt scored 21 and Eliss added 20. Alexander led four Aggie players in double figures with 23 points, followed by Prissy Sharpe with 21, Kim Tarking-

ton with 13 and Amy Yates with 12. The Aggies finished the regular season 8-18, 4-12, and earned the No. 10 seed in the Big 12 Tournament.

### Women's All-Big 12 Team announced

Texas A&M women's basketball players Prissy Sharpe and Amy Yates were named to the Big 12 Conference Coaches All-Big 12 Teams Sunday. However, forward Kera Alexander was one of the more noticeable omissions.

Sharpe, a sophomore who leads the Aggies in scoring (15.3) and rebounding (10.0), was named third-team All-Big 12 and Yates, a sophomore guard, earned honorable mention status.

Missing out on the honors is sophomore Kera Alexander who is leading the Aggies in scoring in conference games with 16.4 points per game.

### Rough weekend for softball team

The Texas A&M Softball Team (12-8) finished with a 1-5 record in the NFCA Classic Tournament this weekend.

The Aggies lost to No. 3 Michigan, 7-4, and No. 7 Arizona State, 8-0, on Friday, then fell to Nicholls State, 2-0, and Canisius, 4-3, on Saturday.

During bracket play on Sunday, the Aggies lost to Auburn, 1-0, and then defeated Boston University, 7-1, with freshman pitcher Amy Vining throwing a complete game with five strikeouts and only one walk to pick up her fourth win of the season.

A bright spot for the Aggies during the tournament was the strong play of freshman third baseman Amanda Whalen, who went a combined six for 18 with five RBI, one run and two stolen bases.

### Karnes qualifies for NCAA meet

Stacie Karnes can breathe a sigh of relief. The wondering is over.

Karnes qualified for the 1998 NCAA Championships in the 200-yard freestyle Saturday at the Aggie Invitational. She swam the event with a time of 1:47.39, a whole second faster than the NCAA cut. Last year she placed 12th in the event, and this will be her fourth consecutive appearance overall.

The NCAA Championships will be held March 19-21 in Minneapolis hosted by the University of Minnesota.

### Tennis teams in action this weekend

By **AL LAZARUS**  
Staff writer

The No. 38 Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team was swept by No. 14 Brigham Young, 9-0, on Friday, but bounced back on Saturday to defeat Kansas State, 5-4.

Although the final score may not show it, the Aggies (8-2, 1-1) had a solid showing against BYU, a perennially strong team coming off a upset of No. 10 Pepperdine.

"If people just look at the final score, they might think we never had a chance," freshman Eva Marcial said, "but we were close in every match, and we are proud of ourselves."

Coach Bobby Kleinecke said although the team was aware of this, they were not concerned with it.

"There's no doubt that we have a win out (in conference), but it's very important for us to take it one

match at a time," Kleinecke said.

After winning four of six singles matches against KSU, the Aggies needed to win only one of three doubles matches to secure victory.

Marcial and sophomore Kathryn Scott took care of this, winning their doubles match, 9-7.

"We knew our match was going to be tough," Scott said. "But we just went on the court thinking that we were not going to lose."

The No. 33 Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team lost to No. 7 University of Texas, 4-2, Sunday in Austin.

The Aggies won the doubles point, but could not get the three singles victories they needed to win the match.

Winning in doubles for A&M were junior Brent Horan and freshman Dumitru Caradima, 8-5, and freshmen Rafael de Mesa and Cody Hubbell, 9-7. De Mesa secured the Aggies' lone singles victory, 7-6, (7-4), 6-1.

### Men finish 3rd in Big 12

By **JEFF WEBB**  
Staff writer

Texas A&M made a big splash this past weekend as it took a third-place finish in the Big 12 Men's Swimming and Diving Championships. The Aggies finished behind Texas (886) and Nebraska (638.5) with 579 points.

Diver Mark Naftanel put on a stellar performance by winning the platform diving and 3-meter diving competitions and finishing second in the 1m diving event. He earned the Outstanding Diver honor and Texas A&M Diving Coach Kevin Wright took home Diving Coach of the Year honors.

"I wasn't really sharp in the preliminaries, so I worked to simplify my dives," Naftanel said. "It helped me get more consistent. It was nice to come back tonight and have some solid dives. I think I made a lot of

progress in my competition mode and it looks like I'll be in good shape going into future meets."

Texas A&M also took the 200-yard freestyle relay in a NCAA automatic qualifying time of 1:18.17. On the third day of competition, the Aggies proved it was not a fluke, garnering second place in the 400 freestyle relay in NCAA automatic qualifying time of 2:55.06. Men's Swimming Coach Mel Nash said that was where the focus was placed after the qualification of the 200 relay team.

"After we got the 200-free in, we just wanted to come back and get the 400," Nash said. "Qualifying in the 400 got us one more swimmer in the NCAA's."

"I think we'll have an even better team at next year's competition. This year, we were only 59 points behind Nebraska, but you have to see where progress is made."

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