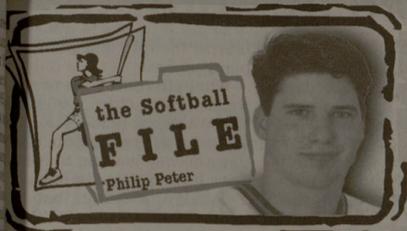


Big 12 provides top competition



With only 16 games remaining, 14 against conference opponents, the Aggies are looking to gain momentum before the conference tournament the first weekend in May. They are currently 1-3 in conference play but are looking forward to hosting double-headers against Kansas and Missouri this weekend.

Big 12 Is Big Time

The Big 12 can legitimately claim to be the toughest softball conference in collegiate play with four teams ranked in the top 10 and six in the top 25 of the USA Today/NFCA poll. Oklahoma leads the way at No. 5, followed by No. 6 Texas, No. 8 Missouri and No. 10 Oklahoma State. Nebraska is ranked No. 2 and Texas Tech made the cut at No. 23. Kansas and Texas A&M also received votes.

Ags Get Spanked When Opponent Is Ranked

Against nine nationally ranked opponents this season, the Aggies have posted a single victory. The

Aggies beat No. 19 Oregon in the Sacramento State Tournament on March 19.

Three of their eight losses to ranked teams have come from conference foes. Nebraska swept a double-header last weekend and Oklahoma State beat the Aggies in February in a non-conference tournament game.

And The Runner Is Going

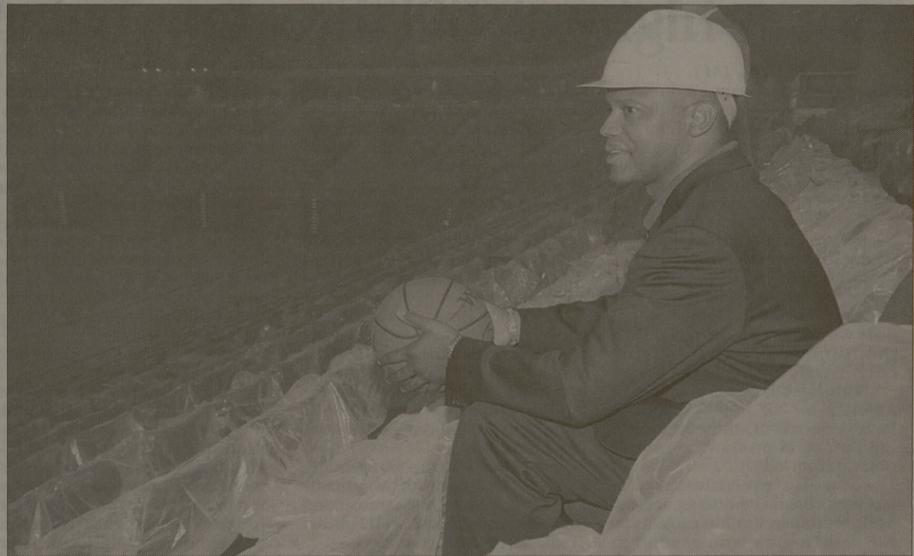
With ten stolen bases this season, senior outfielder Tanya Klecker needs only six to break A&M's career stolen base record of 45 held by Judy Trussell (1984-87) and Carrie Austgen (1981-83). But it is freshman outfielder Tiffany Esters who is stealing the show with 16 stolen bases in 17 attempts. Amy Lawler is not far behind with 13 steals in 17 attempts.

Error Prone

The Aggies have a much higher winning percentage when playing relatively error-free ball. In 41 games the Aggies have committed 71 errors. While posting their 23 wins, the Aggies hold a 10 error margin over their victims, 35 Aggie errors to 45 opponent's errors.

But in 17 losing efforts, the Aggies have committed 36 errors compared to just seven for their opponents.

—Philip Peter is a senior journalism major.



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

New Texas A&M Coach **Melvin Watkins** will construct a new Aggie team for the 1998-1999 season in Reed Arena.

WATKINS

Continued from Page 1

Watkins must also revive interest in a program that has not seen consistent winning since the days of Shelby Metcalf.

"We're going to work awfully hard to capture a little enthusiasm next season and put out a product that's exciting and has a chance to win games," Watkins said. "This university has a long tradition, and we will go in and be very aggressive (in recruiting). A&M is on the top of the totem pole."

Freshman forward Michael Schmidt had his first taste of Watkins and was impressed by his demeanor. "I think he's a real good man," Schmidt said. "He wants to get down to business. He wants to have fun off the court, but on the court, he's all business."

SPORTS BRIEFS

from staff and wire reports

Aggies head into Austin for Relays

The Texas A&M Men's and Women's Track and Field Teams will compete in the Texas Relays today through Saturday at Royal Memorial Stadium in Austin.

The No. 12 women's team and No. 20 men's team will be competing against perennially strong teams such as Texas, SU, UCLA, Florida and Arkansas.

The women's team will have 17 of its members competing, and the men's team will have 18 members in action.

The Aggies are coming off a strong showing at the Florida Relays in Gainesville, Florida last weekend, bringing home four gold medals. Senior Adrien Sawyer (100-meter hurdles), freshman Esther Eisenlauer (javelin), freshman Meghan Koonce (discus) and the men's 1,600-meter relay team were all golden for the Aggies.

"I was pleased with the performances we had last week," Texas A&M Coach Ted Nelson said. "We had good efforts from both the men's and women's teams."

San Antonio adds Lohaus to roster

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The San Antonio Spurs have signed veteran Brad Lohaus to a 10-day contract.

Lohaus, a 6-foot-11, 230-pound forward, began the 1997-98 season with V.L. Pesaro in the A1 Italian League.

During his 10 years in the NBA, Lohaus has appeared in 647 regular-season games and averaged 5.9 points and 2.9 rebounds.

Lohaus, affectionately known around the NBA as the "Vanilla Gorilla," was selected by the Boston Celtics in the second round of the 1987 NBA Draft. Since then he has played for eight different NBA teams, including the Spurs during the 1995-96 season.

Texas Tech pitcher draws suspension

LUBBOCK, Texas (AP) — Texas Tech right-handed relief pitcher Steve Watkins is no longer enrolled at the university after being suspended from the team for unspecified reasons, the school announced.

Officials would not elaborate on Watkins' suspension or departure, citing federal law.

Watkins was 2-0 with a 3.26 ERA in 19.3 innings this season. He was a sophomore in his first season at Tech after transferring from Lubbock Christian University.

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