

AGGIE SPORTS BRIEFS

from staff and wire reports

De Mesa chosen for individual title

Texas A&M freshman Rafael de Mesa has been selected to the field of 64 in the NCAA Individual Tennis Championships, beginning on May 17 at the Henry Field Tennis Stadium in Athens, Ga.

De Mesa, who is ranked No. 32 nationally, was the Big 12 Freshman of the Year and also earned All-Big 12 honors in singles and doubles competition. De Mesa holds a 23-11 overall record in singles.

"This is a great opportunity for Rafael," Coach Tim Cass said. "He has a tremendous season and this will be good for him. With the regionals coming up, we are not really thinking about the individual part of the NAAs. This team still has some work to do before it worries about that."

The NCAA selects 64 singles players and 32 doubles teams for the individual portion of the national championships which follow the team portion.

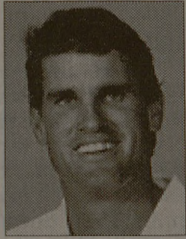
De Mesa was the second player chosen from Region VI, behind Texas Christian's Esteban Carrill. De Mesa holds the head-to-head advantage over Carrill as he defeated the sophomore in a dual match competition in early April.

A&M named top seed for regionals

For the fourth consecutive season, the Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team will be playing in the NCAA Region VI Championship, with competition beginning Friday, May 15 at the Penick-Allison Tennis Center on the campus of Texas A&M.

As expected, the Aggies will be the No. 1 seed in the eight-team tournament and after posting a 17-5 overall record and winning the Big 12 tournament championship. Coach Tim Cass is excited to be in the regional. "Last year we were the last team

in and were seeded eighth," Cass said. "This year we are the one-seed and that shows us a lot of progress in a year's time. That tells us a lot about where this program was and where we are going."



Cass

In the latest edition of the Rolex Collegiate Rankings released Tuesday, the Aggies are ranked No. 11 nationally, matching the highest ranking in school history, which was earned by the 1985 team.

The Aggies will face No. 8-seeded Arkansas-Little Rock in the first round and are in the same half of the draw as No. 4-seeded Arkansas and No. 5-seeded Southwestern Louisiana. UALR is ranked No. 61 nationally and holds a record of 14-9. The Aggies hold a 5-0 advantage over UALR in the series with the last meeting coming in 1989.

A&M golf makes NAAs, again

The Texas A&M Men's Golf Team has been invited to the NCAA Central Regional May 14-16 at Oak Hill Country Club in San Antonio. The regional bid is the Aggies' seventh straight and their ninth in the last 10 years.

"We're thrilled about going to regionals again, especially with it returning to Texas," Coach Bob Ellis said. "We've played really well at regionals the last two years, winning in 1996 and placing third last year. We're more than capable of making it back to the national tournament again this year."

The top 10 teams and top two in-

dividuals not on those teams will advance to the NCAA Championships May 27-30 in Albuquerque, N.M. The Aggies will be going for their 14th NCAA tournament appearance in Ellis' 24 years as head coach.

A&M won the 1996 NCAA Central Regional in Ann Arbor, Mich., then placed third last year in Norman, Okla. The Aggies went on to finish 13th at the 1997 NCAA Championships in Lake Forest, Ill.

Aggie tennis to battle Houston

The Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team is the No. 4 seed in the NCAA Southwest Regional Championships being held May 15-17 at the "Dub" Robinson Tennis Stadium in Baton Rouge, La.

The No. 26-ranked Aggies, who are 18-10 overall and finished fourth in the Big 12 Conference, will face No. 52-ranked Houston in the first round of the eight-team tournament.

Earlier this season the Aggies beat the Houston Cougars, 6-3, at the Omar Smith Tennis Center. A&M holds a 13-6 overall advantage in the series with Houston.

"U of H was a tough match for us earlier this year, but all of the first round matches at the NAAs are going to be tough," A&M Coach Bobby Kleinecke said. "They have one of their top girls coming back from injury and they are coming in on a high after winning their conference."

Despite a 9-3 record against teams that compete in the Southwest Region and a 4-1 record over teams in the tournament, the Aggies are the fourth seed behind No. 1 Arkansas, No. 2 Miami (Fla.) and No. 3 Louisiana State.

Other teams in the three-day tournament are No. 48 Baylor, No. 44 Rice and No. 31 Texas Christian.

In the NCAA Southwest Region, the Aggies are the third-highest ranked team behind Texas and No. 15 Arkansas.

Hatchell lays egg on Big 12 post

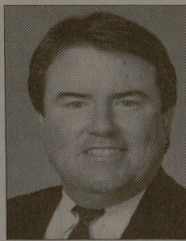
DALLAS (AP) — Big 12 Commissioner Steve Hatchell, who helped form the league in 1995, resigned on Thursday, saying both he and the conference need a change.

Hatchell, who last month said he planned to have another job by this summer, will leave effective immediately. "It's time for a change for the conference and me," Hatchell said in a news release faxed to news agencies Thursday evening.

"Together we have taken this conference from an idea to a reality. ... That process has been difficult and exhaustive at times. But I really believe the Big 12 today stands for excellence and integrity."

A Big 12 spokesman said Hatchell was unavailable for further comment. Sources told The Associated Press last month that Hatchell was leaving under pressure.

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Hatchell

But both Ray Bowen, president of Texas A&M and chair of the conference, and Hatchell, denied that at the time. Hatchell later told some reporters, however, that he was being forced out.

Asked again Thursday if Hatchell was pressured, Bowen said Big 12 presidents have "taken no action to do that."

"I only know what I have read in the papers and he has said he feels like he is (being forced out)," Bowen said. "You'd have to ask him that."

Bowen said Oklahoma State associate athletic director Dave Martin, recently hired by the Big 12 as chief operating officer, will replace Hatchell as interim commissioner.

"Steve Hatchell has done a remarkable job positioning the Big 12 for greatness," Bowen said. "The foundation has been laid. Now we must build the future."

Bowen added that Big 12 presidents will likely begin discussing a permanent replacement for Hatchell at their annual spring meeting later this month.

He declined to discuss possible

candidates.

"It's very premature," Bowen said. "We're very comfortable with Dave Martin in the interim role."

Some officials around the Big 12 have indicated that the league will seek a commissioner with no ties to any conference schools to ease friction that has existed between the Big 12 North and Big 12 South since the start.

Before taking over the Big 12, Hatchell was commissioner of the Southwest Conference, remnants of which make up the Big 12 South.

Hatchell recently interviewed for a top position with the Salt Lake Organizing Committee, which will oversee the Winter Olympics in 2002. But Hatchell did not get that job.

In his release, Hatchell did not mention other job possibilities. The statement said only that he "will explore a number of opportunities which can utilize his specific skill set."

Sources have said Hatchell's problems stemmed from his treatment of staff members at Big 12 headquarters in Dallas.

Knicks lose to Pacers in Ewing's return

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — He fumbled the ball the first time he touched it, he dribbled it poorly, shot it terribly and didn't lead his team to a storybook victory.

No, Patrick Ewing's comeback wasn't the stuff of legend.

Instead, Ewing may have been more of a liability than a leader in his first game in 4 1/2 months as the Indiana Pacers defeated the New York Knicks 85-77 Thursday night for a 2-0 lead in their second-round series.

This was the night the Knicks had been waiting for since Ewing, who went down in December with what was thought to be a career-threatening wrist injury, vowed to return for the playoffs.

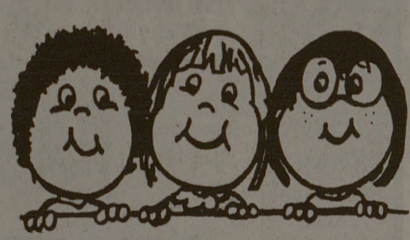
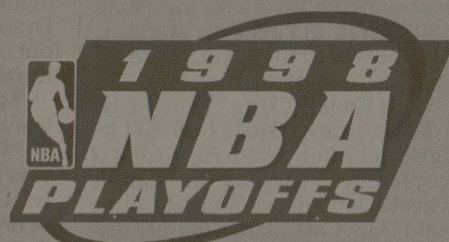
He was on the court with the starting five, but lost the opening tip in what would turn out to be a long list of instances when Ewing simply was not his old self.

He looked tentative in catching a 60-foot pass less than a minute into the game and had his first shot blocked. His next attempt was blocked, too, and he missed his first five shots en route to shooting 3-for-11 and getting 10 points and six rebounds in 27 minutes.

Ewing also had a few defensive lapses, none more costly than when he left Rik Smits wide open with 1:31 left for a jumper that gave Indiana a 79-73 lead.

The Knicks would pull within 79-77 on a layup by Ewing with 46 seconds left, but the Pacers scored less the rest of the way and wrapped up the victory.

Game 3 in the best-of-7 series is Saturday at New York, and the Knicks will be trying to avoid dropping behind 0-3 — a deficit that would be nearly impossible to overcome.



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PAULIE (PG)	12:15 2:20 4:30 7:20 9:35
CITY OF ANGELS (PG-13)	1:25 4:10 7:05 10:00 12:40
THE NEWTON BOYS (PG-13)	1:30 4:35 7:30 10:20 12:55
TITANIC (PG-13)	12:00 4:00 8:00 12:00
	1:00 5:00 9:00
WILD THINGS (R)	12:00 5:30 11:45
MAN IN THE IRON MASK (PG-13)	12:05 6:25 12:45
WOOD (R)	12:20 2:30 4:55 7:20 9:50 12:10
GOOD WILL HUNTING (R)	3:15 9:30
LOST IN SPACE (PG-13)	2:20 7:10 8:15 12:50
	12:50 3:50 10:05
MERCURY RISING (R)	1:20 3:55 6:40 9:40 12:15
THE BIG HIT (R)	12:10 2:30 4:55 7:20 10:00 12:30
* DEEP IMPACT (PG-13)	12:25 1:25 3:00 4:35
	6:45 7:45 9:45 10:40 12:50
BLACK DOG (PG-13)	12:30 2:45 5:10 7:45 10:10 12:35
* HE GOT GAME (R)	12:05 3:15 6:25 9:30 12:35
* LES MISERABLES (PG-13)	1:15 4:15 7:15 10:25

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