

Men's Golf Team eyes NCAA berth

BY TRAVIS HARSCH
The Battalion

The Texas A&M Men's Golf Team will be looking for more than a win when it heads to Lafayette, La., this weekend for the Louisiana Classics. The Aggies will be looking to use the tournament to increase their chances of making the NCAA Tournament.

"We are currently 12th in the Central Region," A&M coach Bob Ellis said. "We need to be eighth or above to be in the championships, so we are looking for a solid performance."

"With this and the following tournament, the Border Olympics, we can help our situation out quite a bit."

The Aggies can make a big jump in the standings this weekend because of the quality of the teams in the Classics. Of the 14 teams in the tournament, only six are unranked. Among A&M's competition this weekend are ranked Big 12 foes University of Oklahoma, University of Nebraska, University of Kansas and Baylor University.

Ellis said he will tell his team to have a good time on the course despite the pressure on the Aggies.

"It's going to be a challenge for us as a team, as individuals and myself as a coach to take the pressure off and make this a fun

situation," Ellis said.

A&M is coming off a 12th-place finish in the Big Island Intercollegiate in Hawaii. The field featured seven ranked teams, including three in the top 10. The Aggies finished ahead of No. 22 Oregon and No. 23 Arizona, something Ellis said shows the Aggies are ready to put their early-season struggles behind them.

"I think they've (the team) reached that point where they are willing to do more than what it takes to win and more than what it takes to be the best you should be," Ellis said. "I think the team has accepted that challenge and is ready to go forward and have a good year from here."

The Classics will be played at the 7,002-yard, par 72 Oakbourne Country Club. The appearance will be the 12th for the Aggies. The team has never taken home the title, but A&M has finished second four times and third twice and has won the individual title four times, including three times in the last six years.

Those four titles include the most recent one, won by Ryan Palmer last year, as he went 70-73-74-217 to take the trophy by two shots. Palmer's showing was not enough to take the team title, however, as Tulsa finished 14 shots in front of the Aggies.

The teams will play 36 holes on Monday and 18 on Tuesday.



TERRY ROBERSON/THE BATTALION

Senior **Ryan Palmer** takes a practice swing. Palmer and the Texas A&M Men's Golf Team will travel to Lafayette, La., this weekend to compete in the Louisiana Classics.



FILE PHOTO/THE BATTALION

Sophomore **Rachel Lewis** makes the stop at second base during competition at the Aggie Invitational I. The Texas A&M Softball Team will host the Aggie Invitational II this weekend at the Aggie Softball Complex.

A&M hosts weekend softball tournament

BY BEN WESTBROOK
The Battalion

Coach Jo Evans will go for her 400th career win this weekend when the Texas A&M Softball Team (15-5) hosts the Aggie Invitational II at the Aggie Softball Complex.

Evans needs three wins in the round-robin tournament to reach the milestone. She currently boasts a 397-269-2 career record and an 84-59-2 (.586) record with the Aggies.

Standing in the Aggies' way is the University of Minnesota. The Golden Gophers currently are ranked No. 21 in the nation and boast 15-4 record.

Leading the way for Minnesota are freshmen Jordanne Nygren and Heather Brown. Nygren is Minnesota's leading hitter, posting a .393 batting average with nine home runs and 23 RBIs. Brown fills the role of ace for the Gophers' pitching staff with a 4-0 record and a 1.25 ERA.

Also participating in the tourney will be Dayton University, a 3-3 team that opened its season last weekend in a tournament hosted

by Southwest Texas State University, and Butler University (0-5), which has been outscored 59-8 by the competition so far this year.

Evans said the Aggies are confident of their chances this weekend and feel they have a good chance to win the tournament.

"We feel good about how we played last weekend," Evans said. "I feel that it gives us momentum."

Sophomore pitcher Amy Vining, who has gone 9-3 on the year with an 0.75 ERA, said she also felt the momentum was in A&M's favor.

"If we continue to play like last weekend, we'll do really well," she said.

Evans said the Aggies have gotten a lift from the play of freshman Tammy Donnell, who has stepped in to fill the shoes of lead-off hitter Hollee Hayden, who will be out at least another four weeks with a broken arm.

"Tammy Donnell did a nice job [last weekend]," Evans said. "She stepped up and played good defense."

The Aggies are ranked 27th nationally in the NFCA-USA Today Top 25 Poll.

Aggies send two to indoor track finals

BY TOM KENNEDY
The Battalion

March is here, and so are all the events associated with it: spring break, March Madness, 88-degree days and 45-degree nights — at least for most students.

But A&M senior triple jumper Detrich Clariett and junior pole vaulter Richard McDonald have the different view of this time of year since both will be competing in the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships in Indianapolis, Ind., March 15 and 16 for the second year in a row.

McDonald comes into the pole vault ranked 15th on the NCAA qualifying list after recording a season-best clearance of 17 feet, 4 1/2 inches on his final attempt at the Big 12 Indoor Championships, where he placed third. Last year, McDonald placed 13th at the NCAA Indoor Championships.

A&M Track and Field coach Ted Nelson said McDonald has the potential to do well, barring the mishaps that can go along with the event.

"She (Clariett) is very capable of hitting a big jump, and she has the experience to compete well for us."

— Ted Nelson
Texas A&M track and field coach

"Richard has been there before, so he knows what he has to do," Nelson said. "The pole vault is a crazy event because it is so easy to 'no-

height', but if he goes out and performs like he is capable, he could place high."

Clariett will begin competition ranked No. 15 on the NCAA women's triple jump qualifying list after setting a season best of 42' 3 1/4" at the Big 12 Indoor Championships.

Last year, Clariett set a school record with a leap of 43' 7 3/4" on her way to fifth place. Nelson said Clariett's experience and ability to perform under pressure will improve her scoring chances.

"D.D. (Clariett) has a chance to score points at this meet," Nelson said. "She is very capable of hitting a big jump, and she has the experience to compete well for us."

Both athletes will compete on the second day of competition, March 6, with McDonald slated to start in the men's pole vault at 5:30 p.m. Clariett will take the infield five minutes later when the women's triple jump begins.

Ags to battle Cyclones in weekend series

Aggies looking to keep flawless home record against ISU.

BY AARON COHAN
The Battalion

The fourth-ranked Texas A&M Baseball Team will try to get back on track this weekend when they host a three-game series against Iowa State University.

The Cyclones are off to a rough start, as scheduling has not allowed them to play a home game this season. In the ten games they have played, ISU has marked up in a 5-5 record.

The Aggies are coming off a tough loss against the University of Texas-San Antonio Tuesday night. A&M made a late comeback

only to lose their lead in the bottom of the ninth behind some irregular pitching.

"I guess we proved Casey Fossum is human," A&M Baseball coach Mark Johnson said. "Our guys pitched well that night; they (UTSA) were just hitting really well, also."

The road has not been friendly to A&M this season, as the team is only 2-3 away from Aggeland. But the Aggies should be welcomed home with open arms by the fans at Olsen Field.

"Our fans get us going big time," junior shortstop Steve Scarborough said. "It's a big factor for us at home."

Junior second baseman Sean Heaney said the A&M fans have been a big part of the Aggies' 10-0 record at home this season.

"I really don't think there's any other place that anyone would rather play than at Olsen Field," Heaney said. "Our fans are a tremendous factor in our wins."

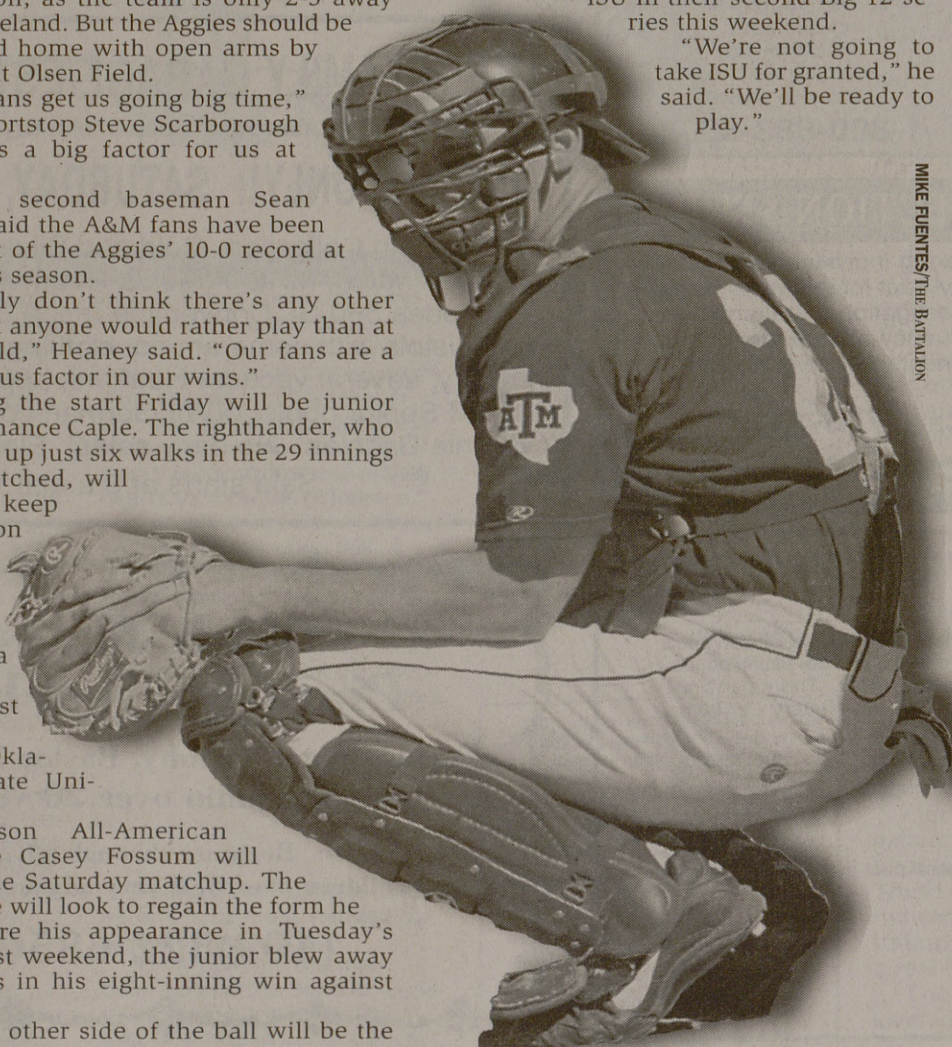
Getting the start Friday will be junior pitcher Chance Caple. The righthander, who has given up just six walks in the 29 innings he has pitched, will look to keep his edge on the Big 12 competition after pitching a complete game last weekend against Oklahoma State University.

Preseason All-American candidate Casey Fossum will toss in the Saturday matchup. The junior ace will look to regain the form he had before his appearance in Tuesday's game. Last weekend, the junior blew away 10 batters in his eight-inning win against OSU.

On the other side of the ball will be the usual supporting cast of Aggie hitters. Senior first baseman John Scheschuk leads A&M with a .451 batting average. Sean Heaney is right behind Scheschuk with a .406 batting average and has nine multi-hit games this season.

Heaney said the Aggies cannot look past ISU in their second Big 12 series this weekend.

"We're not going to take ISU for granted," he said. "We'll be ready to play."



MIKE FLENNES/THE BATTALION

Men's Tennis Team looks for revenge against Tigers

BY AL LAZARUS
The Battalion

Last year, the roles were reversed.

The Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team was the underdog, fighting to come away with a road victory over a higher-ranked team.

The Aggies lost that match to Louisiana State University, 4-3, but this year it will be the No. 19 Tigers who are on the road, trying to upset No. 14 A&M.

The Aggies (5-0, 3-0) will take on LSU Saturday at noon at the A&M Varsity Tennis Center.

A&M sophomore Cody Hubbell said the teams' past will play a role in this match.

"I think there will be a little bit of a revenge factor this year," Hubbell said. "It was a really close match last year, and we definitely could have won it."

A&M senior Brent Horan said playing the Aggies at home was a big advantage for the Tigers.

"It will be a different match this year," he said. "Playing at LSU, the crowd really got into the match."

Saturday's match will be A&M's first home match of the spring season. In the fall, the Aggies defeated the University of Nebraska in their first match at the new Varsity Tennis Center.

A&M has been perfect in its spring schedule so far, defeating Rice University, the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University and the University of Miami.

After knocking off the Aggies last season, LSU went on to finish the season undefeated in conference play, ending the season ranked No. 2 in the nation.

Although they have fallen to the No. 19 spot this season, the Tigers have looked impressive early on, defeating conference foe No. 3 Mississippi State University.

A&M men's tennis coach Tim Cass said the Tigers' ranking is not indicative of their strong play of late.

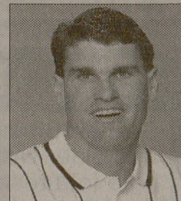
"They may be ranked No. 19, but based on them beating No. 3 last week, we'll treat them like a top-10 team," Cass said.

Aggie sophomore Dumitru Caradima is expected to play in Saturday's match after sitting out the singles portion of A&M's match against Miami with a toe injury.

Caradima and sophomore Shuon Madden recently became the first Aggie duo ever to be ranked No. 1 in the nation in doubles.

Hubbell, who filled in for Caradima at the No. 2 singles spot against Miami, said being the favorite has given the Aggies more confidence heading into this year's match against the Tigers.

"We're all excited to play them again," he said. "I bet LSU is going to be worried, and they should be."



CASS

A&M Baseball vs. Iowa State (March 5-7)

Game 1 (Friday):
A&M - Casey Fossum (3-2)
ISU - Brian Curtin (2-1)

Game 2 (Saturday):
A&M - Chance Caple (3-1)
ISU - Mike Laesch (0-2)

Game 3 (Sunday):
A&M - TBA
ISU - Nate Hilton (0-1)