

Men finish record 10th at national swim finale

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

The Texas A&M Men's Swimming and Diving team made school history by breaking into the elite for the first time at the NCAA championships this weekend, producing 148 points, 10 All-Americans and a fifth-place relay finish.

The 10th-place finish marked a six-place, 57-point improvement for the Aggies, who finished 1.5 points shy of ninth. A&M coach Mel Nash congratulated his 20th year as head coach by leading the Aggies to their highest finish ever.

"To come out and get 57 more points than we did last year and come within a point and a half of ninth place is exciting," Nash said. "Each day we would have dropped. We were 10th every single day, and we held on to it and said, 'No, we're not going to let anybody else have this.'"

"I'm just so proud of them for doing it when it didn't come easy. We had some rough spots and they got up and said, 'We're not going to let this slip away.'"

Competing for the Aggies were Jerrod Kappler, David Morrow, Kevin Howard, Alfred Mansour, Rick Tate, Mark Naftanel, Riley Jones, Michael Colligan, Jesse Ven and Keven Kehlenbach.

Highlighting the performances for A&M were U.S. Pan-Am Team members Howard and Kappler.

Howard placed 12th in the 200-yard butterfly to give the Aggies five points, while Kappler contributed four in the 100-yard freestyle.

Sophomore David Morrow beat out senior co-captain Kappler in the event with a time of 43.74 seconds to finish 11th.

"The 100 free was deep, and that is the highest we ever finished," Kappler said. "Usually in the past few years when I made consuls at night, I usually sloughed off the 100 so that I could do really well in the relay. This year I'm in a whole lot better shape both mentally and physically, so I swam better there."

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Naftanel concluded his A&M diving career Saturday with a ninth-place performance in the platform.

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SENIOR CO-CAPTAIN

form competition, giving Naftanel his sixth and final All-America laurel while earning the team nine points.

Redshirt freshman Even earned his first All-American mention with a 14th-place finish off the tower. In the three days of competition, the two athletes racked up 28 points to make the difference for the A&M finish.

"We didn't dive great today, but Jesse and I both hung in there," Naftanel said. "He got his points and I got my point. Added up, we got 12 points, and that really helped out the team in the long run. I'm glad we didn't give up."

"I'm really proud of all the guys both swimmers and divers. Top 10 was our goal all year, so it feels great to accomplish that."

Finishing off the performance for the Aggies was the 400-yard freestyle relay team of Morrow, Kappler, Colligan and Kehlenbach. The men swam the four legs in 2:54.86 for fifth place and the Aggies' final 30 points of the meet.

"I am so proud of the guys, because the first day of the meet we had a rough start," Nash said. "We wanted to be a little bit better than we were, and some things happened that were kind of shocking to us. Yet they clawed back and swam better on the second and third days. We did things that nobody thought we could do at this meet, especially having a rough beginning."

Auburn University won the championships, defeating defending NCAA champion Stanford University. Big 12 champion University of Texas finished third.



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Softball Team moved to 31-8 on the season this weekend with wins over the University of Nebraska and Iowa State University. The Aggies split a doubleheader against defending Big 12 champion Cornhuskers Saturday and swept a Sunday doubleheader from the Cyclones.

Ags start Big 12 competition Softball team splits pair with Nebraska, sweeps Iowa St.

BY BEN WESTBROOK
The Battalion

The Texas A&M Softball Team marked the beginning of Big 12 play this weekend with doubleheaders against defending Big 12 champion University of Nebraska and Iowa State University. The women played near-flawless defense, committing just one error in four games, to move to 31-8 and 3-1 in Big 12 action with a sweep of the Cyclones and a split with the Huskers.

Freshman Lisa Klam said besides getting off to a good start, the women also sent a message to the rest of the Big 12.

"I think that we are surprising a lot of teams [in the conference]," Klam said. "I thought we played well, and we're coming together as a team."

Klam has surprised some people as well this season. The freshman from Katy had two round-trippers over the weekend, the first coming in the third inning of the Aggies' 1-0 win over Nebraska. Klam's second dinger also came against the Cornhuskers, but it was not enough as the Aggies dropped the game, 4-3.

A&M sophomore pitcher Amy Vining earned two wins over the weekend but also picked up the loss to Nebraska when she came in for three innings of relief work for junior Danielle Lemuth, moving her season record to 18-6. After retiring the side in the fourth, Vining gave up a solo home run to Nebraska All-American Jennifer Lizama, propelling the Cornhuskers to a 4-3 win.



VINING

The Aggie bats failed in the second game, leaving the bases loaded in both the second and fourth innings and stranding eight runners in all.

"I was disappointed with the second game," A&M coach Jo Evans said. "We had so many opportunities."

Sunday, the women geared up to play the 12-16 Iowa State Cyclones. Vining took the mound in the first game, throwing a two-hitter and picking up the win after the contest went into extra innings.

Second baseman Rachel Lewis drove in the winning run in the bottom of the eighth for the game-winning RBI to give the Aggies the 1-0 victory.

The final game against ISU would be another close one. A&M pitcher Jordana Barrack picked up the win and improved her record to 10-2, while Vining came in to claim the save in dramatic fashion. The sophomore pitcher managed to put runners on second and third after a pair of singles and a wild pitch before striking out the final batter for the last out of the game, giving Evans her 100th win in her three years as an Aggie.

The women pulled off three one-run wins over the weekend, something Evans attributes to their defense and maturity as players.

"We've become a lot more confident," Evans said. "We're really poised. We don't panic and we don't press."

Vining was quick to give credit to her teammates in the field for her success.

"The defense was just great," Vining said. "They really stepped up when we needed the big plays."

The women will take the field again Friday when they host the 14th-ranked University of Texas, who



A&M junior shortstop Steve Scarborough lunges for the catch during the Aggies' game against the University of Missouri Tigers this weekend in Columbia, Mo., to move to 25-7 on the season.

Aggies take two from Mizzou A&M Baseball Team moves to .500 in road games with weekend wins

STAFF AND WIRE REPORT

The No. 6 Texas A&M Baseball team entered its weekend series against the University of Missouri looking to break even on the road this season. Despite an 8-12 loss to the Tigers Saturday, the Aggies managed to reach that goal with wins Friday and Sunday to move to .500 in road games.

The Aggies (25-7, 8-3 Big 12) have been a stellar 19-1 at home this season but had won just four of nine games away from Olsen Field going into the series.

Friday's game against the Tigers 4-12, 3-9 Big 12) was highlighted by offensive fireworks but by no strong pitching performances.

A&M junior pitcher Casey Fossum allowed just one run over eight innings and struck out 14 Mizzou batters, while the Tigers' Jody Harris went all 10 innings for Missouri, allowing seven hits.

With the game tied, 1-1, in the top of the 10th, A&M senior first baseman John Scheschuk knocked

in the go-ahead run with a single to left field. Missouri put two men on base in the bottom of the inning, but sophomore pitcher Chris Russ struck out MU's Mike Rallo to end the game and earn his seventh win of the year.

In Saturday's matchup, it was the Tigers' turn to break open a close game. With the game tied at 2-2 in the second, Missouri's Jake Epstein slammed a three-run homer off A&M junior Chance Caple (4-3).

The Tigers extended their lead to 7-2 in the fourth inning before the Aggies answered with a four-run fourth to close the gap to 7-6. But in the bottom of the fifth, Mizzou answered with three runs to cruise to a 12-8 victory.

In the third and deciding game of the series, the Aggies got their offense going early when sophomore Daylan Holt slammed a two-run homer, his 14th of the year, off Mizzou starter Justin Stine in the first inning. Holt would add a second home run in the seventh. The Aggies then stifled a ninth-inning

A&M Baseball vs Missouri March 26-28

Friday:
A&M 2, Missouri 1
A&M — Russ (7-0)
MU — Harris (3-3)

Saturday:
Missouri 12, A&M 8
A&M — Caple (4-3)
MU — Jamison (2-1)

Sunday:
A&M 6, Missouri 3
A&M — Ward (2-0)
MU — Stine (3-3)

comeback attempt by the Tigers to win the contest, 6-3.

The Aggies will hit the road again Tuesday when they face Rice University in Houston at 7 p.m.

Tennis team splits weekend matches

BY SANTOSH VENKATARAMAN
The Battalion

The Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team split a pair of matches this weekend, beating the University of Colorado Friday, 6-3, while dropping Saturday's match to the University of Oklahoma, 7-2.

A&M, now 10-4 overall and 5-1 in the Big 12, hosts Texas Tech University tonight at 6.

In the match against Colorado, the Aggies were led by freshman Martina Nedorostova, who defeated CU's Jessica Garrow, 6-2, 6-3, for A&M's first point.

A&M's No. 4 singles player, freshman Leah Killen, produced the Aggies' second point with a three-set victory. Killen dropped the first set, 6-0, before rallying to win the final two sets 6-2, 6-3.

Sophomore Eva Marcial defeated Colorado's Anna Bek at No. 6 singles in two tight sets, 6-3, 7-6 (7-3).

"I am extremely happy to win the match," A&M coach Bobby Kleinecke said. "This was just a hard-fought match. Colorado is the same team this year that we lost to last year, but we came out more focused this time."

Kleinecke also praised the efforts of A&M's Monica San Miguel, who rallied in her match from a 3-0 third-set deficit to defeat CU's Emily Smith, 6-2, 6-7 (4-7) 6-4.

"We made some adjustments and she did an excellent job of hanging in there and grinding out the win," he said. "It was pure guts that won the match."

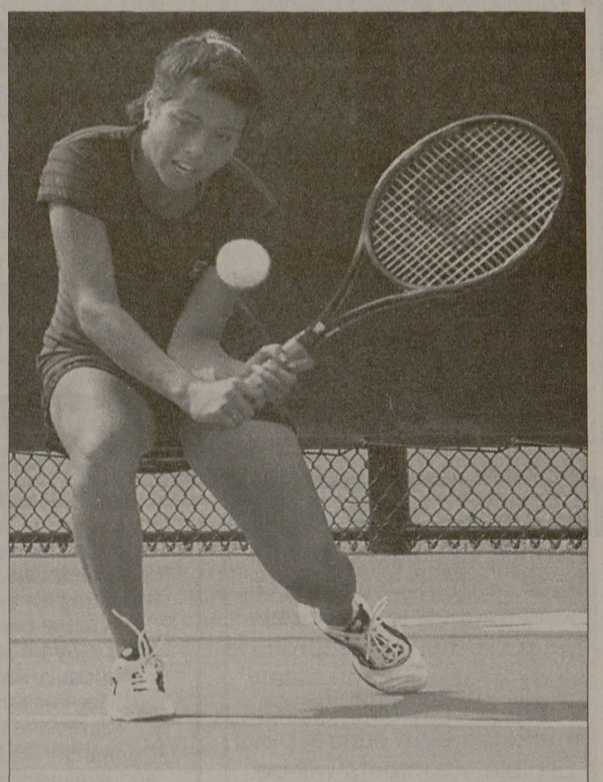
A&M's Marcial and Kathryn Scott clinched the victory with their win at No. 2 doubles.

Against Oklahoma, the Aggies got off to a strong start as Killen crushed the Sooners' Jennie Hamilton, 6-1, 6-0, to give A&M its first point. But Oklahoma would respond with several three-set victories. San Miguel fell to OU's Danielle Knipp, 6-2, 1-6, 6-1, at No. 3 singles while Scott lost to the Sooners' Kristen Guilford, 6-7 (3-7), 6-2, 6-4.

Marcial also lost in three sets to drop her personal record to 14-6 overall and 5-1 in Big 12 competition. The Sooners swept all three doubles matches to clinch the victory and to hand the Aggies their first conference loss of the season.

"We lost this match in the singles, not the doubles," Kleinecke said. "At worst it should have been 3-3 after singles, not 4-2."

Martina Nedorostova accounted for A&M's second point against Oklahoma with a win over Viviana Mrcanova in another three-set encounter. After dropping the first set in a tie-breaker, 6-7 (8-10), Nedorostova rallied in the final two sets by scores of 6-3 and 6-2.



CARIÑO CASAS/THE BATTALION

A&M sophomore Eva Marcial returns a volley during her singles match Saturday afternoon at the Varsity Tennis Center. The Aggies lost the team match to the University of Oklahoma, 7-2.

The Aggies return to action tonight when they host the struggling Raiders. Tech is last in the Big 12 South division with a 2-4 Big 12 record and is 4-11 overall. Tech has dropped its last five matches, including their last match, 9-0, against Louisiana State University.

"We need to bounce back for Monday," Kleinecke said. "We are still a team to be reckoned with and everyone knows that they won't be able to just come in here and walk on us."

The Raiders are led by their top two singles players, Zana Zlebnik and Amanda Earhart.

Zlebnik compiled a 17-6 overall record last season in her freshman campaign and was the first woman ever at Tech to compete in the NCAA individual championships. Earhart finished last season with a 10-9 overall record. Zlebnik and Earhart also form the No. 1 doubles tandem for the Raiders.