

Aggie tennis teams set for home matches

Women play host to Rice University Owls

BY SANTOSH VENKATARAMAN
The Battalion

Doubleheaders usually are reserved for baseball, high school basketball playoffs and Broadway co-stars occupying a marquee. However, the Texas A&M Women's Tennis team will be part of a unique doubleheader tomorrow when it hosts Rice University at 1:30 p.m. at the A&M Varsity Tennis Center.

While the women battle the Owls, their male counterparts will be playing at the same time against the University of Texas.

A&M coach Bobby Kleinecke said hosting both matches jointly is a big boost for both players and fans.

"With the new facility, we wanted to have the men and the women [play] at the same time," he said. "It will be good for the fans to see both teams, and this is something you are going to be seeing a lot more."

Rice and A&M come into the match with a lot of common. The Aggie women are ranked No. 35 in the country, while the Owls are No. 37 in the most recent collegiate tennis ratings. Both teams and coaches are familiar with each other.

"They know us, and we know them," Kleinecke said.

The Aggies and the Owls are both coming off without losses. A&M (12-6 overall) was blanked by Texas, 9-0, in Austin Tuesday in a showdown between the two top teams in the Big 12. Kleinecke said the match was much closer than the record indicated.

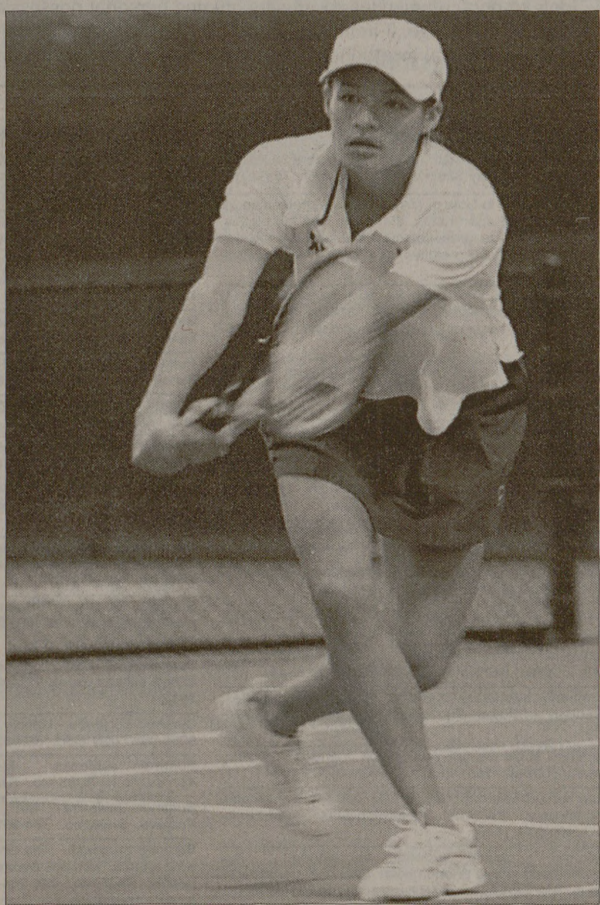
"We fought very hard against Texas," he said. "We are coming into (the Rice match) very positive about that effort."

Rice (13-5 overall) fell to Vanderbilt University, 8-0, Monday. The Owls lost three-set matches No. 3 and No. 4 singles and dropped first-set breakers in two other matches against Vanderbilt, which defeated A&M, 8-1, April 10.

Kleinecke said the match should be close despite the teams' recent struggles.

"I thought they'd be down, but they have some good wins," Kleinecke said. "They beat [the University of] North Carolina, who we lost to."

The Owls' best player, at No. 1 singles, is junior



MIKE FUENTES/THE BATTALION

Sophomore **Lisa Dingwall** prepares for a backhand against Texas Tech University March 29.

Elle Lewis, who sports a 23-15 record this year. Rice's No. 6 singles player, Natalie Briaud, is a local product out of A&M Consolidated High School.

Critical to the outcome of the match will be the performance in the middle spots of the Aggies' singles lineup.

A&M's Lisa Dingwall will likely play Rice's Charlotte Feasby in one of the featured matches, while at No. 3 singles A&M senior Monica San Miguel will square off against the Owls' Justyna Gudowska.

The Aggies will close the season at home against Baylor University April 20.

A&M men prepare for the University of Texas

BY AL LAZARUS
The Battalion

Despite the attention paid to the rivalry between Texas A&M University and the University of Texas, a men's tennis match featuring the two schools traditionally has been about as suspenseful as a Harlem Globetrotters game.

That is, until last season. Having lost 25 of its last 27 matches against the Longhorns, the Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team turned the tables in 1998, overcoming a tough early-season loss in Austin to crush the Longhorns, 4-0, in the final round of the conference tournament.

A&M coach Tim Cass said the Aggie victory added a new angle to the A&M-UT rivalry.

"Before last season, the rivalry was fun because of the spirit between the two schools," Cass said. "Now it's fun because either team can win."

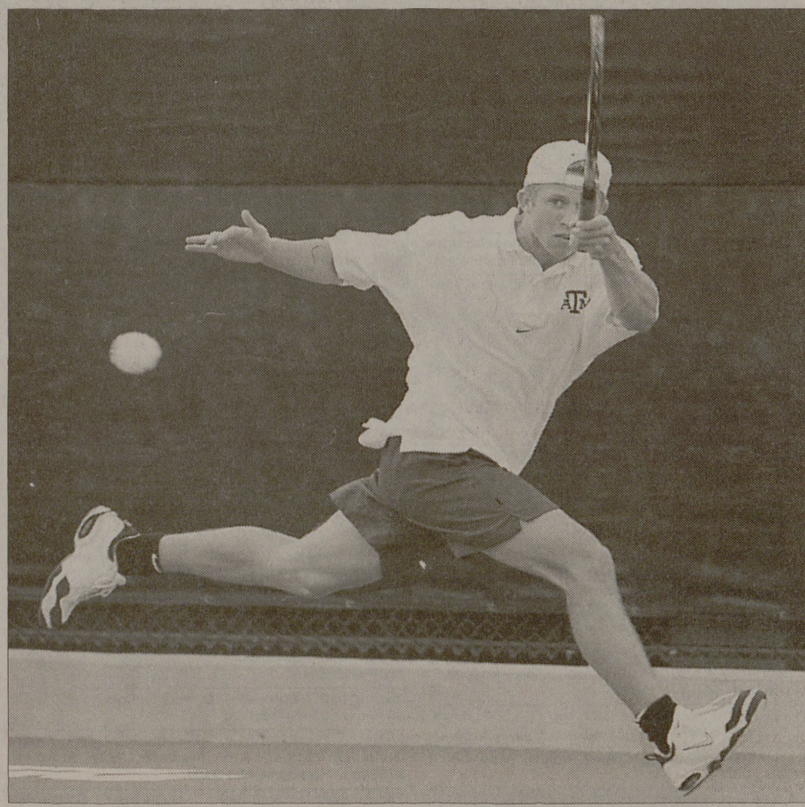
The Aggies and Longhorns, tied with Baylor University for first place in the Big 12, will square off at the A&M Varsity Tennis Center Saturday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

A&M, ranked No. 15 by College Tennis Weekly, brings a 14-3 overall record and 6-0 conference mark into the match. Texas, the nation's fifth-ranked team, is 17-4 with a 5-0 record in conference play.

In the finals of last season's Big 12 Tournament, the Aggies did not drop a set on their way to shocking the Longhorns, an accomplishment Cass said probably has weighed heavily on Texas' mind.

"They're not happy that we won the Big 12 Tournament last year," he said. "And we've got to anticipate that they're going to come in here even more focused and determined because of us beating them."

The Longhorns' lineup features three top-60 singles players — Jack



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Sophomore **Shuon Madden** slams a forehand in the Aggies' match against Abilene Christian University March 24.

Brasington (No. 20), Brandon Hawk (No. 42) and Paul Martin (No. 57). UT's No. 1 doubles team of Gwenael Gueit and Martin is ranked No. 16 in the nation.

The Aggies will counter with sophomores Dumitru Caradima and Shuon Madden, the nation's No. 1 doubles duo. Madden, who Monday was named the Big 12 Men's Tennis Player of the Week, also sports a No. 34 singles ranking.

With a match against conference co-leader and eighth-ranked Baylor

looming April 24, Cass said he has cautioned the team against getting too pumped up for the Longhorns, concerned the Aggies could suffer a letdown against the Bears.

Sophomore Cody Hubbell, who has lived in College Station since he was two years old, said there is no such thing as being too excited to play Texas.

"I've tried to maintain my composure," he said, "but I consider this to be one of the biggest matches of my life."

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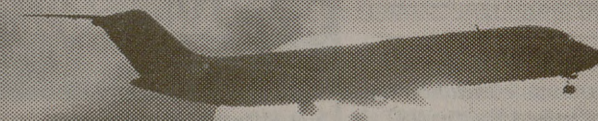
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