Aggies aim for second Big 12 title

A&M holds No. 2 seed in tourney

BERNARDO GARZA/THE BATTALION

A&M forward **Heather Ragsdale** claimed first team All-Big 12 honors.

By Brian Ruff
The Battalion

After their 2-0 loss to the Nebraska Cornhuskers in Lincoln on Oct. 8, coach G. Guerrieri and the Texas A&M soccer team had one thought on their minds — redemption.

With their Thursday night win over Texas, the Aggies secured second place in the Big 12 conference and will get a chance to foil the 'Huskers in the fifth Big 12 soccer tournament.

But the road to the Big 12 Championship passes through the Colorado Buffaloes. The Aggies will face Colorado, the seventh seed in the tournament, at 5 p.m. today in San Antonio. A&M pounded the Buffs on Sept. 24 at the Aggie Soccer Complex, 6-1.

"Colorado is a team that we had a real good performance against the first time out, and we're going to have to really work hard to match that performance," Guerrieri said.

If the Aggies repeat their performance against Colorado, they will face the winner of the matchup between the sixth-seeded Oklahoma Sooners and the third-seeded Texas Longhorns on Thursday.

"We will be preparing the way we need to win the championship, at a speed to beat Nebraska," Guerrieri said.

On the other side of the bracket, the top-seeded Nebraska team will face the eighth-seeded Kansas Jayhawks. The Cornhuskers defeated Kansas in Lawrence earlier this season, 3-0. The winner of the the Cornhusker-Jayhawk matchup will face the winner of Missouri and Baylor, seeded fourth and fifth respectively. The Bears defeated Missouri, 2-1, on Oct. 20.

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Football team regains respect, re-enters poll

AGGIE NOTEBOOK

Since the Aggies' loss to Colorado that snapped their 22-game home winning streak, the A&M football team has talked about respect. The players said they wanted it and deserved it, but they were not getting it.

Well, after holding their last three opponents to a total of 17 points, including the Kansas State Wildcats — the country's third best scoring offense — the Aggies are starting to garner that elusive "R" word.

"It feels great to be back in the Top 25," said outside linebacker Jason Glenn. "You've got to respect us. If you don't, we'll jump on you real quick.

"Before each game, we see ourselves as a pit bull on a chain. You don't feed him for a whole week, and when you let him off the chain, he'll eat anything, and that's how we label ourselves now."

Looking back on this year's season, one can see where that pit bull was finally let off the chain — Iowa State.

In Waco the week before, the defense put on a stellar performance by shutting out Baylor. But, at the same time, the offense struggled to score points against one of the country's worst defenses.

While opposing the favored Cyclones and on the road for the second consecutive week, A&M put together an all-out team effort that carried over into its monumental victory over the Wildcats on Saturday.

By beating KSU, just two weeks removed from being the No. 2 squad in the country, the Aggies moved back into the AP and Coaches polls for the first time since the first week of the season.

"It's a really great feeling," said offensive lineman Chris Valletta. "It's a good time to be an Aggie right now. We're all excited with the big win, but what we need to do is keep having a good season and not overlook Oklahoma State."

Not all the members of the A&M football family are enamored with the proposition of being back in the polls, though. Offensive coordinator Steve Kragthorpe said that, while it is nice to be noticed, he does not give much credence to the weekly offerings of the national media.

"We're going to go out and prepare each week the same, no matter what," Kragthorpe said. "Those polls are arbitrary numbers. There are some teams in the Top 10 that shouldn't be there. And there are some teams that are 27, 28 or 29 that should be (in the Top 10). So who knows? There will never be a true national champion until there is a playoff system."

Even though there is an air of confidence and satisfaction surrounding the team right now, the coaching staff is not buying into the feel-good aura. They know that last week's win is now history and, if the Aggies get complacent, OSU will be more than happy to bring them down.

According to cornerback Jay Brooks, the team will not have those problems again.

"We're hiding out right now. We're just slowly climbing up the mountain," Brooks said. "People are starting to recognize that we're still A&M. We were kind of down the first couple of games, but we're slowly making our mark now. As long as we're in the Top 25 when it counts, that's all that matters to us."

• OU kickoff moved

The kickoff for the Texas A&M-Oklahoma game has been moved by ABC to noon on Nov. 11. The game is sold out already except for temporary folding-chair seating on the sidelines between the 30-yard line and goal line on the east and west sides. The $40 tickets are not elevated and have an obstructed view because of their height.

• Halloween fun

About five minutes into his weekly media luncheon, A&M coach R.C. Slocum was interrupted by a 6-foot mass wearing a long black cloak. Its face was obscured by a black net, and it lunged at Slocum. After startling Slocum, fullback Ja'Mar Toombs removed his mask to reveal the Halloween prank.

Blaine Dionne is a senior journalism major.

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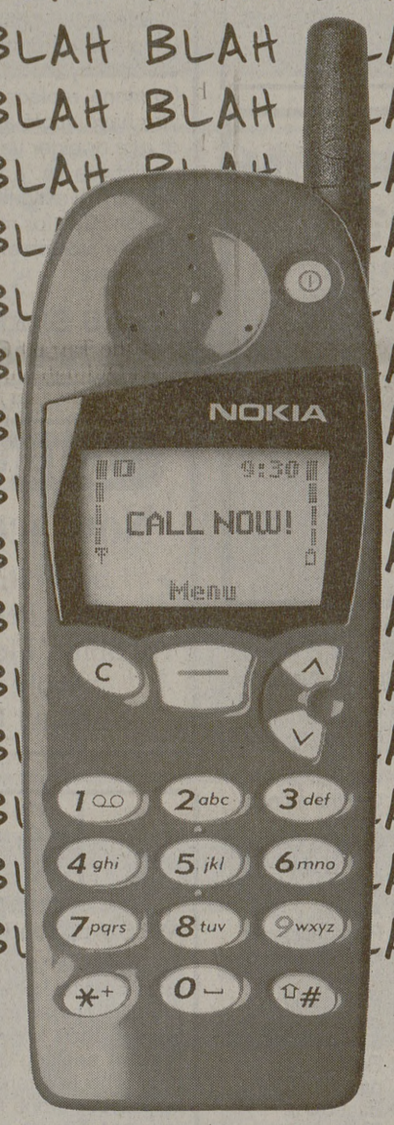

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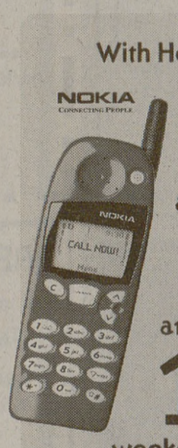

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