

No. 9 Aggies look to the sky Tournament pits Texas A&M against Golden Eagles

BY BRIAN RUFF
The Battalion

After its 4-1 loss to the Big 12 champion Nebraska Cornhuskers last weekend in San Antonio, the No. 9 Texas A&M soccer team (17-5) looks to rebound on Sunday when it hosts the second round of the 2000 NCAA Soccer Tournament at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

The Aggies will take on the 17th-ranked Marquette Golden Eagles.

Marquette (20-2-1) advanced to the second round with a 2-1 double-overtime victory over Wright State.

Marquette was led by forward Kate Gordon, who ended the game with a shot past the Wright State goalkeeper 109 minutes into the match. Marquette won its second straight Conference USA title last

weekend in St. Louis with a win over Cincinnati.

Gordon's game-winner, her 16th goal of the season, was also her fourth game-winning goal in a row and third in overtime.

In 1999, the Aggies were defeated in the third round of the NCAA tournament by the same team that sent A&M home early in 1998 — the Nebraska Cornhuskers. Coach G. Guerrieri's team advanced to the Sweet 16 for the second time in the team's history in 1998.

"The team had to scratch and fight for every single win, and they've done it," Guerrieri said. "Now we ask them to step it up and understand that now, if we lose, we go home."

Forward Heather Ragsdale leads the Aggies with 14 goals and nine

assists on the season, accumulating 37 points.

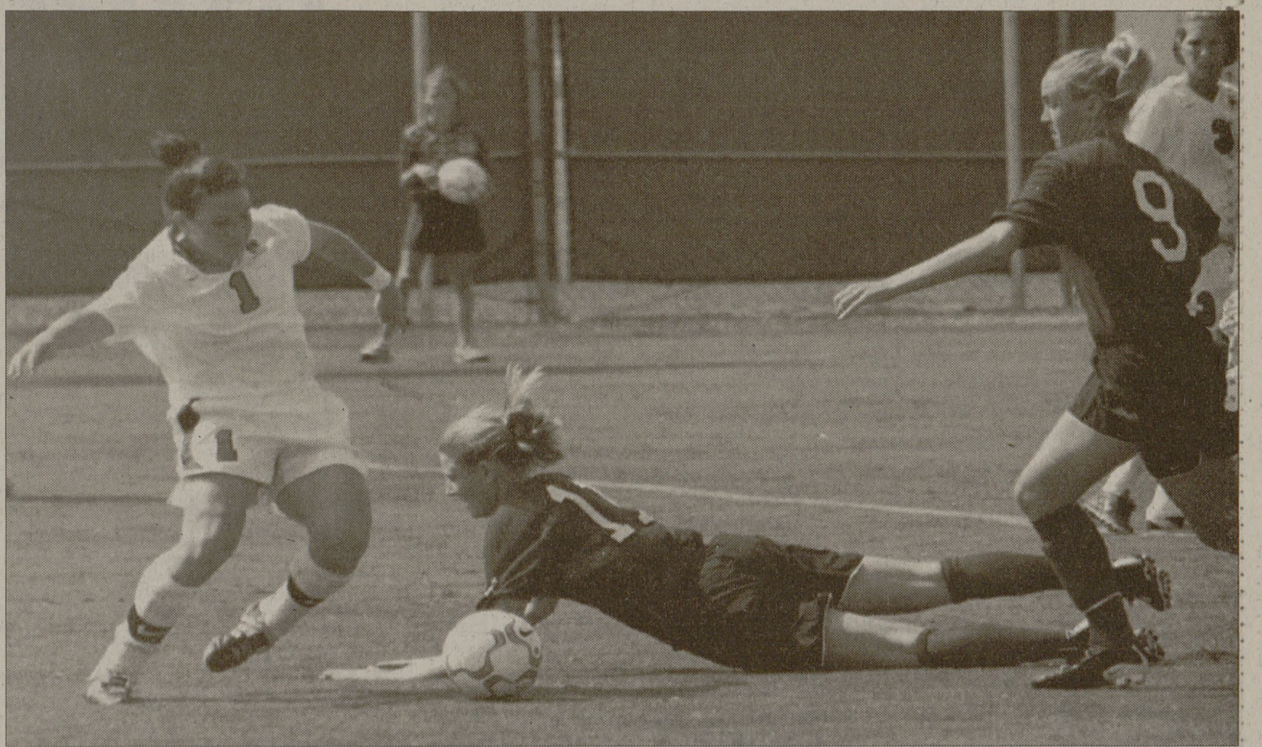
Midfielder Kristen Strutz also continues to contribute to the Aggies' offensive pressure. Strutz, who was named to the Big 12 Conference All Tournament Team, is second on the team with 11 goals and nine assists.

Goalkeeper Esther Thompson will look to add to her 5.5 shutout total against the Golden Eagles.

Should the Aggies defeat the Golden Eagles and advance to the Sweet 16 this Sunday, they will face the winner of the Southern California/UCLA matchup.

A&M finished second in the regular season and took second in the Big 12 tournament.

Kickoff for the A&M/Marquette matchup is set for 1 p.m. Sunday.



Aggie forward **Heather Ragsdale** and midfielder **Kristen Strutz** will be face the Marquette Golden Eagles Sunday in the NCAA Soccer Tournament at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

Cross country teams ready for NCAA run After Saturday meet, Aggies could advance to national match in November

BY DIANE XAVIER
The Battalion

After falling short at the Big 12 Championships, the Texas A&M cross country teams are ready to prove themselves in the NCAA South Central Regional Championship Saturday morning at North Texas in Denton.

The women's 6-kilometer race will begin at 9 a.m. and the men's 10k will begin at 10 a.m.

The event will mark the squads' biggest meet of the season, as it determines which teams will qualify for the the NCAA Cross Country Championship Nov. 20 in Ames, Iowa.

The top two teams and the top four finishers who are not on the top two teams will advance to nationals.

A&M coach Dave Hartman said the 24th-ranked women's team, coming off of its strongest season ever, expects to challenge 11th-ranked favorite and defending champion Arkansas for the title. The team anticipates making its first NCAA Championship appearance.

"We've trained for this particular match all year long," Hartman said. "We did have an off day at the Big 12 meet in Boulder. However, we were up against some of the toughest competition in the nation."

Hartman said that the Boulder race prepared his squads to perform their optimum best at regionals.

"I think the South Central Regional competition will not be as hard as the Big 12 contest," Hartman said. "There are not as many strong teams we have to go up against."

"Also, we are more familiar with the course we are running on, which is to our advantage," he said.

A&M is favored to battle third-ranked Texas Christian for an automatic berth based on the team's season performance.



Brandon Beasley and the men's cross country team will compete Saturday in the NCAA South Central Regional Championship, and can then advance to the NCAA Championship.

"I believe our squad is better than TCU, despite their ranking in the South Central Regional polls," Hartman said. "TCU has raced against a lot weaker teams than us, whereas we've run against the best and toughest."

The men's team, which has struggled this season, will attempt to make its second straight appearance at nationals.

"I know our guys are ready despite our sub-par performance in other meets," Hartman said. "We've been training for a 10k all year, which this race is, whereas other squads haven't."

"If we run like we are capable of, we can finish second or third," he said.

"Our toughest competition will be against the University of Texas."

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Ags set for Iowa State

BY BREE HOLZ
The Battalion

After a heartbreaking loss to No. 1 Nebraska on Wednesday, the Texas A&M volleyball team will try to get back into the win column when it takes on Iowa State Saturday at the Hilton Coliseum in Ames, Iowa. First serve is set for 7 p.m.

The No. 24 Aggies posted their second loss in a row against Nebraska for the first time since 1998. The loss broke the Aggies' record 28-match home winning streak.

"We can take a lot away from the loss," said A&M coach Laurie Corbelli. "We were backing off from our attack, not wanting to make the error. We have to get better offensively against the better teams and put more balls away."

The Aggies sit in fourth place with a 10-5 Big 12 record, while Iowa State remains in last place, with a 0-16 record. The Cyclones were defeated by Colorado on Wednesday, while Nebraska remains at the top of the league.

In 1999, Iowa State finished in last place in the league with a 1-16 record.

The Aggies hold an 11-1 all-time series record and have not lost to the Cyclones since 1989.

The Cyclones' middle blocker, Stacy Nicks leads the team with 1.02 blocks per game.

A&M middle blocker Heather Marshall said the loss at home helped the team realize that it cannot let the crowd be its only motivation.

"We can't rely on the energy from the crowd; we need to rely on our volleyball," she said. "The external factors won't always be there."

See VOLLEYBALL on Page 8.

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