



FILE PHOTO/THE BATTALION

Forward Jaynetta Saunders and the Texas A&M women's basketball team will host Arkansas-Pine Bluff University tonight at Reed Arena. The Aggies are 3-1 on the season.

Ags return to Reed Arena

Texas A&M to take on Arkansas-Pine Bluff tonight at 7

BY BLAINE DIONNE
The Battalion

The Texas A&M women's basketball team will follow last weekend's bittersweet road trip by facing Arkansas-Pine Bluff tonight at Reed Arena at 7.

Sunday, the Aggies returned from Memphis, Tenn., one half short of a Lady Tiger Classic tournament championship.

A&M coach Peggie Gillom said her team was on the verge of a win even though its scoring dried up in the second half.

"We had an opportunity to win that second one, but we went too long without scoring," Gillom said. "You can't do that and try to win a game on the road. We went seven minutes without scoring."

"They didn't pull away that much even when we weren't scoring, but, yet and still, it was a close game."

With a month separating the Aggies from their first conference matchup with the Texas Longhorns, Gillom said she is pleased with the team's progression.

"Every game we have improved a little bit," Gillom said. "I was concerned with our intensity level, especially on defense, but it has definitely picked up over the last few games."

Gillom is now concerned with getting the youthful team more experience. She is particularly determined to involve the five freshmen who dominate her roster.

"I'm always concerned a little bit with teams that you're supposed to beat. You can't take them lightly ... we'll be prepared."

— Peggie Gillom
A&M women's basketball coach

A&M has only three seniors and two juniors on its team this year, making it one of the youngest and most inexperienced in the Big 12. Gillom wants to compensate for that inexperience by giving all her players as much playing time as possible.

"I think our depth is hurting us a little bit right now because of us being so young," Gillom said. "But once they learn what to do, and we get some more production from them, I think we'll be OK."

Gillom said, although she is anxious to get the young guns on the floor, the opportunity has not presented itself.

"Against Northwestern, I thought that should have been a game we could've broken away, and we could've put in some of those freshmen," she said. "But the game was pretty close, and we couldn't get them in."

The Aggies will get their next opportunity to gain experience against Arkansas-Pine Bluff, a SWAC representative that Gillom said poses more of a threat than most people think.

"Pine Bluff has played Southern Miss, UNLV and St. John's," Gillom said. "They lost all three, but they played UNLV and St. John's within 10 — and that was on the road. So this team concerns me a little bit."

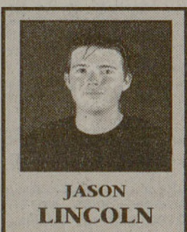
"I'm always concerned a little bit with teams that you're supposed to beat. You can't take them lightly, and we won't be taking them lightly; we'll be prepared."

Dawn patrol practice produces results, for now

Last night was a sleepless one for Texas A&M men's basketball coach Melvin Watkins. He was busy searching for an answer to the Aggies' woes on the hard-court so far this season.

A 20-point loss to first-year Division I program Birmingham-Southern on Sunday afternoon forced him into immediate action.

He called a 5:30 a.m. practice, later pushed back to 6 Monday morning, because he was looking for a different Aggie team to show up to Reed Arena. Any Aggie who did not come, Watkins said, would no longer be a



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part of the 2000 squad.

The Aggies' young roster, which includes just three upperclassmen, got the message, showing up at 5:30 a.m. Players were waiting outside when Watkins pulled up at the pre-dawn hour.

It originally was going to be a practice that should have started with reviewing the game tape from Sunday's game with Birmingham-Southern, but A&M never moved past the first half of film in the two-hour meeting. The review sparked a multi-path conversation between the coaches and players.

"Talk is cheap," Watkins said. "We need to now see some things actually be played out in the practice environment and then, of course, out on the playing floor. But some good things

were said from some of the right type of people. But at this point it's talk. We have to show now."

The problems began with practice, where A&M has been plagued by injuries throughout the starting lineup so far this season.

Center Andy Slocum likely will miss the rest of the season after having arthroscopic surgery on his shoulder.

Forward Aaron Jack missed most of the preseason with a concussion. Forward Tomas Riss is on the upswing after an appendicitis and staph infection at the start of fall workouts, and he could be back in the lineup within a week.

But the injuries have become a crutch for A&M's young squad.

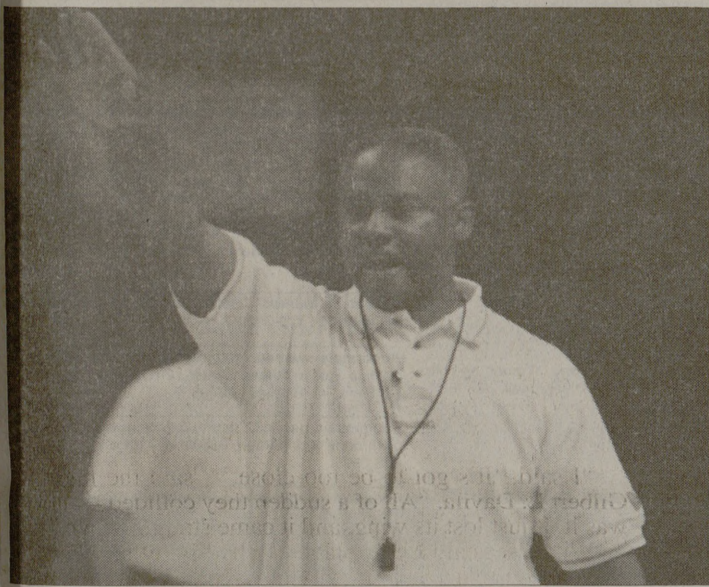
"Our numbers are down, we got

some injuries, so players can look around and say, 'I'm going to play no matter what,' then they take advantage of the opportunity. But kids do that," Watkins said.

Now Watkins will begin a search for a leader on his young squad. But perhaps the most important part is over — the problem has been addressed, leaving the Aggie players to put up or shut up from now on.

"By no means am I saying its panic," Watkins said. "We're not panicked in that we're going to lose this season in. But there are surely some things that we have to address. We have to take responsibility and ownership to some of the problems we have."

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Men's basketball coach Melvin Watkins held a 5:30 a.m. practice session Monday to help sort out the team's work ethic.

Aggie volleyball returns to the postseason

Once again, the Texas A&M volleyball team is headed to the postseason NCAA Championship tournament. This year, the Aggies will be joined by five other Big 12 teams — Nebraska, Kansas State, Missouri, Colorado and Texas Tech.



BREE HOLZ

"This is the second year in a row that the Big 12 has sent so many teams to the tournament," said A&M coach Laurie Corbelli. "It's great for us because it shows just how competitive our conference matches have been. You always have to be at your best to compete in a conference like ours."

The Pac-10 and Big 10 conferences each will send six teams each to the tournament.

The strength of the Big 12 can be seen in the number of losses each team accumulated during the conference season.

A&M, which finished league play with a 14-6 record, lost twice to undefeated Nebraska, but split matches with Kansas State, Missouri, Colorado and Texas Tech.

The Big 12 team that will have the most success in the tournament is the team that is "on."

"I've seen what Tech and Missouri can do when all of their players are playing at their best

levels," Corbelli said. "I don't doubt that all the Big 12 teams will make it through their first-round matches, but they will have to be playing top-notch to get through the second round."

This also holds true for the Aggies, who battle the Houston Cougars in the first round in Stockton, Calif.

If successful, they will take on the winner of the Oral Roberts-Pacific matchup. Pacific is ranked second in the Midwest region and was defeated by eventual national champion Penn State in the semifinals last season.

"Anything can happen in the postseason," Corbelli said. "You never know who is going to be playing at their peak."

Corbelli speaks from experience, as her 1999 squad made school history by defeating then-No. 3 Hawaii on its home court to advance to a first-ever Elite Eight appearance. The Aggies were eliminated by No. 6 Long Beach State in the fourth round.

A&M, which has had trouble in tough road matches, will not be backed by its usual Twelfth Man crowd.

However, A&M has five players from California on its roster: setter Jenna Moscovic, middle blocker Tara Pulaski and outside hitters Michelle Cole, Julia Rex and Brandi Mount.

Playing in those players' home state should bring added enthusiasm.

"It definitely won't be the same as playing at home, but I think we will have an unusually large crowd for playing so far away from home," Corbelli said. "Some of the parents have picked up the yells, so we may have a small Twelfth Man crowd there."

This will be A&M's eighth consecutive appearance and 12th overall appearance in the tournament since the creation of the tournament in 1981.

A&M has been successful in the postseason for so many years for two reasons: great recruiting and great coaching.

Laurie and John Corbelli have managed to recruit numerous members of Volleyball Magazine's annual Fab 50 recruiting list, including Moscovic, Cole and Mount.

Players who join the A&M team out of high school can step on the court at the college level and not make typical freshman mistakes.

Moscovic, the All-Big 12 Freshman of the Year in 1998, made that clear with her phenomenal performances in her first season as an Aggie.

With the leadership of three seniors and a fairly experienced NCAA tournament team, A&M should have no problems advancing past the first round. After that, it is anyone's game.



JASON LINCOLN/THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M volleyball team, along with five other squads from the Big 12 Conference, will begin its 2000 NCAA Tournament run this week.

'Canes relegated to BCS outsider, hope for OU upset

(AP) — No. 3 Florida State will play for a national championship in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 3. The opponent? Still to be decided.

The Seminoles will face No. 1 Oklahoma or No. 2 Miami in the title game of the Bowl Championship Series.

An Oklahoma victory in Saturday night's Big 12 title game against No. 8 Kansas State would send the Sooners to the Orange Bowl. If they lose, Miami would play Florida State for the BCS championship. The Hurricanes beat the Seminoles 27-24 on Oct. 7.

In Monday's BCS standings, Oklahoma was still in first place after a 12-7 victory over Oklahoma State. But second-place Florida State picked up enough ground in the eight computer rankings to prevent third-place Miami from overtaking it no matter what happens in Sunday's final BCS standings.

"There's no way for Miami to make up the ground in the computers," said Jerry Palm, who operates a Website

that closely monitors the BCS standings. "Oklahoma is in with a win and Miami is in if Oklahoma loses."

For four weeks, Oklahoma, Miami and Florida State have been ranked 1-2-3 in the AP media poll and the USA Today/ESPN coaches poll, but the top two teams in the final BCS standings play in the Orange Bowl.

The BCS standings are based on a formula that incorporates the two polls, eight computer rankings, schedule strength and number of losses.

Florida State coach Bobby Bowden was hesitant to celebrate early.

"Until I talk to someone from the Orange Bowl with an invitation in their hands, I won't feel like it's a sure thing," he said.

In this week's computer rankings, though, Florida State

has six No. 1 votes — up from four a week ago — while Oklahoma has two No. 1s — down from four a week ago.

"Even if Oklahoma beats K-State by enough to pass Florida State in three computers where the teams are 1-2, but not by enough to pass Miami in the three computers where Oklahoma trails Miami, it's still not enough for Miami to move ahead of Florida State," Palm said.

Bowden does not believe Miami would be getting a bad deal if it fails to reach the Orange Bowl.

"The BCS was designed to determine who has been the best the whole season, not just one game," Bowden said. "It really comes down to who has the most valuable

loss. We got a loss, Miami has a loss, Washington has a loss, Oregon State has a loss. That's where the computer and strength of schedule comes into play."

Should Miami fail to make it to the Orange Bowl, the Hurricanes would play in the Fiesta or Sugar bowl and create the possibility of co-national champions.

If the Seminoles barely beat the Sooners and the Hurricanes easily win their game, here is how the split can occur: The sports writers and broadcasters in the Associated Press media poll vote independently of the BCS; the coaches poll automatically crowns the Orange Bowl winner its national champion.

Bowl Championship Series rankings

The year's Bowl Championship Series rankings include eight computer ranking polls. Here's a look at the rankings through Nov. 25.

Rank	Team	AP	USA Today/ESPN	Poll Avg.	Richard Billingsley	Dunkel Index	Kenneth Massey	New York Times	David Rothman	Jeff Sagarin	Scraps-Howard	Seattle Times	Computer Avg.	Schedule strength	Schedule rank	Losses	Total
1	Oklahoma	1	1	1.0	2	3	2	1	2	4	1	2.00	24	0.96	0	3.96	
2	Florida State	3	3	3.0	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	1.14	1	0.04	1	5.18	
3	Miami (FL)	2	2	2.0	3	2	3	2	3	3	4	2.71	2	0.08	1	5.79	
4	Washington	4	4	4.0	10	11	4	5	7	2	2	4.86	8	0.32	1	10.18	
5	Virginia Tech	6	5	3.5	5	5	5	4	5	5	7	6	5.29	13	0.52	1	12.31
6	Oregon State	5	6	5.5	7	9	7	8	5	6	5	6	6.14	41	1.64	1	14.28
7	Florida	7	8	7.5	4	4	8	6	11	8	9	9	6.86	3	0.12	2	16.88
8	Nebraska	10	9	9.5	8	13	6	10	8	4	6	8	6.57	18	0.72	2	18.79
9	Kansas State	8	7	7.5	9	12	10	11	8	9	10	10	9.43	43	1.72	2	20.65
10	Oregon	9	11	10.5	12	17	13	15	10	14	8	7	11.43	23	0.92	2	24.86
11	Notre Dame	11	10	10.5	14	15	15	15	12	15	11	11	12.43	26	1.04	2	25.97
12	Texas	12	12	12.0	11	6	9	12	9	10	12	15	9.86	84	3.36	2	27.22
13	Georgia Tech	17	18	17.5	9	8	11	7	15	11	14	13	10.43	45	1.80	2	31.73
14	Texas Christian	13	15	14.0	16	7	12	21	14	12	18	22	13.67	96	3.84	1	32.41
15	Clemson	15	13	14.0	13	21	14	20	13	16	15	14	15.00	57	2.28	2	33.28
16	Michigan	16	16	16.0	15	10	16	17	17	13	16	17	14.86	35	1.40	3	35.26

AP