

Equestrian team faces final shows

By CODY STARK
The Battalion

The Texas A&M women's equestrian team will be back in the saddle, the English saddle, that is, this weekend on the campus of West Texas A&M University for the final three shows of the season.

The Aggies have a 16-point lead over second-place Kansas State University as they look to hold on to their Zone 7 lead and advance to the national show. Oklahoma State is only one point behind KSU and would like to sneak past to claim the No. 2 spot. Unlike the western competition, the top two English teams from the region advance to nationals.

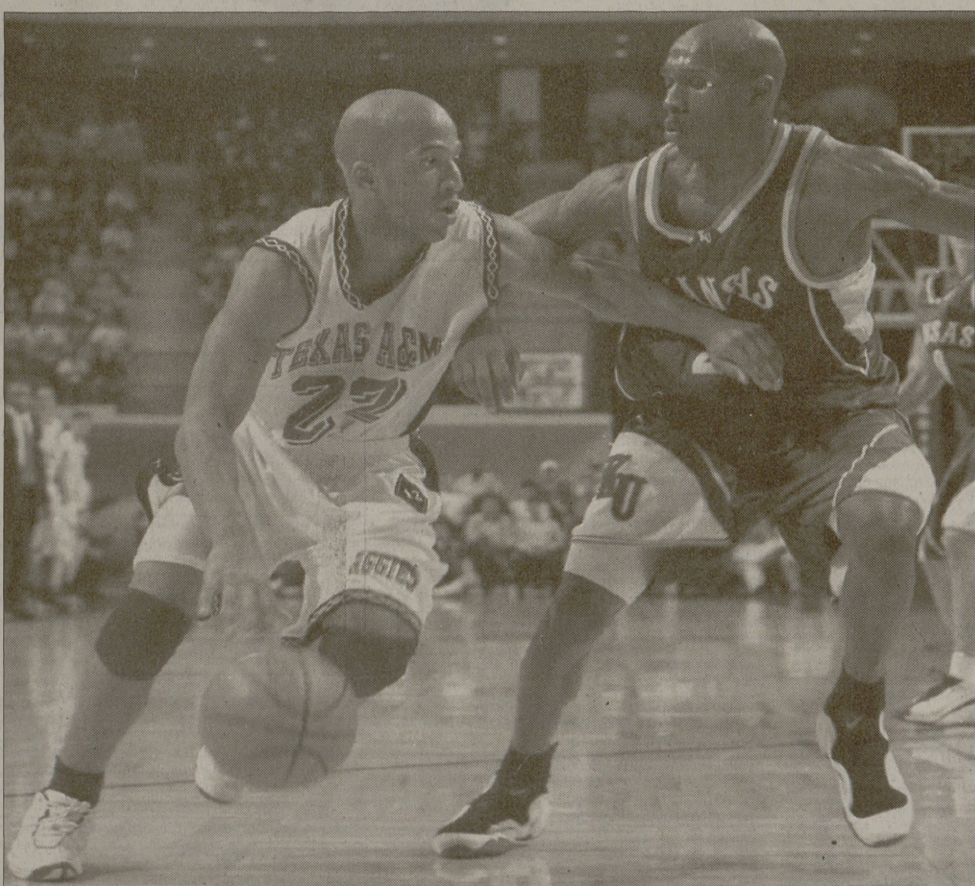
A&M has already advanced 10 riders to the regional show that will be held in College Station on March 3. They are Melynda Knowles and Suzanne Summers in walk-trot, Morgen Kobza in beginner walk-trot, Joan Burns and Meagan Galinger in advanced walk-trot, Jessica Mattingly and Cori Willet in novice flat, and Keyea Webster in intermediate flat and intermediate fences.

Germaine Dougherty and Meredith Houx have advanced in open flat and are on the verge of qualifying in open fences as well. Houx and Dougherty are also vying for the high-point rider of the region. They are currently tied for the top spot with 55 overall points. The high-point riders from each region will compete at nationals for the Cacchione Cup. Dougherty placed 14th out of 25 at last year's competition.

Houx, who only needs a couple of points to qualify in open fences, has found out that it isn't just a walk in the park.

"I need two more points to qualify for individuals in the fences part, so that is my main goal, to get those two points," Houx said. "I'm a little nervous just because I thought it was going to be easy to get those two points, and it hasn't been as easy I thought. I feel a little pressure after the last show and the horses I got. You never know what you are going to get."

The event begins at 4 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. Saturday. The final show will be held on Saturday at 3 p.m. in Canyon, Texas.



FILE PHOTO/THE BATTALION

The A&M men's basketball team will try to continue its three-game winning streak against Missouri on Saturday at Reed Arena.

Ags take on Tigers

Men's squad hopes to continue streak

By JASON LINCOLN
The Battalion

For the first time since 1998, the Texas A&M men's basketball team is on a genuine winning streak. Wednesday's narrow margin of victory over University of Texas-Pan American was enough to give the Aggies their third straight win.

While A&M's three wins came against lower tier-Big 12 teams and a little-known non-conference opponent, it was enough to start A&M in the right direction after opening the conference season with nine straight losses.

Saturday, A&M will look to capture its first win against one of the Big 12's top-tier teams when it takes on Missouri at 12:45 p.m. in Reed Arena.

The Tigers, well on pace for an NCAA tournament appearance, are just 2-2 in February. Meanwhile, A&M's two straight wins in Big 12 action leave it on the verge of climbing out of last place for the first time this year.

The Tigers lost sophomore forward Kareem Rush for the season to a thumb injury just 10 days ago. At the time, Rush was the Big 12's leading scorer and 11th

in the NCAA, while averaging 21.9 points per game.

The Tigers got a break when junior guard Clarence Gilbert, the Big 12's fourth leading scorer with 17 points per game, was reinstated to the team on Monday.

Missouri defeated Colorado 80-69 on Tuesday in Columbia, but enters A&M with a four-game road-losing streak.

Wednesday's come-from-behind victory witnessed five Aggies score in double figures.

Bernard King led A&M's charge with 22 points. Nick Anderson scored 12 points, Keith Bean scored 11, and Jesse King and Jamaal Gilchrist each posted 10.

The Aggies will be looking for their second four-game winning streak in coach Melvin Watkins' three seasons at A&M. Only one active player remains from that season — junior point guard Andy Leatherman.

Leatherman scored a pair of free throws with just seven seconds remaining to seal the win.

Texas A&M will introduce Reveille VII as part of the festivities on Saturday.

Aggies attempt to end skid

By BRIAN RUFF
The Battalion

The Texas A&M women's basketball team looks to stop a six-game losing skid Saturday night at Reed Arena. Peggie Gillom's squad hasn't seen the win column since Jan. 20. Unfortunately for the Aggies, the No. 19 Colorado Buffaloes stand in the way of ending their losing streak.

"We have got to do the things we need to do, and we have to play with effort."

— Peggie Gillom
A&M women's basketball coach

A&M comes into the game after suffering an 83-63 loss to the Oklahoma State Cowgirls on Tuesday night. Even though senior forward Jaynetta Saunders posted her seventh double-double of the season with 30 points and 14 rebounds, the Aggies were again unable to overcome their lack of rebounding, and they dropped their second loss of the season to the Cowgirls.

The Aggies were out-rebounded 52-35 by OSU. Freshman guard Toccara Williams, who is among the conference's leaders in assists and steals, added seven points and

nine assists against the Cowgirls.

After the loss to OSU, the Aggies' record dropped to 12-11 overall and 2-10 in Big 12 action. They have lost nine of their last 10 games.

Colorado comes into the game riding an emotional high after beating the No. 6 Iowa State Cyclones in Boulder. The Buffs knocked off Iowa State, 73-66, to hand the Cyclones their second Big 12 conference loss of the season.

The Buffaloes are led this season by junior guard Mandy Nightingale, who averages 13.7 points per game. Junior center Britt Hartshorn also is a force for the Buffs, averaging 11.6 points. She comes into the A&M matchup in second place in blocked shots, averaging 2.04 per game. Both had 17 points against the Cyclones on Wednesday night.

Colorado knocked Iowa State out of first place in the Big 12 with the win, and the red-hot Oklahoma Sooners moved into the No. 1 spot in the conference. Colorado sits in fourth place in the Big 12, behind Texas Tech.

The Aggies have not out-rebounded a single opponent in Big 12 play. A&M ranks last in the conference in rebounding margin, averaging 10-plus rebounds less than the opponent this season. The team's worst rebounding performance came against Baylor on Feb. 10, when the Aggies were out-boarded by a season-high 36 boards.

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FILE PHOTO/THE BATTALION

The Aggies hope to end a six-game losing streak with senior forward Jaynetta Saunders Wednesday against the Colorado Buffaloes.

A&M faces No. 5 Alabama in Invitational



CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Sophomore catcher Selena Collins tags a Sam Houston player out at home during the Texas A&M victory over the Bearkats.

By AMAD OWIDI
The Battalion

In the same way Kevin Costner protected Whitney Houston in *The Bodyguard*, the Texas A&M softball team will attempt to defend the Aggie Softball Complex this weekend in the Verizon Aggie Softball Invitational.

After winning five of their last six games, the Aggies prepare to host three teams on a roll of their own. The competition will include No. 5 Alabama, Penn State University and Texas A&M-Corpus Christi.

These teams are not strangers to one another. The Aggies, Alabama and Penn State participated in last year's regional tournament in Tempe, Ariz.

Winner of its first five games, the Alabama Crimson Tide will roll into town undefeated. This weekend will mark a return of softball players who grew up making their home in the Lone Star state. Senior catcher Kelly Askew from Pasadena and junior pitcher Shelley Laird from Spring will return to Texas wearing the crimson of Alabama.

"Alabama is going to be the team to beat this weekend," said A&M softball coach Jo Evans. "This is going to be a great game for us to see where we are at this point."

Starting the season with seven wins and two losses, the Aggies have garnered a share of top 25 votes. The challenge of a highly ranked opponent is one the Aggies look forward to.

"I'm pumped up. I hope I get a chance to pitch," said freshman pitcher Lindsay Wilhelmson.

Penn State received top 25 votes of its own this week.

The Nittany Lions also bring a native Texan back to her roots. A freshman pitcher from Victoria, Texas, Marisa Hanson will look to turn a few heads in her return.

The Aggies are scheduled to play twice Friday. Their first game is at 3:30 p.m. against Alabama. The Aggies' second game will be at 5:45 p.m. against Penn State. The Aggies have another double dip the following day. On Saturday morning at 11, they will

See PENN STATE on Page 10.

Tennis travels to Florida

By TRUE BROWN
The Battalion

The Texas A&M women's tennis team will have its first matches of the season away from the friendly confines of the Varsity Tennis Center this weekend. They will be traveling to Florida International University today and the University of Miami Sunday.

Both teams should present solid challenges for the Aggies (4-0), who are coming off a nail-biting 4-3 win over Texas Christian University on Tuesday night. The Aggies were forced to come from behind in three of the four final matches.

No. 41 Florida International (4-0) is off to a fast start after dominating wins over two ranked teams, including No. 43 Miami, 5-2.

"We are kind of walking into the lion's den down there," said A&M women's tennis coach Bobby Kleinecke. "(Tuesday) showed us a little bit of our character and heart, so I think this is a good time to go put it on the road."

Florida International will be led by the undefeated doubles tandem of Anneliese Rose and Mariana Fustinelli, who are ranked No. 44. Rose and Fustinelli will match up against the Aggies' No. 10 duo of freshman Jessica Roland and sophomore Ashley Hedberg.

Miami (3-1) will feature a pair of undefeated singles players, Katia Bogomolova and No. 81 Bettina Hafner.

The Aggies will be led in singles play by juniors Leah Killen (4-0) and Martina Nedorostova (3-1) and sophomore Olivia Karlikova (3-1).

A&M knocked off Miami, 6-2, in College Station in 2000. The win, which came in the 14th match of the season, was A&M's first over a ranked opponent last year. This season, the Aggies defeated ranked opponents twice in their first four matches.

"Miami was a little miffed about that one last year, so they will definitely

See FLORIDA on Page 10.

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