SPORTS-

Higgins to lead Aggie men's golf team Former New Mexico coach replaces Hall of Fame coach Ellis after 27 years at A&M

Mark Passwaters The Battalion

sday, June 6, 2001

Replacing a coach who is a member of e Golf Coaches Association of Ameri-Hall of Fame with 27 years on the job no easy task. Texas A&M thinks they ave found that man in University of ew Mexico golf coach J.T. Higgins. "I am extremely pleased J.T. Higgins

as accepted our offer to become the nen's golf coach at Texas A&M," said Athetic Director Wally Groff. "I think he will e a tremendous recruiter and an excellent it for our program. He was the choice of our search committee and I had a good eel for him after our interview."

"I'm very excited for him and the golf program.

Higgins became the Lobos head coach

I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to be the men's golf coach at Texas A&M.

> — J.T. Higgins new A&M men's golf coach

in 1998 after being the assistant coach at "J.T. will do a fantastic job for Texas UNLV from 1991-97. Higgins' New pressed with the facilities. And, to top it

A&M," said retiring coach Bob Ellis. Mexico team never finished lower than off, I fell in love with College Station." fourth in the Mountain West Conference tournaments and advanced to the NCAA regionals in 1999 and 2001. In 1998 and 2000, the Lobos advanced to the NCAA championships.

This season, UNM finished 17th nationally in the Golfweek and the College Golf Foundation polls, and Higgins was named the 2001 Mountain West Conference Coach of the Year.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to be the men's golf coach at Texas A&M. I had heard great things about the traditions and the pride in the school and the city," Higgins said. "I was thoroughly im-

Higgins' goals for the Aggie golf program are not small. "We have a good nucleus and a lot of young talent," he said. "We can compete right away."

"If we can compete for the Big 12 championship, we'll have a great chance nationally. In the long term, I want to win some national championships."

Higgins said that Traditions — the Jack Nicklaus designed course in Bryan, which will become the Aggies' home course in 2002 — will be a great asset in recruiting. "The addition of Traditions will enable

us to recruit the best players in Texas and will naturally be a great asset to the program," he said.

at New Me Named 2001 Mountain West Conference Coach of the Year Led UNM to its first-ever West Regional championship in 1998 UNM finished third at the WAC Championships in 1998 and 1999, second at the Mountain West Championships in 2000 and fourth in the MWC in 2001 Led UNM to four straight NCAA

The Higgins Record

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regionals and two NCAA Championship appearances

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Aggie basketball fills out roster with new recruits Watkins optimistic about incoming junior college point guards, Bryan High School standout Daryl Mason

Michael Blahoff and Matthew Thigpen The Battalion

During the 2000/01 basketball season, Texas Adria &M head coach Melvin Watkins realized that he team would need a significant upgrade of the guard positions to see an im-

provement. In order to see that imrovement, the Aggies have gned Bryan High School tandout Daryl Mason and



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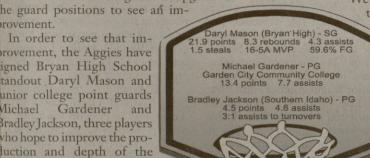
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action and depth of the lard spots. "We felt like the guard spot was the ot spot for us in terms of what our immedite needs were," Watkins said. "We surely ad some concerns, especially ow has alread with the point guard position and

storage when low to displ best view," very fortun w this piece. indows that h nay only be see litan Museu Jew York and Museum in W



of the two junior college transfers.' Watkins said he focused was on junior college players because of their advantages over high

school players.

than we probably could have gotten out of the high school ranks, and their maturity level will hopefully make an adjustment à shorter process," Watkins said.

Watkins said he saw a talent in Daryl Mason that

The 6-foot-6 inch Mason averaged 21.9 points, 8.3 rebounds, 4.3 assists and 1.5 steals while helping Bryan to a 33-4 record and a berth in the state RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

the 13-5A MVP last season and the 16-5A MVP this season, shooting 59.6 percent from the field. "Daryl is a winner," Watkins said. "I would think it's going to be very difficult to keep him sit-

he simply could not pass ting beside me because I think he'll do things that say, 'Hey, coach, I need to be out there on the floor.' We are very excited to have Daryl, and I think our fans will see why we're excited.

In signing Michael Gardener, who will have three years of eligibility at A&M, Watkins hopes championship game. Mason, a he has a player who will bring the leadership the

we think we have addressed that with the addition versatile player who played all five positions, was team that has been lacking the last couple of years.

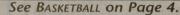
Gardener, a 5-foot-10 inch point guard, averaged 13.4 points and 7.7 assists while leading Garden City Community College to a 25-6 record, earning second-team all conference honors. He was a high school teammate of Aggie forward Jesse King in Detroit.

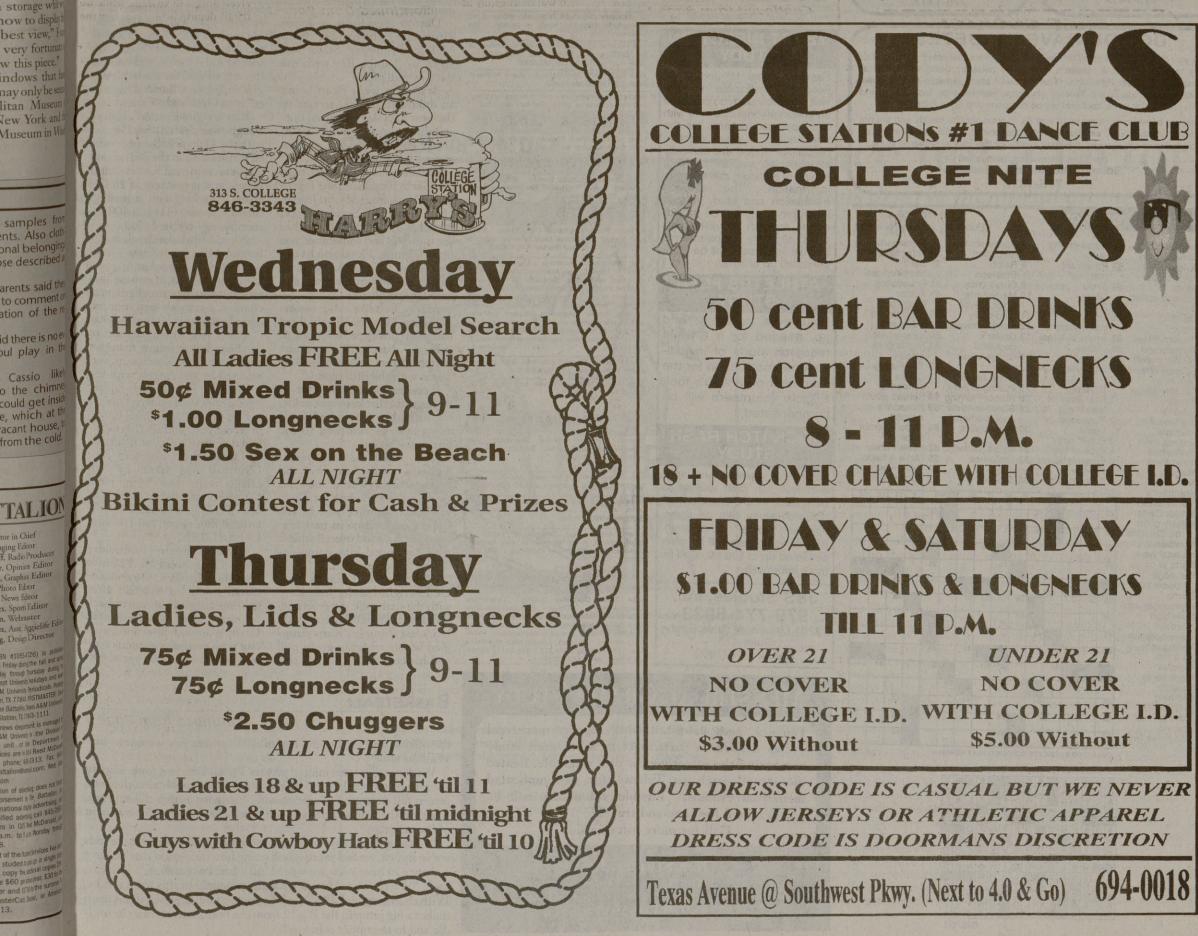
"[Gardner] brings a lot of energy to the game, and plays at a pace that we would like to get to," Watkins said. "He plays very fast."

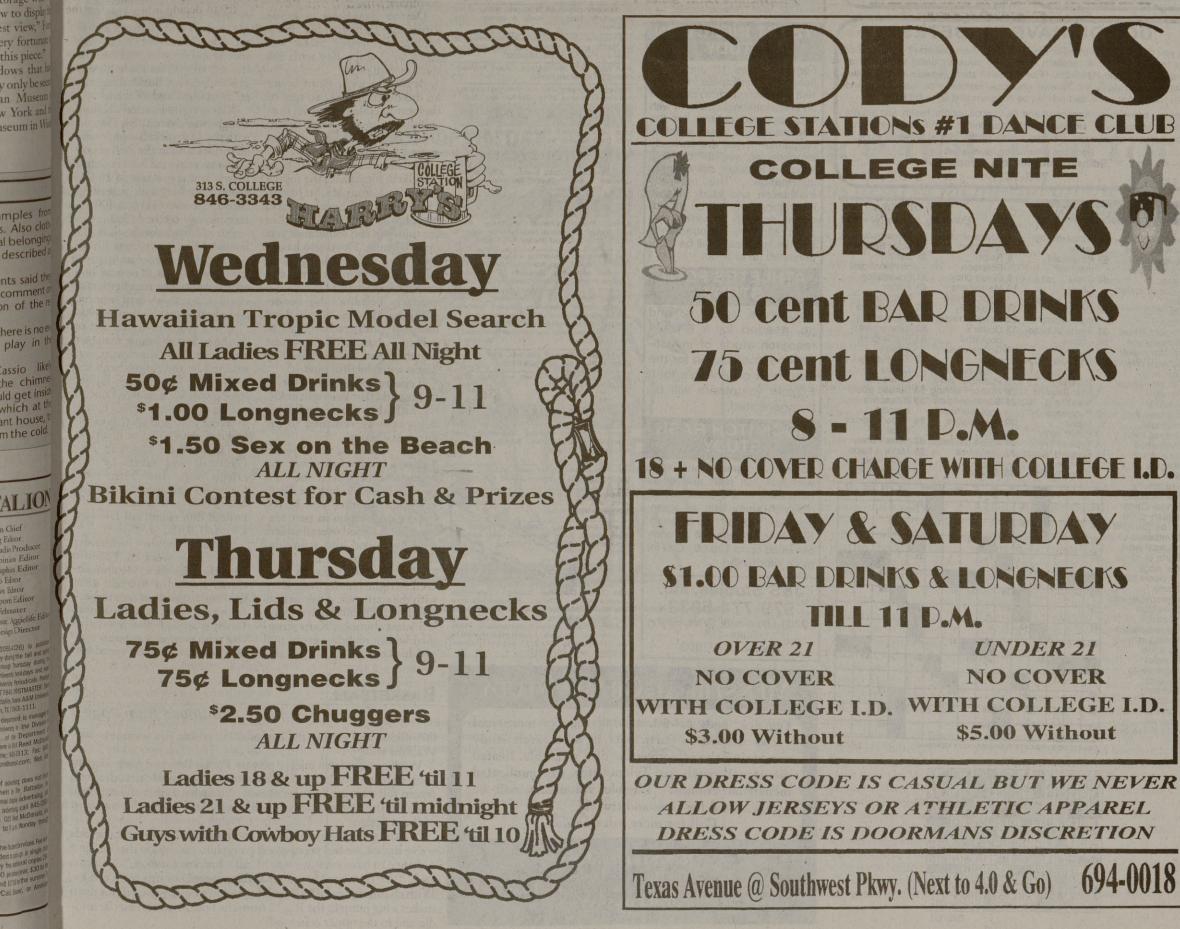
Watkins did not want to get caught short-handed at the point guard position and began pursuing Bradley Jackson late in the recruiting season.

Coming out of high school two years ago, Jackson was rated as the eighth best point guard in the nation. This past season, Jackson posted a 3:1 assist to turnover ratio while helping Southern Idaho to a 29-4 record.

"The thing about Bradley is that he might not play as fast as Michael, but he's just so solid in his play in terms of running the team and getting into







"We feel their skill level will make their transition a lot smoother

"We feel we have a chance to have what we would call a breakout

season."