

# Sports

THE BATTALION

Wednesday, August 22, 2001

## Success on horizon for Ag sports

### A&M squads set sights on Big 12 titles in 2001



Texas A&M varsity sports programs experienced an up-and-down season last year, and all of the Aggie squads are looking to improve by kicking off the 2001-2002 year with success.

The A&M football team looks to improve on a 7-5 mark and will try to begin a new winning streak at Kyle Field after losing two games at home last season.

This season, the Aggies are not ranked in the pre-season Associated Press poll, despite returning junior quarterback Mark Farris and one of the nation's top centers: senior Seth McKinney. McKinney and junior cornerback Sammy Davis were named preseason All-Americans by Football News magazine.

A&M must also do battle in arguably the strongest conference in the country, with Oklahoma, Nebraska and Texas taking the No. 3, 4 and 5 spots, respectively.

The Aggies also will be without three players who filled highlight reels last season: wide receiver Robert Ferguson, fullback Ja'maar Toombs and linebacker Jason Glenn.

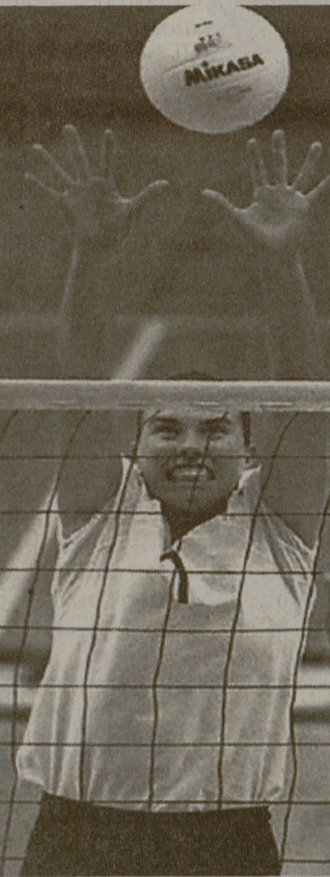
If the Aggies want to make a run at the Big 12 title, they will need to knock off Oklahoma or Texas and hope they receive help elsewhere.

Ninth-year head volleyball coach Lori Corbelli will lead the A&M team into the season ranked 18th in the USA Today poll after posting a 20-9 record last season.

The Aggies should make a run at the Big 12 title with six returning starters, including seniors Jenna Moscovic and Erin Lechler. A&M will try to knock off defending Big 12 champion Nebraska, who is ranked No. 1 in the preseason poll.

After advancing to the third round of the NCAA playoffs last season, head A&M soccer coach G. Guerrieri's team enters the season boasting a No. 11 ranking and returning eight starters, including 2000 All-American Heather Ragsdale and 2000 Hermann Trophy Finalist Nicky Thrasher.

The Aggies will have many chances to earn nationwide respect, with a schedule chock full of top-25



GUY ROGERS • THE BATTALION

Sophomore running back **Richard Whitaker**, sophomore middle blocker **Carol Price**, senior forward **Anne Tamporello** and senior **Brandon Beasley** all intend to help their teams claim a Big 12 title.

opponents, including a visit by the national champion North Carolina Tar Heels on Sept. 2.

The A&M cross country team hopes to improve on last year's history-making season. The Aggie women finished 18th overall at the NCAA Championship and should make a strong showing this year also.

Returning seniors Melissa Gulli and Andrea Bookout were the Aggies' top two finishers at the NCAA meet last year. On the men's side, the Aggies seek to improve on an eighth-place finish at the 2000 Big 12 Championships. Junior Chris Lee and sopho-

more Andrew Cook, who finished in the top 30 at the meet, will need some additional support to move the team up in the rankings when the season begins in mid-September.

Aggie sports should be more exciting than ever this fall, and with tougher schedules for most of the Aggie squads, A&M will have the opportunity to upset top-ranked opponents and bring Big 12 Championship trophies home to Aggieland.

Brian Ruff is a junior sports management major.

#### SPORTS IN BRIEF

#### Injury-plagued tight end cut by Cowboys

OXNARD, Calif. (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys released tight end David LaFleur on Tuesday, cutting ties to their injury-plagued first-round draft pick in 1997.

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said LaFleur, who had been on the physically unable to perform list, was let go after failing a physical.

"It was apparent that he was not going to be able to run," Jones said. "I think he gave us all he could give us."

The move is not totally unexpected as LaFleur has fought injuries for more than a year. A groin injury nagged him all last season and a herniated disc in his lower back sometimes makes even walking painful.

"He was a warrior, he played hurt," Jones said. "When he was able to perform, he was very important to what we were trying to do."

The Cowboys are now counting on third-year tight end Mike Lucky to handle the bulk of the blocking duties in the team's switch to a run-oriented, ball-control offense.

"It's good for me to finally get out here," Lucky said. "I'm still a little bit rusty. But it's going to be tough for me without David out here. He's one of the guys who brought me along."

Jackie Harris, a better receiver than blocker, is playing with the first-team offense. He's the team's only proven commodity at tight end, catching 39 passes for 302 yards and a team-leading five touchdowns last season, his first with the Cowboys.

Second-year defensive end Aaron Fields also was waived.

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