

GUY ROGERS • THE BATTALION

Junior forward Meg Banahan goes up for a shot during the Aggies' 72-53 exhibition win over Abyhoj Tuesday at Reed Arena.

Aggies start with win, 72-53

By BRIAN RUFF
THE BATTALION

Junior forward Meg Banahan and sophomore forward Toccara Williams led the Texas A&M women's basketball team to a 72-53 victory over the Abyhoj basketball club Tuesday night at Reed Arena in the team's opening exhibition game of the 2001 season.

The Abyhoj team is the Aggies' first of two exhibition opponents to open the season. Coming from Denmark on its United States tour, Abyhoj's game against the Aggies was its fourth stop in Texas. The club team had already played the University of Texas-Arlington, Texas Christian University and Southern Methodist University before traveling to College Station.

Banahan, who was one of two Aggies who tallied a double-double against the Denmark team, racked up 12 points and had 13 rebounds, including eight in the first half of play.

"Meg played an all-around game," said A&M basketball coach Peggie Gillom.

"Defensively, offensively — she just played smart. That is what she was last year before she got hurt."

The game was Banahan's first action since suffering a season-ending knee injury on Jan. 17 against Oklahoma.

"Last year when I got hurt, it was a spot where I really thought I was playing well,"

"*[Banahan] played an all-around game. Defensively, offensively — she just played smart.*"

— Peggie Gillom
A&M women's basketball coach on the play of junior forward Meg Banahan

Banahan said, "I just worked real hard trying to get back to that."

Williams also added 17 points, but was just one rebound shy of a double-double with nine boards on the night.

Both teams took some time to brush away the off-season dust, going four minutes without adding points on the scoreboard. The

Aggies also had trouble hitting shots from the floor, going just 16 for 44 from the floor in the opening period.

"We just came out flat," Gillom said. "We were getting good looks, but the shots did not fall."

A&M jumped out to an early 14-0 lead, but the Denmark team marched back and cut the Aggie lead to just 24-12 with just more than five minutes left in the half.

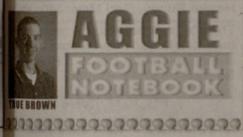
The Aggies held on to the lead at the close of the first half, but Denmark guard Kendra Neal hit a layup with just three seconds left in the half to cut the Aggie lead to 35-20.

In the second half of play, the Aggies maintained a comfortable lead on the shoulders of senior post Celeria Washington, who had 10 points in the second half. Washington also brought down 14 rebounds against the Denmark squad.

Washington hit a layup with more than eight minutes remaining in the game, giving the Aggies their biggest lead of the game at 22 points.

Abyhoj was led by point guard Kendra Neal, who had 20 points as well as 10 rebounds to post a double-double of her own.

Rodriguez, Penright stepping up



winning streak and are tied for first in the Big 12 South.

Production from the outside

The Wrecking Crew has been bolstered this season by a pair of first-year starters at outside linebacker.

Christian Rodriguez, a fifth-year senior, and junior Jarrod Penright have combined for 80 tackles this season. Rodriguez has seen action in all but one game, and Penright has played in all of A&M's nine games.

Penright recorded a career-high nine tackles during the Aggies' 24-21 win over Iowa State.

The duo are also first and second in sacks for A&M. Penright has 9.5 sacks this year while Rodriguez has 5.5.

After starting 2001 with a combined four starts in the regular season, the duo has earned starts in 16 games this year.

Farmer keeps fighting

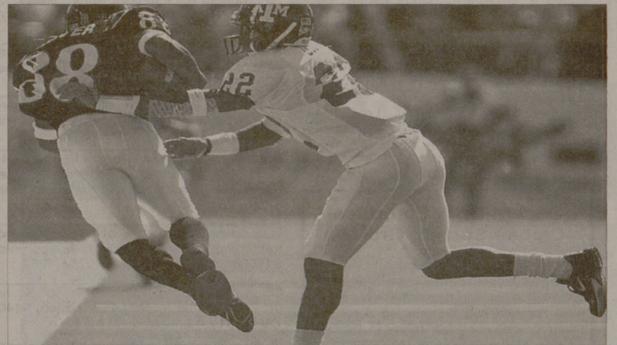
With one more rushing yard, true freshman Derek Farmer

will become the seventh freshman running back in A&M history to tally 500 rushing yards and the first since Dante Hall ran for 642 in 1996.

The school record for freshman rushing was set by Greg Hill when he rushed for 1,216 yards in 1991.

Farmer leads the Aggies in ground yards with 499 on 108 carries, an average of 4.6 yards per carry. Farmer first saw action against Oklahoma State

See NOTEBOOK on page 10.



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A&M junior cornerback Sammy Davis pushes Texas Tech's Nehemiah Glover out of bounds during the Aggies' 12-0 loss in Lubbock.

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