

## Leading by EXAMPLE

### Senior sets high standard for young A&M team

By Kevin Espenlaub  
THE BATTALION

Following Sunday's Big 12 win against the visiting Kansas Jayhawks, Aggie senior swimmer Clara Ho did not talk about her four season-best times she had just completed or beating the Aggie women's school record in the 200-yard butterfly that she originally broke in 1999 as a freshman. Even her automatic bid to the NCAA meet did not take precedent over the impact she thought the win had on the team's morale and how it might affect the rest of the season.

However, for freshman teammate Courtney Patterson, Ho's performance impacted her as much as the team's victory did.

"Days like Clara had today show everyone on the team that you don't have to wait for the end of the season to post times that can qualify you for the NCAAs," Patterson said. "That is everyone's goal on this team, and to watch Clara do it [Sunday] was just amazing."

Ho is serving as A&M's team captain in her senior year after her All-

America season in 2000-2001 in which she placed No. 11 in the nation at the NCAA Championship meet in the 200-yard butterfly. Ho's loyalty to her teammates and her work ethic have impressed third-year Aggie swimming coach Steve Bultman.

"Good, positive leadership skills and good, positive attitudes are so important and she obviously has those," Bultman said following Sunday's action. "She's not the most vocal captain, but with her actions, she speaks very loudly."

Ho has enjoyed swimming since her parents enrolled her in swimming lessons at the age of five and she chose to pursue the sport over her other hobbies that included dancing, playing the piano and karate when it came time to join a college team. She moved from Fremont, Calif., to Texas A&M following a two-day recruiting visit.

"I really felt comfortable on my recruiting trip here and really liked the team," Ho said. "I just felt in my heart that I belonged in Aggieland. I also wanted to attend a large university because I was coming from a very

small private school in California. And, I didn't know what I wanted to major in, so I needed some place with a lot of choices," she added with a laugh.

At A&M, Ho decided on a career path and is currently a management major in the school of business with a focus on human resources. Despite beginning two-a-day practices at 6 a.m., she is taking 15 hours this spring and is preparing to graduate in August.

"It's without a doubt more training and more competition since I came to A&M, but I still enjoy it a lot," Ho said. "The girls that I've been on the team with and everyone I've met at A&M has been great and it's been a lot of fun."

The Aggie women's swim team will continue its season Friday in Baton Rouge, La., at the home of the Louisiana State University Lady Tigers. Ho hopes to carry her success from this weekend into the rest of the season.

"I just want to finish this season off with a bang and set some personal bests," Ho said. "But our real goal, like most other schools, is to send a relay team to the NCAA Championships."



STUART VILLANUEVA • THE BATTALION

Senior Clara Ho, an All-American last year, qualified for the NCAA Championships in the 200-yard butterfly Sunday during A&M's meet with the University of Kansas.

## Team problems, injuries give Aggies fits on road swing

By True Brown  
THE BATTALION

To say a sense of desperation had crept into men's basketball head coach Melvin Watkins' voice would be an understatement.

But after A&M put on a spirited performance and played the 13-2 Texas Tech Red Raiders down to the wire last Wednesday, the voice that was desperate is now tempered with hope.

With Big 12 play looming large on A&M's schedule, Watkins' hope is coming in the nick of time for the Aggies (6-10, 0-2 in Big 12).

"I think that is a beginning," Watkins said, referring to A&M's enthusiastic play against

Texas Tech. "It is the beginning of us getting back on track. We started off the season with a pretty decent basketball team and we are nowhere near where we were at the beginning."

After starting the season 5-1, the Aggies' tailspin began with a 90-56 loss against Tulsa in Houston. The loss was the first of a four-game losing streak. Then, after beating Purdue on Dec. 21 at the Las Vegas Classic, A&M dropped five straight games, including a 34-point loss at the hands of North Carolina.

A&M's fall can be traced to three different things: the road (A&M has played one home game in the last 37 days), injuries to key players and what Watkins calls "internal problems."

Knee injuries sidelined sophomore guard Jesse King and senior guard Andy Leatherman. Sophomore forward Nick Anderson was slowed by a sprained ankle and junior guard Bernard King, the team's leading scorer with 17.2 points per game, averaged only 11.3 points while playing with a strained groin.

"Any time you go on the road it is going to be tough," Watkins said. "And then with the internal problems and injuries on top of that, we've had some things that have torn this team apart."

The internal problems Watkins refers to revolve mostly around two of A&M's brightest underclassmen. Prior to the Aggies' game with the Oklahoma Sooners Aggies played Oklahoma on Jan. 5, Watkins

flew sophomore Michael Gardener and freshman Daryl Mason home for violating team rules. The two remain suspended indefinitely.

"We are still dealing with that situation," Watkins said. "We're trying to work through it and see if it would be best for them to come back to the team. If not, we need to look at other options outside that."

With the suspensions, the Aggies lost more than 40 minutes of playing time per game as well as 11 points per game. Before being suspended, Gardener had started 11 times, second-most on the team.

"I hope it works out to where we can get them back," Watkins said. "We surely need them, but they have to be what we need them to be — not necessarily what they want to be."

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