

Sports

THE BATTALION

Monday, March 4, 2002

Stephenson helps Ags to victory over Tech

Senior right fielder's double pushes No. 17 A&M to first series sweep of Red Raiders since 1993

By Doug Fuentes
THE BATTALION

As the No. 17 Texas A&M baseball team and the No. 22 Texas Tech Red Raiders hit the field Sunday at Olsen Field in the series finale, both teams were desperate to find something that would warm them up. With temperatures near freezing and a 20 mph north wind blowing, conditions were more fitting for a November day at Kyle Field than a March day at Olsen Field.

It took a while, but A&M senior right fielder Neal Stephenson provided all the warmth the Aggies needed, as his double in the bottom of the eighth broke a 1-1 tie and propelled the Aggies

to a 4-1 victory over the Red Raiders and a series sweep in the Big 12 Conference opener for both teams.

"It got a lot warmer when Neal hit the gapper and we got couple more runs in to get a little cushion," said A&M head coach Mark Johnson. "It's hard to score with the north wind and the chill factor. It was a good ball game. We survived it. It's tough in those conditions but I was glad to get a 'W' and a sweep."

With the game tied at one heading into the bottom of the eighth, A&M sophomore Matt Alexander got the Aggies (13-4, 3-0 in Big 12) going with a single on a two-strike count.

After freshman left fielder Coby Mavroulis failed to

advance Alexander, the Aggies caught a break when Tech starter Steven Gooch hit junior first baseman Travis Wong with a pitch to give the Aggies runners at first and second with one out.

Stephenson, whose only other hit of the series was a three-run home run during the second game on Friday, stepped up and delivered a double to right-center field that scored Alexander.

Wong scored on the play as Tech center fielder Jon Slack misplayed the ball, allowing Stephenson to make it to third base.

"I had been struggling a little bit," Stephenson said. "Walking

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STUART VILLANUEVA • THE BATTALION
A&M junior center fielder Eric Reed bunts during the third inning of the Aggies' 4-1 victory over Texas Tech on Sunday at Olsen Field. Reed would score later that inning on a double by freshman left fielder Coby Mavroulis.

'Zona freezes No. 18 Aggies in their tracks

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's tennis team came into Friday's match hoping to take down a ranked team in No. 45 Arizona.

Arizona snapped the Aggies' winning streak at three however, knocking off A&M 5-2.

"We came out on fire today," said Arizona head coach Vicky Maes. "The girls were excited to come out and play after a couple of tough losses to top 10 teams."

"I told the team before the match, 'This is a time for us to turn things around. Are we going to hang our heads or come out and play like we can play?' The girls responded well

to that."

The match on the No. 1 doubles court was the exciting match as the No. 22 tandem of sophomore Jessica Roland and junior Ashley Hedberg defeated the No. 21 duo of Maja Mlakar and Marie-Pier Pouliot 9-7.

The Aggies could not capitalize on the momentum, however, dropping the doubles point for only the second time this season. The first drop came against No. 2 Vanderbilt, which went on to win the match 5-2.

"They started out in control," Kleinecke said. "Anytime you play a close match like this, doubles is going to be crucial. Losing the doubles point added more pressure."

No. 88 Jessica Roland, who was questionable going into Friday's match, played on

Friday, but fell to No. 27 Maja Mlakar in straight sets 6-1, 6-3.

"I thought I did well, considering everything that was going on with the ankle injury," Roland said. "[Mlakar] is a great player. I think if I was at 100 percent, perhaps it would have been a different outcome."

One of the bright spots for the Aggies was the play of senior Olivia Karlikova, who has struggled with injuries and illness early in the season.

"[Karlikova] was out at the beginning of the season," said Kleinecke, "and she has really picked up her game."

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A&M senior Olivia Karlikova goes for a backhand during her match against Arizona on Friday at the Bryan Tennis Center.

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