

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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No. 25 Aggies fall to 'Horns in close match

By True Brown
THE BATTALION

AUSTIN — Blown leads plagued the Texas A&M volleyball team Wednesday night, as the University of Texas came from behind three times to claim a 33-31, 24-30, 30-19, 23-30, 15-11 win in front of a crowd of 3,171.

After forcing a fifth game, A&M (11-5, 3-4 Big 12) led 11-9 before collapsing as the Longhorns ran off six straight points and stretched their unbeaten streak to five.

UT (13-3, 5-2) took advantage of a big blocking performance by its front row, finishing the match with 15 blocks.

"We're not playing smart when we need to," said A&M head coach Laurie Corbelli. "Texas did a good job with their blocking and strategy. I think we still should have been able to find our way out of it."

A&M wasted a 6-1 lead in game one and 7-3 in game three as Mira Topic, Bethany Howden and Kathryn Wilson combined for 51 of the Horns' 69 kills.

In game one, A&M fell behind for the first time after a kill by UT's Kathy Hahn. Hahn recorded a game-high eight kills, including the game clincher.

The Aggies evened things up in game two, building a 12-9 lead after a dig by Melissa Munsch led to a big kill by Tara Pulaski. After earning a 27-23 advantage, A.D. Achilefu rattled off the Aggies' last three kills to clinch the game.

A&M limited Hahn, who led UT with a .395 hitting percentage in the match, to just two kills in the game. A&M failed to hold the momentum, however. Leading 7-3 in the third game, the Aggies let Texas go on an 18-6 run to take a commanding lead.

The 30-19 score marked the second-worst game performance this season by the Aggies. "We totally disappeared in game three," Corbelli said. "Don't ask me where (we) went ... I have no idea."

The Aggies managed to find some life in the fourth game by mounting a comeback of their own. A&M rallied from a 16-11 deficit after Corbelli put in reserve Kendra Felder.

Felder tied the match at 19-19, and added two more kills to put A&M on top for good.

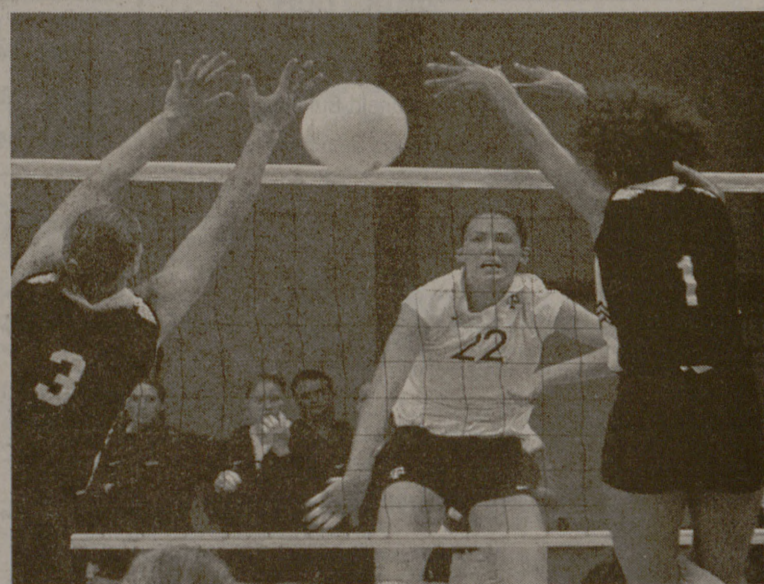
"Thank goodness we came back and proved ourselves in game four and got a little confidence," Corbelli said. "We showed that we can come back, and that's important for a young team that's trying to figure out their identity and who they are."

Pulaski led the Aggies with season-high 20 kills and .484 hitting percentage.

UT's win snapped a string of six straight matches the Aggies had won against the Longhorns, including the last two in Austin. A&M has not won on the road since Sept. 7 when it beat Illinois State.

The loss left the Aggies still searching for consistency, something they have lacked this season, especially in close matches.

"We were really looking to get past our poison that has been engulfing us lately," Corbelli said. "We were so close. We need to find a different path to get through these times. We're really perplexed as to how we get so far but still can't finish."



ALISSA HOLIMON • THE BATTALION

Outside hitter Laura Jones spikes the ball between Greichaly Cepero and Amber Holmquist against Nebraska.

G. Guerrieri, more than just a coach

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

Ten years ago, Texas A&M decided to upgrade its women's soccer program from varsity II status to a full-blown varsity sport. A national search began to find the right candidate for head coach and ended about three hours north in Richardson, Texas.

At Richland College, head coach G. Guerrieri had proven himself to be a winner, and the Aggies wanted him to bring that winning persona to their upstart program.

Before Richland College, Guerrieri worked with soccer on every level. After his goalkeeping days at the University of Tulsa, where he set most of the school's team and individual defensive records, Guerrieri started his coaching career at Tulsa as an assistant coach. He went on to coach at Rollins College, University of North Texas, Hardin-Simmons and Richland from 1986-1993. He

also coached the Sting Under-19 club team as well as seven Olympic Development Teams.

"One of the things that I was looking at was if I could get myself into a program that I could just concentrate on one thing and just concentrate on just coaching one team and all the things that need to be done to the best possible ability," Guerrieri said. "I was fortunate enough to be able to do that here at A&M."

On March 31, 1993, Guerrieri was given his wish. The A&M women's soccer program was his to run, and he ran it well. In A&M's inaugural season, the team finished with a 15-3-1 record.

"Recruiting is the lifeblood of any program," Guerrieri said. "We were fortunate in that the girls who were playing on the varsity II team were capable of playing at a decent college level."

Among the players Guerrieri brought to

A&M that year was Yvette Okler, who still holds the team record for goals in a game when she scored four against the University of Texas on Oct. 31, 1993.

In 1994, the team's record improved to 15-2-2 overall. The following year, with a mark of 18-6-0, the Aggies made their first appearance in the NCAA Championship Tournament. The Aggies advanced to the second round by beating Clemson University, 4-1, before losing to Southern Methodist University, 2-1.

In 1996, A&M entered the newly formed Big 12 Conference and in 1997, the A&M women's soccer team won its first of now three Big 12 Championships. It was also the first Big 12 Conference championship for any Aggie athletic team.

See Guerrieri on page 3B



COURTESY OF TEXAS A&M MEDIA RELATIONS

Texas A&M women's soccer coach G. Guerrieri gives the Aggie soccer team final instructions prior to a match at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

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