

# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Wednesday, October 23, 2002

## Matijevic ready to help build tennis success

By Gary Livingston  
THE BATTALION

### AGGIE SNAPSHOT

When Texas A&M sophomore men's tennis player Ante Matijevic first stepped foot on American soil in January 2002, he wasn't sure what to expect. The sophomore had lived his entire life in Croatia, and to continue his dream of playing tennis, he came to the United States.

"It was really exciting the first three weeks," Matijevic said. "Everything was so big it was unbelievable. People are so nice, I didn't expect people to say 'hi' to strangers, that would never happen in Croatia."

There is also an appealing aspect of college life which Matijevic hasn't mastered yet.

"I'm single because it's so tough to date," Matijevic said. "The girls here are very pretty and very nice."

While still learning U.S. culture, Matijevic has had no problems on the tennis court. He was named the Big 12 Conference Newcomer of the Year last season, and has shown signs of improvement this season by advancing to two semifinals in consecutive tournaments.

Two weeks ago at the ITA All-American Championships in Tennessee, Matijevic teamed up with sophomore Lester Cook and the duo had the best performance by an A&M doubles team ever by advancing to the semifinals. The duo is currently ranked No. 14 in the nation.

This past weekend, Matijevic reached the singles' semifinals at the Midland Invitational, eventually losing to the tournament's No. 1 seed Toni Gordon.

"I have been really pleased with Ante's performance," said A&M men's tennis head coach Tim Cass. "He had the best record for us in the spring. He has a 4.0 GPA, he has real-

ly embraced A&M, and he has great maturity for an 18-year old."

Part of that maturity could be attributed to the environment in which Matijevic grew up in. He grew up in a life most Aggies could never imagine. For years his country was torn apart by the wars in Bosnia. Some of the fighting took place only 30 miles from his town, and the Serbs attacked his small town of Split on one occasion.

"I was young so I don't remember too much," Matijevic says. "The war was close to my town, so school was closed down on some days. I remember crying when my father left because he was a doctor and was involved in the war. But, things are getting better, and the economy is stable."

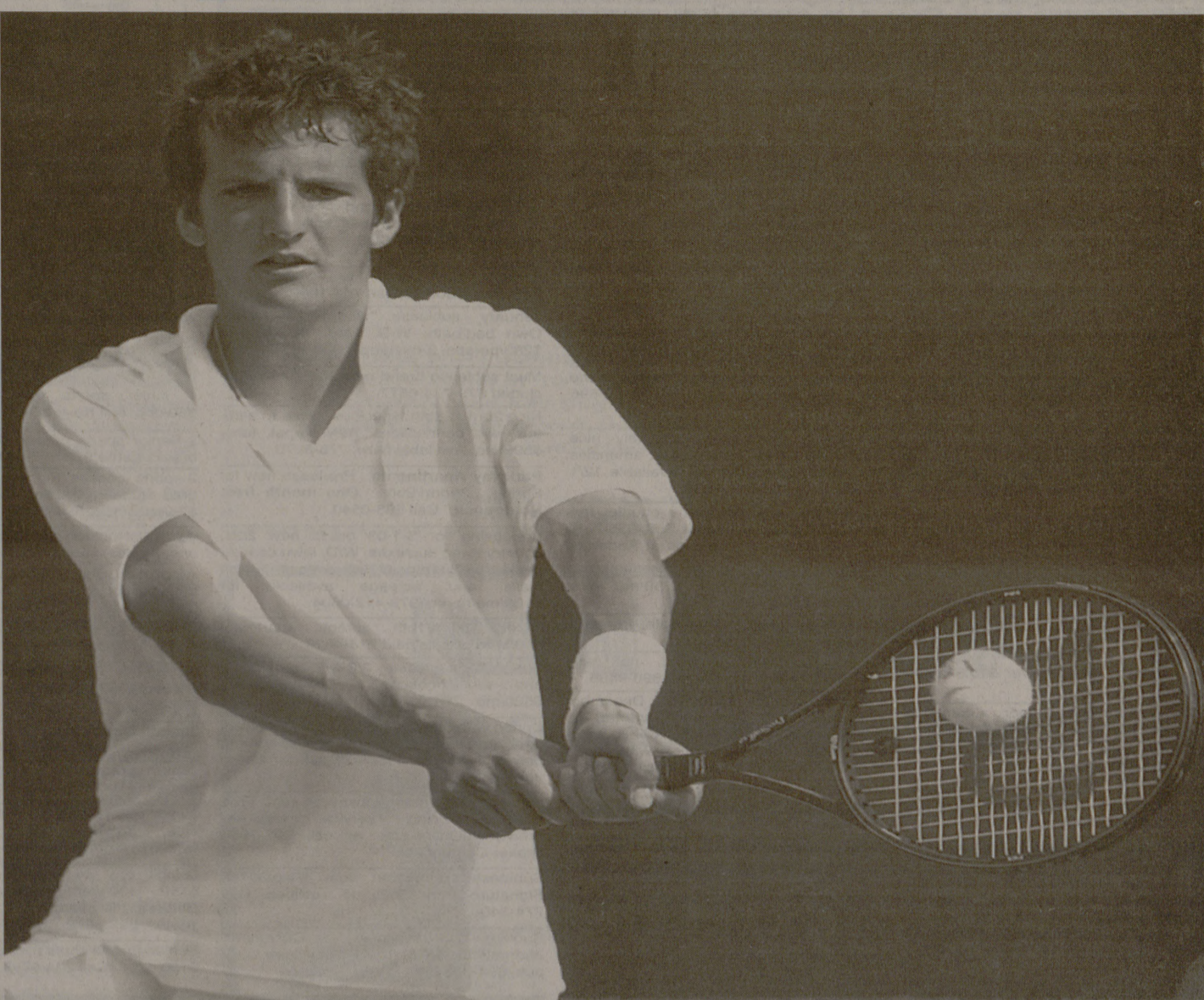
Since he picked up a tennis racket at the age of eight, Matijevic has grown to love the game of tennis. His parents didn't play, but he watched matches on TV and got interested in the sport. The only problem was that after high school there wasn't much opportunity in his country. Matijevic said this is because people don't have a lot of money to support programs, and that conditions are bad.

Matijevic had to make a tough decision: should he stay with his family in Croatia, or pursue his dream of playing tennis? Matijevic chose the latter and began researching U.S. college programs. He wanted to play for a good team, and noticed A&M was ranked in the top five at the time, so he wrote a letter to Cass.

Cass first found out about Matijevic through the internet because Tres Davis, who played for A&M at that time, had competed against Matijevic. Through some talking and luck, Matijevic came to A&M. Even though he said he is having fun here, Matijevic still misses his family.

"We talk everyday by e-mail, and at least once a week by phone," Matijevic said. "I got to see them this past summer, and I'm going home for Christmas."

Matijevic has learned to embrace the U.S. way of life. He goes out with the team every once and a while, he



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Sophomore men's tennis player Ante Matijevic is prepared to help lead the Texas A&M team to his goal of a national championship next semester. Matijevic is currently partnered with sophomore teammate Lester Cook as the No. 14 doubles tandem in the nation.

likes to drink coffee, and says he has attempted to dance but is not that good. He has become good friends with A&M basketball player Tomas Ressa who also hails from Europe. His teammates joke around with him by

calling him Arnold because he sounds like the action movie star.

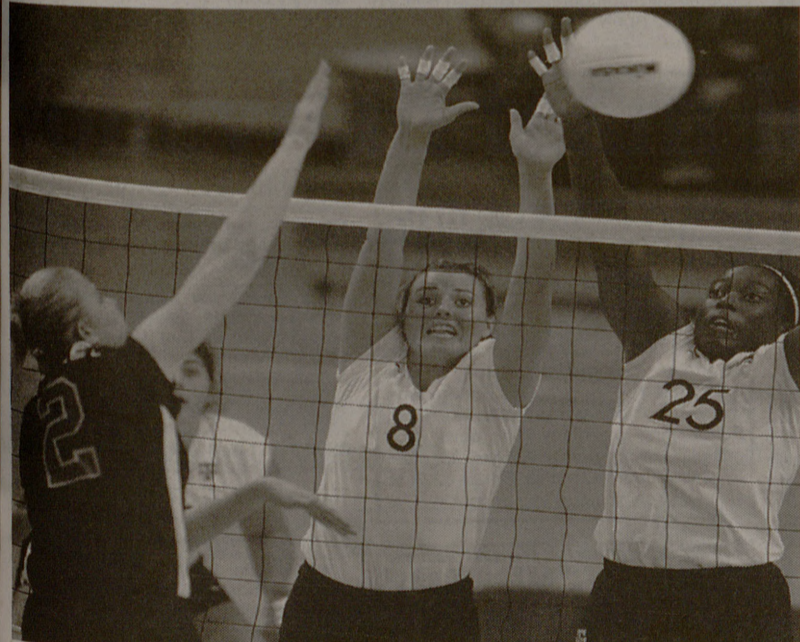
Matijevic has some big goals for himself and the A&M program this season. He wants to be one of the top ranked players and wants to win a

team championship while he is at A&M.

Cass said Matijevic has already shown a great work ethic and his confidence is going to lead him to be a great player.

## Volleyball team looks for answers against Baylor

By True Brown  
THE BATTALION



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Sophomore Lexy Beers and senior A.D. Achilefu attempt a block against Tech.

The first half of the season is one Texas A&M head coach Laurie Corbelli would like to forget. Her Aggies ran into a brick wall after Big 12 play started on Sept. 18, and they are still searching for the cure to turn their season around.

"We are really trying to find that missing link, that answer," Corbelli said. "It's out there, and I think we are getting closer to finding what it takes to pull out wins."

It looked like A&M (12-6, 4-5 Big 12) had found the answer after last week's five-game marathon win against Texas Tech. However, all the momentum that was gained that day was lost three days later when the Aggies fell to Kansas State.

Now, the Aggies are less than .500 in conference play again and searching for answers.

A&M has lost three of its last four matches, prompting Corbelli to contemplate possible changes that might heal the Aggies' ailments in pressure situations.

"I'm used to having a highly-skilled group, and this is a highly-skilled group for the most part," Corbelli said. "In tight situations, that is sometimes where we have had vulnerabilities. We're not going to let it happen anymore. We're going to tackle it more than we have."

"In practice when we're in pressure situations, there's going to be more severe punishment, more sit and watch. (I want to do) things to get the message out a little louder. Maybe it's not loud and clear enough right now."

Sophomore Melissa Munsch, A&M's leader in kills, aces, digs and points per game, said the Aggies' struggles can't be blamed on their youth anymore. Rather, she blames it on an erratic focus.

"A lot of people would blame it on inexperience, but I don't see it that way," Munsch said. "We've all played volleyball at a high level, and we've played against a bunch of teams that are really good. I think we sometimes lose focus. Once we get ahead, we can't hold back. We start off strong, but we need to work

on finishing strong."

The first answer the Aggies are searching for in the rebuilding puzzle may come in the form of the Baylor Bears, which A&M plays tonight at 7 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Baylor (8-11, 2-7) has been swept in its last three matches, and has been plagued with injuries.

The Bears lost their top player last month. Outside hitter Stevie Nicholas suffered a torn meniscus against Colorado and is out for the season. Her loss has contributed to Baylor's paltry .185 hitting percentage in conference matches.

With Nicholas out, the Bears moved middle blocker Tisha Schwartz to outside hitter, and Schwartz responded by taking the league lead in kills, with 5.0 per game.

"I have to admire a team that loses their superstar and still finds ways to put other people in places where they can still come up with wins," Corbelli said. "Some teams lose their star and it's not pretty. There are some great athletes on their side of the net."

NORTHGATE DISTRICT ASSOCIATION  
presents

**LIVE AT LUNCH**

EVERY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

IN OCTOBER

12-1:30

Come check out all the new lunch specials at your favorite restaurants and listen to live music on the promenade

-UPCOMING EVENTS: Boogate October 31<sup>st</sup>  
-PRE-GAME PARTIES: Fridays before games  
-POST GAME SPORTS TALK SHOW: After Games

www.NorthgateTX.com for Details

**Mr. Gatti's Fall Buffet Savings!**

**COUPON**

**\$3.99** Plus Tax  
**Lunch Buffet**  
All-You-Care-to-Eat-  
&-Drink Adult Buffet  
Monday thru Thursday ~ 11am-2pm  
Up to four people per coupon. Must purchase a buffet to enter. Coupon not valid in combination with other coupons or special pricing. Valid thru 12/30/02. B

**COUPON**

**\$4.59** Plus Tax  
**Dinner Buffet**  
All-You-Care-to-Eat-  
&-Drink Adult Buffet  
Monday thru Thursday ~ 5pm-9pm  
Up to four people per coupon. Must purchase a buffet to enter. Coupon not valid in combination with other coupons or special pricing. Valid thru 12/30/02. B

Plus, check out our Back-to-School Weeknight Specials... going on NOW!

**Monday Night**  
Every Kid's Buffet comes with **\$2.50 in Gameplay FREE!**

**Tuesday Night**  
**Mr. Gatti's Gourmet Night** featuring any of our delicious Gourmet Pizzas and a special Italian Entrée!

**Wednesday Night**  
**Double Gameplay!! Buy \$5 in Gameplay, get \$5 FREE!**



Bryan 1673 Briarcrest 776-1124