

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Volleyball team back on track after Baylor sweep

By True Brown
THE BATTALION

A 20-kill performance by Laura Jones helped the Texas A&M volleyball team sweep past the injury-riddled Baylor Bears Wednesday night at G. Rollie White Coliseum, 30-24, 30-20, 30-22.

A&M (13-6, 5-5 Big 12) turned in a stellar defensive performance by recording 76 digs, the most for the Aggies since they had 78 against Nebraska on Oct. 6.

"I felt like we were moving better on defense," said A&M head coach Laurie Corbelli. "We've been working a lot on trying to keep the dig where our attack has more time to form on transition. We've been trying to rush it and our hitters hadn't been able to get up and get good approaches."

Baylor, which has been plagued by injuries all season, entered the match without the services of All-America candidate Stevie Nicholas, who is out for the season.

The Bears (8-12, 2-8) suffered another injury in the third game when starter Laura Daniela Lloreda

went down with an ankle injury.

The injuries have forced Baylor head coach Brian Hosfed to juggle his rotation.

"When those kinds of things happen in the middle of the match, it's really tough because we have to do things that we haven't practiced," Hosfed said. "We're bare bones as it is, so when it happens during a match, it's really hard."

After A&M took game one, Baylor stayed close in the second and took a 16-15 lead after a kill by Lloreda.

A&M's A.D. Achilefu evened the score with a kill, then Jones ran off three straight kills to put the Aggies up for good.

Baylor's biggest attack threat, outside hitter Tisha Schwartz, was held to just two kills in the second game, as the Bears struggled with their passing game. Poor passes limited the Bears' attack and contributed to their meager .131 hitting percentage.

"Schwartz doesn't make a lot of errors, but she doesn't get a good swing at everything," Corbelli said. "Some of those balls that came at us

weren't real difficult to dig."

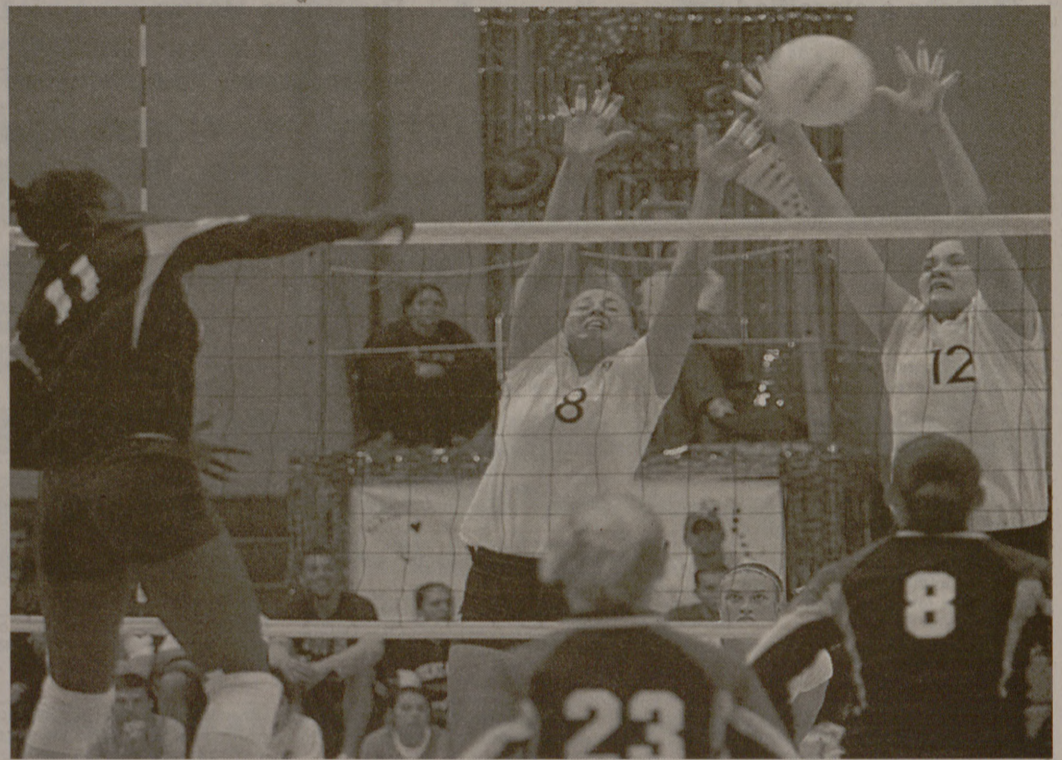
The Aggies took advantage of the soft attacks in the second and third games and turned to Jones and sophomore Melissa Munsch to capitalize. Munsch finished with 13 kills.

"We've really worked hard on getting the ball up a little bit higher so we can have time to create a team offense and get these big hitters in a position where they can do some damage," Corbelli said.

Trailing 28-17 in the third, the Bears staged a minor comeback when Lindsey Long served four straight points to bring Baylor within six, but A&M's Tara Pulaski finished the match with a kill.

The kill cemented A&M's sixth-straight win over Baylor, and the .284 hitting percentage by the Aggies was their highest in league play.

"We really needed this win," Munsch said. "We executed when we needed to. This gives us a lot of confidence going into the second round (of Big 12 play). This win really starts us off on the home stretch."



A&M sophomore Lexy Beers and junior Tara Pulaski block Baylor's Stella Odion Wednesday.

Men's tennis preparing for final Fall tournament

By Gary Livingston
THE BATTALION

Halfway through an interview, Texas A&M head men's tennis coach Tim Cass had to take a break because a recruit he is hoping to land called his cell phone. Such is life for Cass, as his team continues to roll along through preseason tournaments preparing for the spring season.

This weekend, the A&M men's tennis team will head to Ft. Worth to compete in the Omni Hotels ITA National Intercollegiate Indoor Championships.

Unlike previous tournaments, where Cass has sent two or three players, he will send five,

signifying the importance of the tournament.

"There will be very strong schools competing there," Cass said. "The tournament definitely means more, there is a bigger team atmosphere."

Cass said schools from all over Texas and surrounding states will be featured at the tournament. The Aggies competing will be junior Khaled El Dorry, sophomores Lester Cook and Ante Matijevic, and freshmen Matt Loucks and John Nallon. A&M has had some luck in this tournament in the past.

"Shoun Madden won this event twice," Cass said. "(Senior) Ryan (Newport) reached the semifinals last year. We've always had a good showing at this tournament."

Cass can't help but be pleased with his team's performance thus far this season. Compared to last year, Cass says the team is further along than it was a year ago, and the core group of guys are pushing each other hard in the weight room and in practice.

"We have high expectations as a team which will help us continue to improve and to grow," Cass said. "I think physically we are making great strides which will pay dividends come late April and May."

This past weekend, A&M continued its success with impressive showings at two Texas tournaments. At the Midland Invitational Tournament, Matijevic made it to the semifinals, beating quality

opponents along the way. He eventually lost to the tournament's No. 1 seed Toni Gordon from Texas Christian University. At the UTSA Invitational, Loucks made it to the finals by playing five matches against top opponents.

Cass said other players looked great in action this past weekend including Nallon, who looked very sharp, and El Dorry, who had two top-100 wins. Cass said El Dorry is learning what it takes to be a top-100 player.

The Ft. Worth ITA tournament will run today through Monday and Cass said it will give the team a great opportunity to step up and face a challenge. This tournament will conclude the fall season for the men's tennis team.

LISTEN
UP
AGS!



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