

# Women's basketball team ready to open season

By Gary Livingston  
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's basketball team will begin the 2002-2003 NCAA season tonight when they take on Northwestern State at Reed Arena at 7p.m.

Texas A&M head coach Peggie Gillom will begin her fifth season at the helm of the Aggies with a 43-68 record. Last season, the women's basketball team had their best season since 1996, posting a 13-16 overall record with a 5-11 conference record. Both were high marks for wins since Big 12 play began in 1997.

Three starters will be returning from last year's team: senior Kim Moore and juniors Janae Derrick and Toccara Williams. In addition to the three returning starters, the Aggies will also have 11 letter winners returning.

The Northwestern State Lady Demons went 22-7 last season, finishing second in the Southland Conference with a 7-3 record. In 15 seasons at Northwestern State, head coach James Smith has compiled a 299-137 record. They lead the all-

time series against A&M 3-1.

The Aggies have looked impressive in their two exhibition wins over the past two weeks. A&M defeated RTU Klondaika on Nov. 13th by a 86-66 margin, and then defeated Houston Flight of the NWBL Elite 87-59 on Nov. 20.

In those games, the Aggies spread the ball with five players scoring in double digits against Klondaika and four accomplishing the feat against Houston Flight.

In each of A&M's exhibition wins, Derrick led the team in scoring with 17 and 21 points respectively.

"Janae has really matured and taken over for us," Gillom said. "She has really worked on her game and has taken the lead."

Gillom said she was impressed by the way her team seemed to improve over the course of the two games.

Against RTU Klondaika, a Latvian all-star team, the Aggies shot under 40 percent and only 22.2 percent from the three point line. The Aggies didn't look too hot on defense either, allowing Klondaika's center, Zana Teilane, to

score 25 points, with 11 rebounds and eight blocks.

Against Houston Flight the Aggies improved their shooting to 45.5 percent, which includes Derrick's 8-12 effort. From the three point line the Aggies improved to 30 percent.

The biggest difference was the defense. The Aggies frustrated Houston Flight's shooters all night holding them to shooting percentage of 40.3 and out rebounding them 56-31. The effort of the night came late in the second half when the Aggies held Houston Flight scoreless for nearly eight minutes while building a 29-point lead.

With the exhibition season over with, Coach Gillom said she knows it's time to concentrate on the upcoming season and opponents.

"Exhibition is over with and it's always good to win," Gillom said. "It's a good confidence builder, and prepares us for more games."

After their matchup with Northwestern State Monday, the Aggies will be hosting the Whataburger Basketball Classic beginning on Nov. 30 at Reed Arena.



J.P. BEATO III • THE BATTALION  
A&M junior guard Toccara Williams makes a move to the basket in the exhibition victory against RTU Klondaika. A&M's regular season begins tonight.

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