

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 7 • Wednesday, January 29, 2003

Texas A&M softball team set for new season

Final week of practice begins for Aggies

By Michael Crow
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M softball team is now less than a week away from kicking off its 2003 season, following a trip to Italy for exhibition play and weeks of practice. While in Europe, A&M played two exhibition games versus the Italian team, winning each game via double-digit shutouts.

"The trip (gave) us a great opportunity...to get some international playing experience," said Head Coach Jo Evans. "It was really good to finally get on the field and play."

The Aggies are certain to enter the season as a threat after finishing their 2002 campaign with an appearance in the NCAA Regional tournament.

Evans wants to take her team even farther this year with improved offen-

sive play. First-year assistant Rich Wieligman will take over as the team's hitting coach this year and should help the Aggies to improve their numbers in the batter's box. Wieligman spent the past two years working as an assistant at Texas Tech.

"It's a great opportunity for me, getting to come to A&M," Wieligman said. "I've had to coach against (Evans) and recruit against her for the last few seasons, and I'm just looking forward to working with her."

Wieligman's task on offense should be made easier by the return of senior catcher Selena Collins. Collins led A&M in virtually every offensive statistical category in 2002 on her way to receiving third-team All-American honors and being voted Big 12 Player of the Year by league coaches. The catcher from Glendale, Ariz. finished the season batting .331, with 16 homeruns and 43 runs batted in.

"Selena is a very important player in our lineup," Evans said. "But we should have plenty of good hitters having success around her as well. That should be a key to our season."

The Aggies also return the team's top three pitchers from a season ago. Juniors Jessica Slataper and Lindsay Wilhelmson tallied 190 and 141 innings pitched last year respectively. Slataper was on the mound for a team-leading 20 wins. In addition, senior Lindsey Rippee contributed 61 innings pitched and a win-loss percentage of .889.

"It is nice to have experience on the mound," Evans said. "They have gained a lot of confidence and certainly know now what it takes to be successful at the top level."

A&M will also depend on some of its newcomers to contribute in 2003.

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ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M pitcher Lindsay Wilhelmson releases a pitch during the 2002 season.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Aggies fall to No. 6 OU, 75-68

The Texas A&M men's basketball team fell to the Oklahoma Sooners on Tuesday evening in Norman, Okla. Senior OU guard Hollis Price led his team with 24 points in the game.

A&M senior guard Bernard King became the Aggies' all-time leading scorer despite the loss, passing Vernon Smith's 1,778 points scored between 1977 and 1981. King is now just 41 points away from becoming the all-time leading scorer in the Big 12.

Jordan named to 14th NBA All-Star team

Chris Sheridan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Michael Jordan was selected to the All-Star team for the 14th time Tuesday, and Karl Malone was shut out for the first time in 15 years.

Jordan moved into a tie with Malone and Jerry West for the second-most All-Star selections in NBA history behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's 19.

Jordan, who has the highest career scoring

average in All-Star history at 21.3 points, was voted in as a starter in his 13 previous selections. He is a reserve for the Feb. 9 game in Atlanta.

Malone was selected every year since 1988, but did not make the cut in balloting by NBA coaches.

Also chosen for the Eastern Conference team were Jason Kidd of New Jersey, Paul Pierce and Antoine Walker of Boston, Brad Miller of Indiana, Zydrunas Ilgauskas of Cleveland and Jamal Mashburn of New Orleans.

Six NBA teams — Boston, Dallas, Houston, Indiana, the Lakers and Phoenix — will have two All-Stars.

Other than Malone or anyone else from the Utah Jazz, those notable for not being selected included Indiana's Ron Artest, Washington's Jerry Stackhouse, Dallas' Michael Finley and Golden State's Antawn Jamison.

The starters for the East will be Detroit's Ben Wallace, Indiana's Jermaine O'Neal, Orlando's Tracy McGrady, Philadelphia's Allen Iverson and Toronto's Vince Carter.

Houston's Steve Francis and Yao, Kobe Bryant of the Lakers, Minnesota's Kevin Garnett and San Antonio's Duncan will start for the West.

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