

# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 7 • Tuesday, February 4, 2003

## March Madness could head to Texas A&M

It's February, but postseason is a real possibility



**Dallas Shipp**

Forget March Madness. It's barely February, and the Texas A&M men's basketball team and its fans are talking about the possibility of the Aggies making the National Invitation Tournament (NIT). Some of the more optimistic are even discussing the possibility of getting a bid — dare it be said — to the NCAA Tournament.

The 1986-87 season was A&M's most recent trip to the NCAA Tournament. That was the same year senior guard Bernard King and the rest of this year's senior class began undergraden.

Watkins and his staff have assem-

bled a team this year that is nothing short of spectacular, considering the state of the program when Watkins arrived four years ago. The A&M basketball program was sinking quickly, and Watkins was assigned the task of saving it, a job comparable to towing

**TEXAS A&M AT BAYLOR**  
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the Titanic with a ship. Watkins may have been treading water in his first four seasons, but this year he could be on to something. Watkins has recruited players from around the nation and even the world to bring in fresh, new talent to play in a state and at a school that revolves around football. That new talent has given the Aggies a chance to do something they haven't done in a long time — win.

The biggest recent recruit, freshman forward Antoine Wright, has lifted much of the burden off the shoulders of senior guard Bernard King, who in his first three years at A&M single-handedly carried the load for the Aggies.

Wright, who was named Big 12 Freshman of the Week this week for the third time this season, has turned in six double-doubles as a freshman and is among the top five in the conference in defensive rebounds and three-pointers.

Rather than fight for the spotlight, King and Wright have created an impressive one-two punch for the Aggies and have said themselves that they cannot be stopped.

"There are no two players on any team who can stop both of us," King told reporters following A&M's win over Kansas State earlier this season.

That kind of confidence is something



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

See **Postseason** on page 8

Senior Bernard King and freshman Antoine Wright celebrate after defeating Texas Tech.

## Softball season begins with emphasis on perspective

By Michael Crow  
 THE BATTALION

This week has been anything but typical for Stephen F. Austin Head Softball Coach Jennifer Poulsen and her team. At around 8 a.m. Saturday, Poulsen and several trainers were preparing to travel to Houston for the team's opening series with Texas Southern University when they were distracted by a streak of smoke and debris accompanied by a loud boom.

It was not until her team was on the road that Poulsen realized that what she had seen and heard in the Nacogdoches skies was the explosion of the space shuttle Columbia.

Despite an onslaught of media reports of wreckage being found on the team's home campus, the Ladyjacks (2-0) continued to Houston, gaining two wins over Texas Southern before preparing to face Texas A&M on Tuesday. Coach Poulsen spoke optimistically about her team's successful start but said that she and her players did feel personally affected by the day's

tragic events.

"(The wins) were bittersweet," Poulsen said. "We played well in a couple of games, but in the back of our minds, we knew what we were coming home to. It was very surreal."

In the brief time between Saturday and this week's double-header with the Aggies, Ladyjack players have had an opportunity to reflect on the weekend's events.

"A couple of kids made the comment that it just makes you realize you need to value every day, whether it be at home, in the classroom or

on the field," Poulsen said.

A&M Head Coach Jo Evans and her team could not agree more. While preparing to begin play this week, Evans spoke of the unimaginable grief that Columbia crew members' families must be feeling, while also voicing an admiration for those individuals who lived their lives doing what they loved most.

"When something like that happens, I think you take a bit of time to reflect on your own gifts,"

See **Softball** on page 8

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