

# Women's team visits Lubbock

By Troy Miller  
THE BATTALION

Post play is a necessity in Big 12 basketball. For the Texas A&M women's basketball team (9-11 overall, 2-7 Big 12) strong post play determines if it wins or loses.

In their upset victory over then-No. 24 Oklahoma, the Aggies got production in the post from junior Lynn Classen who scored 23 points and contributed five rebounds and four blocks in the game. The Aggies are looking for those types of numbers from Classen when they travel to Lubbock to take on the No. 8 Texas Tech Lady Raiders (19-2, 8-1) Wednesday. "Lynn has been steady for us in the post despite her being hurt," said A&M Head Coach Peggie Gillom.

Tech dominates in the post as it averages 43.5 rebounds per game, the best in the Big 12. Senior forward Plenette Pierson leads the Raiders with 18.7 points and 7.2 rebounds

per game in the post.

Pierson's dominant play elevates the need for a strong rebounding presence from players such as Classen.

"One of the things (Classen) hadn't been doing is boxing out very well," Gillom said. "She did a great job against Oklahoma and Colorado and we're definitely going to need her against Texas Tech. They are a great rebounding team and a great team all around."

Tech Head Coach Marsha Sharp will be looking for win No. 499 in her career when she brings her Lady Raiders into College Station. Tech has won four straight games since its 69-58 loss to Texas in Austin. Before the loss the Raiders had a 17-game win streak.

With a weak A&M post-game — the Aggies are last in the Big 12 in rebounding defense as they give up 43.5 boards per game — Tech will look to feed the ball to Pierson early and often.

"I think I see a mentality

right now in (Pierson) that I thought was going to be difficult for us to achieve," Sharp said. "She's better right now than she's been at any time in her career at Tech."

A&M has gotten more aggressive in its past two games. After upsetting then-No. 24 Oklahoma 69-61, the Aggies came back from a 17-point halftime deficit to get as close as four before losing to Colorado 55-49.

"It takes a lot of energy to pull out a win like that," said A&M junior guard Toccara Williams after the loss to Colorado. "I just think we dug ourselves in that hole too far."

The Aggies are looking to take that newfound fire to Lubbock and try to pull off an upset one more time. The Aggies have not beaten Tech since a 72-68 victory on March 9, 1996 in the Big 12 Tournament. A&M has not won a game in Lubbock since Feb. 4, 1980. The Raiders hold a 45-9 edge in the series.

## Big 12

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### 8. TEXAS TECH

The honeymoon might be over for Head Coach Bobby Knight who could end up finishing the season with four straight losses. The final four games for the Red Raiders (13-6, 3-5) are against Oklahoma State, Texas, Kansas and on the road against Baylor.

### 9. KANSAS STATE

The Wildcats (11-10, 2-6) finish up the middle of the pack this year in the Big 12 and are the final team with any chance of reaching the National Invitational Tournament (NIT), albeit a small chance. With a little luck the Wildcats could finish 5-4, though it is highly unlikely.

Iowa State (12-7, 2-6), Baylor (10-9, 1-7) and Nebraska (9-12, 1-7) are all going to be watching the remainder of the basketball season on ESPN following their first round exit from the Big 12 tournament in Dallas, Texas.

The final month of play should be exciting, especially for the top four teams that battle it out for the league championship in the nation. The team that wins the Big 12 will likely be a favorite to join Final Four in New Orleans in late March.

## Opener

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the fourth and fifth innings, by the bottom of the sixth, things were beginning to look bleak for the Aggies as the Islanders' maintained a stranglehold on a 5-4 lead.

Still, the Aggies' pitching staff was able to hold the Islanders to the one-run lead, setting up a dramatic ninth inning. A&M junior Matt Alexander led off the inning with a single, followed by a surprising sacrifice bunt by Patton, who had earlier homered.

"(Patton) gets up earlier and hits a homer and then lays down a bunt in the bottom of the ninth," Alexander said. "You can't be much more of a team player than that."

Following Patton's at bat, junior center fielder Justin Ruggiano clinched the Aggie victory with a two-run shot over the left field wall. The clutch hit gave A&M its first win of the season.

While the loss was tough for the Islanders, Head Coach Hector Salinas remained proud of his team.

"We came in with the idea of competing well," he said. "We battled a lot today, and I'm proud of our guys."

The Aggies will get a well-deserved break from playing until they host UCLA on Feb. 21.

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