

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Friday, February 21, 2003

A&M kicks off home tourney against UCLA



JP BEATO III • THE BATTALION

A&M pitcher Logan Kensing releases the ball against Houston on Sunday.

By Michael Crow
THE BATTALION

Two similar teams will meet on Friday when the Texas A&M baseball team returns to action against the University of California — Los Angeles.

The Aggies (4-1) and Bruins (5-6) will open the four-day Domino's Pizza Aggie Baseball Classic at 7 p.m. at Olsen Field. While the two teams do not share similar records in the young season, both are traditionally strong baseball programs located in hotbeds for recruiting high school talent.

UCLA will be hobbling into College Station after consecutive losses to North Carolina State and the University of California — Santa Barbara Gauchos. A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said he and his team

will certainly not be taking the Bruins lightly because of their slow start.

"They're a Pac-10 team that plays well every year and is almost always in contention for a championship," he said. "You know you've got your hands full if you're facing the Bruins."

UCLA's most recent loss came at the hands of the Gauchos, largely due to a defensive breakdown for the Bruins. With the game tied 3-3, freshman UCLA pitcher Hector Ambriz (0-2) surrendered a four-run fourth inning, and the Bruins never regained the lead, losing the game, 7-4.

UCLA sophomore pitcher Bryan Beck took over for Ambriz in the fifth inning and did not surrender a run in his three innings of work. Beck will likely see action in this weekend's tournament, as the

Bruin coaching staff has become increasingly impressed by his play.

"With the way Bryan has improved this year, he has a good chance of winning a starting job," said UCLA Head Coach Gary Adams.

Most of Beck's work thus far has come from the bullpen.

The Bruins' offensive attack has been led by junior infielder Preston Griffin, who owns a .372 batting average and a solid .721 slugging percentage leads his team with four home runs this season.

Johnson's Aggies should enter the game with confidence after a strong week of play in which they finished 3-1. Most recently, the Aggies posted consecutive wins over the No. 11 Houston Cougars and the unranked Sam Houston State Bearkats. A&M sophomore

pitcher Logan Kensing was named the Phillips 66 Pitcher of the Week, thanks to two strong outings. Kensing should be an asset during the Aggie baseball Classic, as he demonstrated that he could be effective as a starter and coming out of the bullpen.

"When it was last game of the weekend, and we were a little bit thin in our bullpen, he obviously pitched very well," Johnson said.

Offensively, the Aggies will threaten UCLA and their other tourney opponents with a solid lineup.

Justin Ruggiano and Cory Patton have each had clutch home runs this season and lead A&M in hits with eight apiece.

Friday's game with the Bruins will kick off the tournament that also includes Creighton University and the University of Utah.

Softball team returns home for St. Joseph's Aggie Invitational

By Pete Burks
THE BATTALION

There's no place like home. This certainly rings true for the Texas A&M softball team, which will return to the Aggie Softball Complex after playing a doubleheader against the Southwest Texas State Bobcats on Wednesday.

The Bobcats (10-8) squeaked past the No. 19 Aggies (8-6) 2-0 in the first game and won 3-2 in the second game. In the first game, after hitting two batters in the bottom of the first, Aggie junior pitcher Jessica Slataper allowed a two-run double, which ultimately was the only hit the Bobcats needed as they beat A&M 2-0, even though they were out hit five to one.

The Aggies looked for redemption in the second game, but could not hold on to a short-lived one run lead. The Aggies were their own worst enemies, allowing two unearned runs that

stemmed from errors in the second and third innings. Junior pitcher Lindsay Wilhelmson tried to lead a comeback by crushing a homerun to left field, but Southwest Texas came right back with senior outfielder Ashley Koop driving in the winning run in the bottom of the seventh.

The Aggies return to College Station to host the second half of the St. Joseph's Aggie Invitational today, where they will enjoy a considerable home-field advantage, as evidenced by their 6-1 home record. Strong home play has helped the team improve its ranking from No. 24 to No. 19 during the course of the season.

The Aggies will host Wichita State, Prairie View A&M and Southeastern Louisiana this weekend, playing Wichita State and Prairie View twice, and Southeastern Louisiana once. The Aggies will kickoff the tournament against Wichita State and Southeastern Louisiana at 2:30 p.m. and 4:45 p.m., respectively.

On Saturday, the Aggies and WSU Shockers

will face off again at 2:30 p.m., and in the afternoon game, the Aggies will get their first look at the Panthers of Prairie View A&M at 4:45 p.m.

The Aggies' final game is Sunday in an afternoon date with the Panthers. Preparation for the weekend might be difficult, since the Aggies have not faced any of these teams in a while. The Southeastern Louisiana Lions are coming into the tournament at 1-6, while Wichita State enters at 2-3, and Prairie View A&M comes in after losing to Sam Houston in its home opener on Thursday.

Despite the unfamiliarity between the teams, two coaches who will participate in this weekend's tournament are familiar with each other's coaching style. Texas A&M Head Coach Jo Evans and Wichita State Head Coach Tim Walton know each other well, as Walton was once an assistant for the Oklahoma softball team,



ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION

A&M pitcher Jessica Slataper winds up against the Bobcats.

See Softball on page 7

SIGNATURE PARK

Introducing Signature Park, an exciting luxury rental residential community featuring signature style and design unrivaled in the Bryan-College Station area.

Professional on site management, convenient location, and beautiful natural surroundings, complete the package for a signature lifestyle.

Great Roommate Floorplan



Three Bedroom / Two Bath
1,183 Square Feet

* \$999.00 Special!

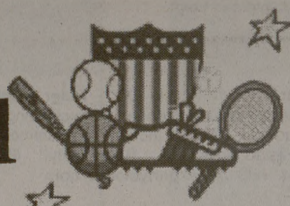
This brand new gated community offers spacious one, two, and three bedroom residences with full size washer & dryer, intrusion alarms, pre-wiring for multi-line phone capabilities. Plus a host of other amenities including those you'd never expect in a rental community; two pool resorts, 24-hr. fitness facilities, business center, and billiards room.

Pre-leasing now!

3780 Copperfield Drive • Bryan, Texas 77802
979-774-5556 • fax 979-774-3860

Office Hours: M-F: 8:30-5:30, Sat. 10:00-5:00, Sun. 1:00-5:00

2nd Annual Spirit Weekend Feb 21st -23rd



Friday

Kick off @ Rudder Plaza 11-1pm

GAMES Giveaways Free Food
\$1 Raffle for a Ben Knox Print

Ol' Army Yell Practice after the UCLA game

Saturday

5k run/3k walk 2-4pm

Benefitting the Boys & Girls Club of the Brazos Valley

Sunday

Cookies & Cocoa Reception

5-6:30 pm @Olsen Pavilion

Join us for tons of fun!



Everyone is welcome!

Brought to you by the:

