

Aggies resume play in Florida

By Marcus White
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's golf team heads to Parrish, Fla. Monday and Tuesday to compete in the Central District Challenge at the River Wilderness Country Club. This will be A&M's first competition since last fall's Las Vegas Shootout where the Aggies finished sixth among 15 teams.

A&M will be looking to kick off the spring season successfully after what proved to be a questionable fall season. "Each tournament we play this spring will be important due to the inconsistent play we had in the fall," said A&M women's Head Coach Jeanne Sutherland. "I feel much more prepared going into this tournament than I did going into any of them in the fall."

The Aggies will be represented at the two-day tournament by sophomores Kyla Neal and Nicole Melton, freshmen Ashley Frey and Brenda Norris and junior Mira Bendevis.

Bendevis, who will be competing in only her third competition of the 2002-2003 season, was recently named co-captain of the women's squad. The Fredericksvarek native has found the transition from life in Denmark to College Station an

easy one, relying on strong friendships with her teammates to help bridge the gap between home and college.

"I have been really lucky and I have great friends," she said. "It is weird to think that I have known them for only two or three years."

Melton placed second individually at the Las Vegas Shootout, capping off the three-day competition with a 4-under-par 68 on her way to a 1-under-par 215 (76-71-68). The

Sutherland said. "It will be important for us to have a good showing to improve our chances of postseason play."

The Aggies will face a strong field of central district teams in Florida, including No. 19 Indiana University.

The Hoosiers will depend on the increasingly impressive play of junior Karen Dennison, who is attempting to capture her fourth first place finish in five events this season. Dennison is currently ranked among the top five golfers in the women's NCAA competition, according to the Golfweek/Saragin Performance Index.

"I think it's my putting," she told Golfweek writer Lance Ringler. "I have always hit a lot of fairways and greens and now I am making putts."

Indiana Head Coach Sam Carmichael said Dennison's success can be attributed to her relentless work ethic.

"Karen is a really good player who makes the effort everyday to become better," Carmichael said. "She has the chance to become an outstanding player."

Several highly-ranked teams will be participating in the 54-hole event, including No. 28 Kent State and No. 29 Baylor.

"I feel much more prepared going into this tournament than I did going into any of them in the fall."

— Jeanne Sutherland
A&M Head Coach

2002 Big 12 Freshman of the year has finished among the top two golfers in each of her last two competitions.

"Mira and Nicole are playing well and if we get solid play from our young players, I think we will have a good tournament to start out the year,"

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Aggies sweep weekend series

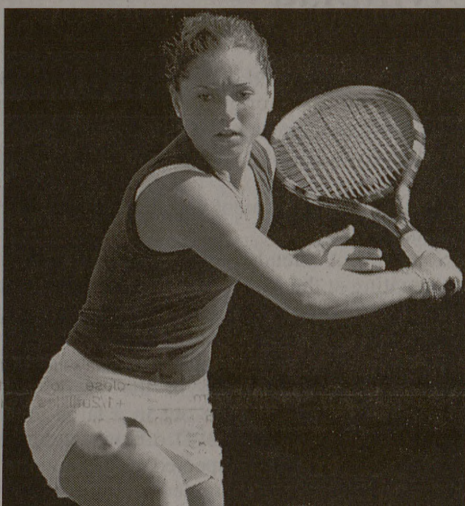
The No. 31 Texas A&M women's tennis team completed a strong weekend of play in which the Aggies defeated the University of Texas — San Antonio, the University of Houston and the University of Nebraska in successive matches.

Against UTSA, the Aggies swept the doubles matches on their way to a 5-2 victory. A&M faced Houston in the nightcap of Friday's doubleheader. A 6-1 A&M win extended the Aggies' undefeated streak to four consecutive games.

led by the tandem of Ashley Hedberg and Lauren Walker, the Aggies shutout the Nebraska Cornhuskers on Sunday to complete the weekend series sweep.

The Aggies are in the midst of a six-match homestand and will return to action on Saturday against Big 12 rival Oklahoma State University.

Saturday's game is scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. at the A&M Tennis Center.



ADAM A. KRAZER • THE BATTALION

Jessica Roland returns a serve against Nebraska.

Weir shoots 66, wins Nissan Open

By Doug Ferguson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Mike Weir staged another unlikely comeback Sunday, making up a seven-stroke deficit against Charles Howell III and winning the Nissan Open with a birdie on the second playoff hole.

Weir closed with a 5-under 66 on tough Riviera Country Club, then waited nearly an hour as Howell played his final seven holes in 2 over.

Weir, winless on the PGA Tour a year ago, won for the second time in four starts and moved to the top of the money list with just over \$2 million.

"It's a dream start to the year," Weir said. "Hopefully, I can keep it going."

A month ago in the Bob Hope Classic, he rallied from four strokes behind in the final round and won by two shots when everyone else around him

made mistakes. Sunday at Riviera was not much different.

Howell had a three-stroke lead going into the final round, and still led by three heading to the back nine. But he missed a few fairways and a couple of key putts, each one allowing Weir to slowly creep back into the picture.

Both finished at 9-under 275. Nick Price had a share of the lead until bogeys on the 15th and 16th. He finished two strokes behind after a 72, tied with Fred Funk (68).

Tiger Woods had the best round of the day, a 6-under 65 that lifted him into a tie for fifth at 278. It was the eighth consecutive top-10 finish for Woods, dating to the British Open at Muirfield (tie for 28th).

As Howell squandered one chance after another, Weir made a tough par on No. 13 to stay in the game and didn't make a bogey over his final 13 holes.

Weir appeared to have a clear advantage on the second playoff hole, the 311-yard 10th, by playing safe off the tee with a fairway metal. He hit a sand wedge to 8 feet.

Howell went with the driver and hit it right into a bunker, a position where few players manage to even make par. Still, he hit a tremendous shot from 35 yards to a skinny green, the ball trickling 6 feet past the hole.

"Charles hit a hell of a shot," Weir said. "It was just my day."

Two of Weir's five victories have come in a playoff, the other one in the Tour Championship two years ago in Houston.

Woods, meanwhile, now has played the Nissan Open six times without winning, the most at any other PGA Tour event. He didn't lose his sense of humor.

"It definitely was a goal to get in the top 10 so I can get Ryder Cup points," he said.

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