

No. 15 Michigan visits A&M

By Pete Burks
THE BATTALION

For the University of Michigan softball team, leaving home for a couple of road games in Texas was supposed to mean heading to warmer climates. However, when the No. 15 Wolverines step on the field at the Aggie Softball Complex to take on the No. 19 Aggies, it will probably remind them more of playing in Ann Arbor.

In a way, the game will be a battle of opposites with the Aggies coming in with four straight wins, taking their second tournament in a row. Meanwhile, Michigan comes in after a disappointing showing at the Leadoff Classic in Columbus, Ga.

The Aggies (12-6) will be looking to continue their success and boost their confidence before heading out to Palo Alto, Calif. to meet some of the nation's best in the Stanford Classic.

Michigan, on the other hand, will simply be looking just to get back on its feet. The Wolverines (3-5) are highly ranked, but have not fared well in the young season. They are coming off of tough losses against No. 5 Washington, 5-3, and No. 16 South Carolina, 3-0.

Although Michigan had a

slow start this year, it is ranked No. 15 for a reason. Head Coach Carol Hutchins is in her nineteenth season with the Wolverines, and her longevity at Michigan is representative of the success that she has had.

Just last year, the Wolverines won the Big 10 regular season championship, tournament championship, and the NCAA regional championship to advance to the Women's College World Series for the sixth year in a row. In addition, Hutchins has been named as Regional Coach of the Year seven times during her tenure.

The Aggies may be playing well, but A&M Head Coach Jo Evans isn't letting her guard down.

"Michigan was ranked No. 4 in the pre-season poll, and they are very well coached," Evans said. "They can hit the ball, and they're very athletic. We know they will give us all we can handle."

In addition, the Wolverine players are not too shabby either. They return a veteran team of five juniors and five seniors, led by senior first baseman/pitcher,

Marissa Young. Young will come into the game with a diminutive 1.98 ERA and record of 2-0. Also, she is on the watch list for the National Collegiate Player of the Year.

Meanwhile, A&M has its own National Collegiate Player of the Year candidate in senior catcher Selena Collins. Collins comes in batting .378 with six homers and 16 RBIs, and will lead an A&M offense that has been absolutely on fire. As a team, the Aggies are batting .269, and although sputtering at times, they are becoming more consistent each game. Collins said she looks forward to playing a competitive team such as Michigan.

"They always make it to the (World Series), which is why it's so exciting to play them at home," Collins said. "They have great hitters and a stellar defense, but playing great competition helps us capitalize on what we've been working towards, and that is heading to the World Series."

This will be the first meeting between these two teams, but nonetheless, the winner will come out with some added momentum as they draw nearer to conference play. The game is the Aggies' last at home before they head to California, and it is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. this evening.



COLLINS

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Women's golf team finishes third in Florida tournament

The Texas A&M women's golf team entered the Central District Invitational Tournament on Tuesday in seventh place before posting a team score of 295 to tie for third place.

The Aggies and the tournament champion Ohio State Buckeyes were the only two teams to finish the day with a round below 300.

A&M sophomore Nicole Melton and junior Mira Bendevis led the Aggies' late surge, each posting a one-over round of 73 at the River Wilderness Golf Club. Melton's three-round score of 223 put her in a tie for third among individual competitors. It marked the third-straight time that the freshman has finished in the top three of a tournament.

The Aggies tied Kansas State University with a team score of 923. The Buckeyes (909) and Baylor University (915) finished with better rounds.

OSU

Continued from page 7

kids are focused, we have shown that we can play well and hang with the top teams in our conference."

As the season's end draws near, the Aggies will have the leadership of junior guard Toccara Williams to lean on. Williams leads the team in scoring (12.7), steals (107), assists (131) and is second on the team in rebounding (5.1).

OSU, which is coming off an 83-48 loss to No. 8 Texas Tech over the weekend, is led by 6-foot-2 junior center Trisha Skibbe. Skibbe leads her team in points (17.0) and rebounding (7.4). The Cowgirls, though, will be in search of their first conference road win of the season as they come to College Station, and are in danger of being swept by the Aggies for the first time since the 1996-97 season.

"It should be a good old fashioned game where two programs are trying to move upward and improve," said OSU assistant coach Rob Edmison. "We're trying to keep our kids excited about playing and the prospect of improving."

Tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m. at Reed Arena on Wednesday night.

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