

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Tuesday, March 18, 2003

Aggies travel to UTSA for midweek action

By Kevin Espenlaub
THE BATTALION

After taking two of three games from No. 12 Nebraska this weekend at Olsen Field, the No. 20 Texas A&M baseball team will travel to San Antonio Tuesday to face off with the University of Texas-San Antonio in a non-conference matchup at Wolff Stadium beginning at 7 p.m.

Despite their 9-10 season record, the Roadrunners have won five of their last eight contests and will try to even the season series against the Aggies (19-5, 2-1 Big 12), who defeated UTSA 8-5 at Olsen Field March 4.

"I told the team that Tuesday was our next big challenge," said A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson. "We have to see if we got our emotions so high this weekend that we won't be able to be on an even field in those Tuesday ballgames and not drop (our level of play) much right after the beginning of the Big 12 games."

The Aggies, who are on a streak of their

own after claiming victories in nine of their last 10 games, used solid pitching from juniors Matt Farnum and Kyle Parcus, as well as a 4-for-4 day from junior transfer Justin Ruggiano to claim the third and deciding game in the Nebraska series.

Farnum, who started the game for the Aggies, improved his season record to 5-0 and Parcus closed out the last 2.2 innings to record his first save of the season. Farnum also pitched seven innings for the Aggies and claimed the win in the first game against UTSA this season.

"(A&M) did a good job of mixing it up on us at the plate," said UTSA Head Coach Sherman Corbett. "(Farnum) did a great job of getting his breaking pitches over the plate (in the first matchup), and that kept us off-balance. He pitched a great ballgame."

Now A&M will look to junior right-hander Brian Finch to close out the season series against the Roadrunners.

Finch will try to change his luck against UTSA after being pounded for all five of its runs on four hits in the March 4 matchup when he relieved Farnum in the eighth inning.

He will bring a 2-1 record into the game with a 5.73 ERA in 22 innings of work and has recorded 15 strikeouts this season.

Finch's last start was against Texas-Pan American March 9. He did not earn a decision after allowing four runs on six hits in four innings.

He will try to earn the win against a Roadrunner team that is coming off a 13-2 loss on the road against the McNeese State Cowboys. The win gave the Cowboys the 2-1 series win in the first conference matchup for both teams.

The Aggies hold the all-time lead in the series 11-4, but the Roadrunners hold a 3-1 advantage in games played in San Antonio.

The game will also hold some emotional ties for Corbett, who played for A&M from 1982-1984, and UTSA Assistant Coach Jason Marshall, who was a four-year letterman for the Aggies.

"They are very special people to me," Johnson said. "They played for me and they are Aggies. I root for them in every game they play. I just hope they don't have a real good ballgame on Tuesday."



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Junior Kyle Parcus delivers a pitch in Sunday's game against Nebraska.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

A&M football team begins spring practices today behind Kyle Field

The Texas A&M football team will begin its spring practices today at the grass fields behind Kyle Field. The practice season will consist of 15 practices and will mark the official beginning of the Dennis Franchione era at A&M.

A&M lured Franchione away from Alabama last December and signed him to replace R.C. Slocum as the new Aggie head coach.

Today's and Wednesday's practices will be held in only shorts and T-shirts under NCAA regulations, and full pads will be used in Friday's practices.

The team's first scrimmage will be March 29 at Kyle Field, and the annual Maroon and White game will be held April 12 at 2 p.m.

Anyone is welcome to watch the Aggies' spring practices, but registration is required for anyone hoping to attend.

To register to watch practices, call 458-2185.

Practice today and tomorrow will be held from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m.

Men's tennis team hosts doubleheader

By Jeff Allen
THE BATTALION

The No. 11 Texas A&M men's tennis team is set to take on Northern Arizona University and Wichita State University today in what is to be the final doubleheader of the 2003 season.

The double dip, which comes as part of an eight-match home stand for the team, is the fifth one of the year. During that stretch the Aggies have accumulated an 8-0 record, including a win last week against No. 7 Duke that went a long way toward solidifying the Aggies' place in the polls.

"(The team) has earned the ranking," said A&M Head Coach Tim Cass. "I'm happy for them because it's their ranking, and they are the ones that were successful in (earlier

matches, and that's why we're where we are at."

The competition today doesn't look as fierce as it did last week when the Aggies were facing a national power.

In the first match, the Aggies (12-5) will square off with a Northern Arizona squad that struggled early in the season. The Lumberjacks lost six of their first seven matches out of the gates this season and have been trying to climb out of that hole ever since.

The Lumberjacks come into College Station riding a three-match losing streak, including losses against A&M-Corpus Christi and No. 55 Texas Tech.

The second match for the Aggies is the night cap with Wichita State, which is coming off a 3-1 performance last week at the HEB Team Championships held in Corpus Christi.

The Shockers will play the Aggies for the first time in nearly 15 years when they take the court at 6 p.m. tonight at the A&M Tennis Center. Three wins at the tournament last week have been all the Shockers have been able to muster so far this season.

Wichita State has dropped matches against three Big 12 teams, suffering losses at the hands of the University of Nebraska, Baylor University and the University of Texas, three schools that the Aggies will play later this season when conference play resumes.

The doubleheader comes at a time when the Aggie men have finally hit their stride after starting the season slow. The men pieced together a six-match winning streak and have gone undefeated in their first 10 home matches of the year.

Last Thursday the Aggies were able to get Big 12 play off to a good

start against the University of Colorado. The Aggie men defeated the Buffaloes 6-1 at the Tennis Center, extending the Aggies' win streak to its current six games.

"We really want to put ourselves in position to win the Big 12," Cass said. "The conference matches are very, very important. You must go 8-0 in conference to get the job done."

In the meantime, the Aggies have managed to answer some of the lingering questions from early in the season. They have started to play solidly in doubles competition, which has given the team real momentum in the last five matches, all of which the Aggies have won by snagging the crucial doubles point.

The Aggies begin at 1 p.m. facing Northern Arizona and at 6 p.m. against Wichita State. The Aggies will complete the home stand Saturday against No. 19 Alabama.

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