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# Aggie men heading to NCAA's in Austin

By Jeff Allen  
THE BATTALION

Last week the Texas A&M women sent nine swimmers to the NCAA Championships in Alabama, but things didn't go quite as planned. The women came back empty-handed, but perhaps they learned a bit about why men's swimming and diving Head Coach Mel Nash holds the meet in such high esteem.

"It definitely is the most stressful meet of any you'll find," Nash said. "Everyone I've talked to who's been in the Olympics and the NCAA meet says that the NAAs have more electricity. With eight teams and 32 guys all back in the lanes, it is really an electric atmosphere."

This weekend, the No. 14 men's team will get its crack at the nation's best as it heads to Austin for the third time this month to compete in the 2003 NCAA Championships, hosted by the University of Texas. The men will go into the meet carrying seven swimmers and two divers, equaling the size of the women's contingent exactly, but Nash and the men are hoping to draw from their recent success at the meet in cracking the goose egg off the scoreboard.

"The difference for us is that we have Matt Rose, Scott Mueller, Dan Blanchard and Alfredo Jacobo, who have all

been there and scored at the meet and know what it's like. Plus we have a real track record of going to the meet and scoring," Nash said.

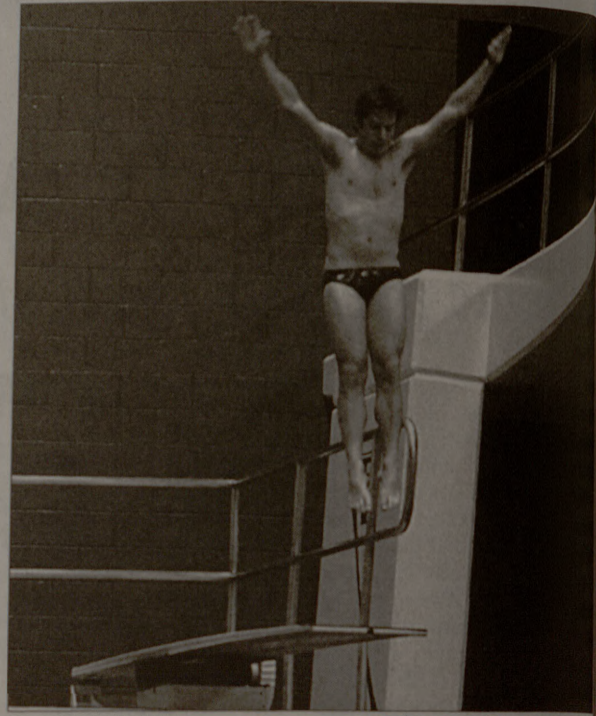
The men set off this year with hopes of making a march toward the nation's Top 25, despite the fact that this year had already been dubbed a rebuilding year by Nash. The definition came early in the season as the men set out bottom-heavy, having only four seniors on the roster, compared to 13 freshmen.

"Seeing as we are so incredibly young, we needed some of our freshmen to become sophomores, and they did the job and did very well," Nash said.

The Aggies are heading back into Austin devoid of any of those four seniors on their NCAA roster, but that doesn't mean the Aggies are lacking any experience.

The squad will be led by junior Matt Rose, who will be swimming in the 50 and 100-yard freestyles as well as the 100-yard backstroke. Rose will also be swimming on the Aggie relay teams, one of the most crucial aspects of the meet. The relay races count as double toward the team points, which are tallied at the end to place the teams.

The placement of the teams at the meet is the team's final ranking, regardless of what it



Freshman Christian Picard will be one of two A&M divers heading to Austin to participate in the NCAA Championships this weekend.

may have been ranked during the dual meet season.

Rose, Mueller, Blanchard and Jacobo will be joined by freshman Andrew Sullivan, sophomore Calvin Zielsdorf and junior Chris Niels. The team is also sending two divers: freshman Christian Picard and junior Adam Morgan.

The Aggies are eligible to compete in all five relays, but it will be a game-time decision

about whether they will actually compete in all of them.

"I think we are going to be a little bit surprised some people," Niels said. "We are young, but we have a lot of experience, and have the chance with our inexperience, plenty of guys are ready for breakthrough swim."

The meet begins today at the Lee and Joe Jamall Texas Swimming Center, and will continue through Sunday.

## Cardinals sign Emmitt Smith

IRVING (AP) — Emmitt Smith will return to Texas Stadium this season, but he won't be wearing the familiar blue and silver uniform that has marked his career.

Smith, the NFL's leading career rusher, agreed to terms with the Arizona Cardinals on Wednesday, moving from one of the league's most storied franchises to its most downtrodden. Next time No. 22 takes a handoff in Irving, he will be wearing red and white.

Smith was released Feb. 27 by Dallas in a salary-cap move agreed to by the Cowboys and Smith. The Cardinals were the only team the 33-year-old Smith visited. "Emmitt will start," coach Dave McGinnis said, adding that he will also help break in Marcel Shipp, who led the Cardinals in rushing last season in his second year.

The Cardinals said Smith got a two-year contract, but did not disclose terms. It was believed to be worth about \$4 million a year.

The Cowboys had no immediate comment on the signing.

The Cardinals will visit Texas Stadium during the regular season, but the date has not been announced. Dallas plays a preseason game in Arizona during August.

A starting job was one of the things Smith had sought and one of the things the Cowboys couldn't guarantee when they released him after 13 seasons and 17,162 yards.

But Smith's other desire — winning again — may not be so easy. Arizona finished 5-11 last season and has been one of the NFL's consistently losing franchises — it has one playoff victory since 1947.

Smith contributed to the Cardinals' woes over the years. He scored 25 career touchdowns against them, his highest total versus an opponent.

Overall, Smith ranks No. 1 in NFL history with 153 rushing TDs.

Smith, who will turn 34 on May 15, failed



SMITH

to reach 1,000 yards this season for the first time since his rookie year in 1990, gaining 975 yards.

Smith rushed for over 100 yards in only two games, including the one with Seattle on Oct. 27 in which he broke Walter Payton's career rushing

record of 16,726 yards.

The Cardinals plan to formally introduce Smith on Thursday.

"I've always been very confident in my abilities," Smith said right after being released by Dallas. "I think I'm a 1,300-yard back, and I will be out to prove that."

"I am not a guy that is afraid of competition," he said. "I walk up and face it full throttle. I will help someone's organization get to the Super Bowl, get back to the Super Bowl or win the Super Bowl."

Rod Graves, the Cardinals' vice president, and Bill Bidwill, the team's owner, said they believed that Smith's presence alone would enhance the image of the Cardinals, both locally and nationally.

McGinnis, who was an assistant with the Chicago Bears when Payton was finishing his career there, said he expects Smith to make the same contribution to Shipp and other Cardinals that he saw from Payton.

"Walter was a great example to everyone who was there at the time," he said. "Emmitt will do the same, on the field and in the locker room."

The Cardinals entertained Smith lavishly when he was in Arizona for his visit.

Bidwill said that when they took him out to dinner, they made sure he sat where he could have a view of the entire Valley of the Sun.

"He turned to me and said: 'You made sure I sat in this seat, didn't you?'" Bidwill said.

### SPORTS IN BRIEF

#### Aggies lose to Baylor in critical Big 12 matchup

The Texas A&M women's tennis team fell to the No. 44 Baylor University Bears on Wednesday evening at the A&M Tennis Center.

The No. 29 Aggies (10-7, 5-2) started off strong, taking two of three doubles matches and won the first match in singles when junior Jessica Roland claimed a 6-4, 6-1 victory on court one.

However, Baylor (8-8, 5-1) bounced back to claim the next four singles matches to clinch the victory.

The Aggies had held a perfect 6-0 record at home this season before the loss and were within a half game of the Big 12 leading-University of Texas coming into the match.

A&M was also 9-0 this season when the team was able to claim the doubles point.

Baylor has now won five of the last six meetings between the teams and hold second place in the Big 12.

#### Football team continues spring practice schedule

The Texas A&M football team continued with its spring practices this week and Head Coach Dennis Franchione said he has seen progress.

"We are building a foundation, and I have been pleased with the attitudes of the players," Franchione said.

On Wednesday, the Aggies returned to full pads after working out in shorts and helmets on Tuesday. The spring practices are open to the public, but fans are encouraged to call 979-458-2185 to register and to receive additional information.

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SPORTS THE BATTALION

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