

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Baseball team hosts SHSU in midweek game

Ags hope to keep momentum from weekend series

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

A&M's Scott Beerer releases a pitch against Baylor on Sunday. The Aggies beat the No. 6 Bears in two games of their three-game series.

Texas A&M baseball has been down on its luck since reaching the College World Series in 1999. Since the visit, the Aggies have suffered three seasons without a post-season appearance. But early season success against a pair of conference rivals could be a sign that 2003 is the year the Aggies will return to Big 12, and national, prominence. So far, the No. 22 Aggies (23-9 overall, 5-4 Big 12) have already won two three-game series against perennial national power No. 16 Nebraska and No. 6 Baylor. Every weekend the Aggies are in a battle against a Big 12 opponent with the same thing on their minds: a Big 12 championship. "I think the history of the league indicates that it will be very close," said Baylor Head Coach Steve Smith. "Last year was almost comical with eight teams that could

win it in the last weekend of the year." With the weekend Big 12 matchups weighing so much, it is hard for the Aggies to stay focused on their non-conference, mid-week Tuesday matchups with teams that should be easier to beat than their nationally-ranked Big 12 competitors. This week the Aggies will face Sam Houston State (12-17) Tuesday night at Olsen Field with first pitch set for 7 p.m. "We've only experienced two weeks of Tuesday ball games since the start of conference," said A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson. "Tuesday games are a lot harder, and I've had championship ball clubs not play well on Tuesday nights." After the Aggies took two of three games from Nebraska in a thrilling weekend to open Big 12 play, A&M went on the road and lost 6-5 in San Antonio to the University of Texas at San Antonio. Now the Aggies will try to keep the momentum rolling into Tuesday night's game

with the Bearkats after an emotional 4-3 win to capture the weekend series with Baylor. Sam Houston is coming into College Station with a weekend series win of its own as it took two of three games from Southland Conference rival Lamar. The Bearkats are not afraid of Big 12 opponents either, as they have already handed Nebraska a 10-3 defeat earlier this season. "I reminded (the team) that this is going to be critical," Johnson said. "We have to take care of our homefield, and Sam Houston's coming in and wanting to play well." The Aggies beat Sam Houston 8-0 in Huntsville in the teams' first meeting this season. Since then, the Aggies have proved to be a tough team by beating nationally-ranked ball clubs and holding a 16-3 record at Olsen Field. "We're starting to realize how good we really are," said A&M junior Scott Beerer. "We're getting that swagger."

Texas, Ford eye championship; Michigan State fans react

By Jim Vertuno
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — At a school with little basketball tradition, the Texas Longhorns should be content just to reach the Final Four.

Right? Don't try telling that to T.J. Ford, coach Rick Barnes and the rest of the crew in burnt orange. They've got far loftier goals.

When Ford hugged Barnes after the Longhorns' victory over Michigan State in the South Regional final, the coach quickly reminded his star point guard that the team's goal is a national title.

"We've got more work to do," Barnes told him.

Texas is the only No. 1 seed in the Final Four, and the Longhorns like their chances in New Orleans. The other No. 1s, Oklahoma, which reached the Final Four last season, and traditional powers Kentucky and Arizona are gone.

The Longhorns (26-6) play Syracuse (28-5) in the national semifinals on Saturday. Kansas faces Marquette in the other semifinal.

Making its first Final Four appearance in 56 years, the Longhorns are generating a buzz in a city where football is king.

"We haven't won anything yet," Ford said. "This is a great feeling, but I'd rather cut down a net in New Orleans and put it on a national championship trophy."

Barnes has wanted to take a team to the Final Four ever since 1981, when he was an assistant at George Mason and watched the games in Philadelphia. Until this season, he had never been past the round of 16 as a head coach.

"I told myself then that when I became a head coach, the one thing I wanted to do for my team was to them to a Final Four so they could experience and feel it," Barnes said. "Once you get there and experience that feeling, they will never question anything you tell them or get them to do in terms of getting there."

Texas was last in the Final Four in 1946, when the NCAA tournament field had just eight teams. The Longhorns reached the regional finals in 1990.

Barnes has steadily built expectations for postseason success. Texas won the Big 12 in his first season, and made the tournament in five seasons under Barnes.

The Longhorns have been focused on getting to the Final Four since losing to Oregon in the regional semifinals last season.

Victories over North Carolina-Asheville and Purdue in the first two rounds allowed Texas to advance to play in San Antonio, fueling criticism that the

NCAA but set up the Longhorns to succeed by putting them so close to home.

Texas had been ranked in the top 10 all season, but finished second to Kansas in the Big 12 and got bumped early from the conference tournament.

The crowds in the Alamodome were a definite advantage — more than 60,000, most of them wearing orange, came to watch and fill the arena with chants of "Texas Fight!"

The Longhorns didn't sell out any of their home games during the regular season.



"It was a great feeling to look up and see so much orange," Barnes said. "These guys earned this. They deserved it."

The crowds at the Superdome won't be so pro-Longhorn, although the prospect of a basketball championship has Texas fans scrambling for tickets to New Orleans.

"I expect a lot of people to jump on the bandwagon," guard Royal Ivey said. "But that's OK. I'm not going to eject anybody."

By Amy F. Bailey
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Michigan State University students and local authorities said Monday they are disappointed about weekend disturbances after the Spartans' appearances in the NCAA Tournament, but said the events were smaller than riots in 1999.

After trying to improve the relationship between the university and the community in the four years since the riots, police and students said they're discouraged there are still disturbances at Michigan State.

"It's frustrating to know that there's nothing more you can do other than ask them not to," said Misty Staunton, a 23-year-old senior from El Paso, Texas.

Eighteen people were arrested Friday night after students and fans took to the streets to celebrate Michigan State's victory over Maryland to advance to the NCAA Tournament's Elite Eight, East Lansing Police Lt. Kevin Daley said Monday.

A woman was in critical condition at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing on Monday after she fell from a balcony near campus Friday night, said East Lansing Police Chief Louis Muhn.

On Sunday night, seven people were arrested when about 2,000 people gath-

ered near campus after the Spartans lost 85-76 to Texas, Daley said. Six of the seven were identified as university students and the group included six men and two women, he said.

During the disturbance, four cars were overturned, several small fires were set in bushes and Dumpsters, and vending machines were damaged, Daley said. Officers also set off tear gas to break up a crowd earlier in the night and a bus stop was damaged by revelers, he said.

Sunday night's disturbances caused about \$40,000 in damage to university property, Michigan State Police Chief Jim Dunlap said.

University officials are researching their policies for students arrested for disorderly conduct and other violent behavior, spokesman Terry Denbow said.

"This will not be tolerated," he said. After the Spartans' 1999 NCAA Tournament loss to Duke, police made 132 arrests that included 71 Michigan State students. Rioting caused more than \$250,000 in damage to the city and campus.

The university created a policy after that riot allowing officials to punish students for crimes committed off campus. Punishments could include suspension and expulsion.

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