

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Friday, April 4, 2003

Aggies hope to jump out early on Bay, OSU

By Pete Burks
THE BATTALION

When the No. 20 Aggie softball team returns to the Aggie Softball Complex to face the No. 15 Oklahoma State Cowgirls on Saturday at 2 p.m. and Sunday at 1 p.m., one thing will be on both teams' agenda: redemption.

Both teams are coming off close losses to in-state rivals, and a win for either team would ease the sting of their recent defeats as well as provide some momentum for the last leg of conference play.

Oklahoma State (27-7, 6-1 Big 12) will be looking to take its frustrations out on the Aggies as the Cowgirls lost a close game to their arch-rivals, the No. 4 Oklahoma Sooners.

A magnificent pitching performance by senior pitcher Lauren Bay went by the way-side, as the Cowgirls could not hold onto a 1-0 lead in the bottom of the seventh. Until the seventh, Bay no-hit the Sooners, but that quickly changed.

After giving up a single and a walk, the Sooners sealed the win with a two-run dou-

ble to end the game. The loss snapped OSU's 15-game winning streak, and gave Bay her first loss since March 6, her fourth of the season.

Oklahoma State Head Coach Margaret Rebenar expects to see just as tough a game against the Aggies as she saw against Oklahoma.

"These games in the Big 12 are dog-fights, and the scores indicate that," Rebenar said. "A&M has a great ballclub, and they have some players that tend to come through in clutch situations. We try to approach every game in the same way because in this league, no team should be underestimated."

Meanwhile, A&M (26-13, 4-3 Big 12) will look to clean up its game defensively: the Aggies have committed six errors in the last two games.

On Wednesday, the Aggies lost to a Baylor squad that had yet to win a game in conference play. Baylor capitalized on four Aggie errors to win the game despite a solid pitching effort by junior pitcher Jessica Slataper, who gave up five hits and allowed only one earned run in the loss.

A&M senior catcher Selena Collins said the key for the Aggies will be to get off to a

fast start against the Cowgirls and their star pitcher, Bay.

"Oklahoma State is a very aggressive team," Collins said. "Lauren Bay really keeps them in the game. If we jump on them early, I think we'll be fine."

One thing that should prove helpful to the Aggies is their continued dominance at home. This year, the Aggies have been nearly invincible at the Aggie Softball Complex, boasting a 14-1 record. However, as A&M Head Coach Jo Evans can attest, having a stellar home record does not mean the Aggies will head into their bout with OSU in an overconfident manner.

"We know that OSU is a very competitive team, and they are currently leading the conference," Evans said. "Lauren Bay is a phenomenal strikeout and power pitcher, and her team has been giving her enough run support to win. We split with OSU last year, and we expect nothing less than a tough battle from them."

The Aggies are at a crucial make-or-break point in their Big 12 schedule, and a good showing versus Oklahoma State would be well worth their while as a huge game with bitter rival Texas looms on the horizon.



ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION
Senior catcher Selena Collins consults with junior Lindsey Wilhelmson on the mound in the Aggies' game against Nebraska on March 23.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

No. 19 Aggies visit Sooners in Norman

The No. 19 Aggie baseball team travels to Norman, Okla., this weekend for the first of seven road games. The Aggies enter the series in seventh place in the Big 12 standings with a 5-4 conference record and a 24-9 record overall.

A&M is coming off a 15-8 win over Sam Houston State University on Tuesday night. The Aggies finished the game with 14 hits.

The Sooners are off to their worst start in years and are tied for last place in the Big 12 with a 0-6 Big 12 record and an overall mark of 12-13.

Oklahoma is coming off a big win over Wichita State that ended a nine-game losing streak for the Sooners, who have just two players that are hitting more than .300.

The Aggies have seven hitters above the .300 mark including junior left fielder Scott Beerer who leads the team with a .339 batting average and is second with 24 RBI.

A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said the Sooners are a better team than their record indicates so far.

The first game of the three-game series is Friday at 6:35 p.m. Game two is Saturday at 2 p.m., and the series ends Sunday at 1 p.m.

Equestrian team heads to New Mexico

By Jeff Allen
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M equestrian team will be head to Las Cruces, N.M. Saturday to compete in the Zone 7 Championships hosted by New Mexico State University. The Zone Championships are the last stop on the Aggies' journey as they strive to make a bid for the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association National Championships in May in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

So far, the Aggies have qualified one individual rider, junior Meredith Houx, who rides English style, for the national championship meet.

Despite the lack of NCAA recognition, equestrian became a varsity sport at A&M,

along with archery in 1999, and like the archery team, has quickly developed into a successful and influential program.

The Aggie Western team earned the National Championship last year at the IHSA show. The Aggies were led by Quincy Cahill, who was the high point scorer in the region three years in a row and won at Nationals all three years before graduating and leaving the team in December.

The Aggies were forced to look to new leadership in Cahill's absence, and sophomore Katie Forest has stepped up, becoming arguably the best Western rider in the Aggies' region.

"Quincy was it for three years and now it's Katie," said Head Coach Tana Rawson. "She picked up where Quincy left off."

The team has qualified for the Nationals

as it was the high point team in the Region during the regular season.

Despite the Western team having already qualified for nationals by virtue of its regular season success, the team is looking at this weekend as a chance to defend the Zone Championship it earned last year by defeating Oklahoma State.

On the English side of things, the Aggie women have been eliminated as a team from competing in the national championships.

To qualify for a chance to compete for the national crown, a team must score the most points in its region throughout the regular season. Oklahoma State beat the A&M squad and is heading to nationals representing Zone 7 Region 2.

See **Equestrian** on page 7

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