

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies ready for annual scrimmage

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M football team will conclude its first spring under Head Coach Dennis Franchione Saturday when the team is split into two sides for the annual Maroon and White Game at 2 p.m. at Kyle Field.

Franchione hopes to see 40,000 attending the intra-squad game between the Maroon team and the White team.

"The enthusiasm of our fans has been super," Franchione said. "Our fans and our supporters' excitement has been really genuine and really refreshing and fun to see."

Two Aggie fans, former President George Bush and his

wife Barbara, visited the team to lend their support after Tuesday's practice.

"You've got a great coach in Coach Fran," Bush said. "You do a lot for this school. We're proud to be a part of the Aggie family."

The Maroon and White game is the first chance Aggie fans have at seeing the changes Franchione and his coaching staff have brought to the Aggie football team. Junior Dustin Long and sophomore Reggie McNeal will split quarterback duties between the two teams.

Fans will also be able to see some Aggie youngsters who could make significant impacts in the fall, such as redshirt freshman running back Courtney Lewis. Lewis gained 87 yards on 12 carries in the Aggies' scrimmage

April 5.

"Courtney Lewis is a young man who continues to catch everyone's eyes," Franchione said. "He makes people miss and turns what looks like a negative play into a positive gain. He has an exciting future."

Junior Jason Carter will be unveiled as an A-back, a special multi-purpose position in the offense created by Franchione. Carter is moving to A-back from quarterback and will line-up at tailback as well as wide receiver, depending on the offensive set.

"We felt like we had to have (Carter) involved in our 22 best football players," Franchione said. "A-back is a multi-purpose position. He can play at three or four different locations in our offense."

New defensive coordinator Carl Torbush will unveil his 4-3 defensive scheme, a change from the 3-4 defense run under former Head Coach R.C. Slocum.

Torbush's defense at Alabama in the 2002 season ranked third in the nation by giving up just 257.31 yards per game.

Plenty of festivities will surround the Maroon and White Game. The Fighting Texas Aggie Band will perform at halftime and five fans will be chosen to compete in a halftime field goal kicking competition for Aggie football prizes. Players and coaches will sign autographs from 9:30-11 a.m. in the Memorial Student Center.

Students are admitted for free with a valid student I.D., and kickoff is scheduled for 2 p.m.



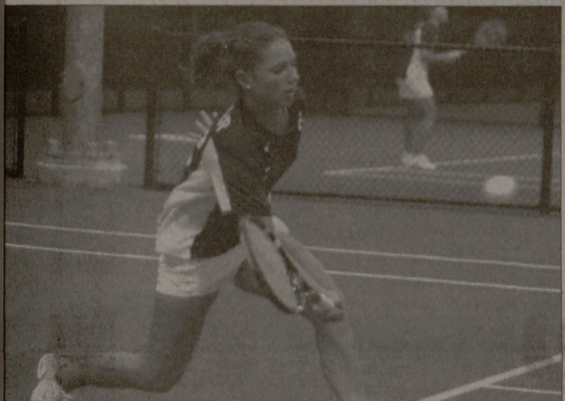
ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION

Junior Dustin Long leads A&M at quarterback in the game against Texas last season. Long will help "draft" a team for Saturday's scrimmage.

Women's tennis team to meet Rice

By Blake Kimzey
THE BATTALION

When the No. 30 Texas A&M women's tennis team squares off against Rice University tonight in Houston, visions of the old Southwest Conference rivalry will take center stage. When the SWC dissolved, Rice was annexed into the Western Athletic Conference while A&M merged into the Big 12.



J.P. BEATO III • THE BATTALION

Roberta Spencer lunges for a return against South Alabama last weekend at the A&M Tennis Center.

Even with new conference allegiances that have taken the two schools in different directions, the traditional match between the Owls (8-11) and the Aggies (13-8, 6-2 Big 12) has not gone by the wayside. When the two teams meet tonight at the Jake Hess Tennis Stadium on the Owls' home turf, things will have a familiar feel.

"When we get together to play, it is a true Texas rivalry," said Rice Head Coach Roger White. "We've probably played over 25 times against each other, and both schools are always up and excited to face off. We have struggled this year as a young team and have underperformed, I'd say, but we will be up to the challenge and we'll be looking forward to it."

After enjoying a two-week home stand, the Aggies will look to overcome the intense atmosphere at Rice. A&M is hitting the road after completing a seven-match home stand in which it went 5-2, and is coming off a hard-fought 4-3 setback to No. 14 South Alabama.

Meanwhile, the Owls have lost two in a row and are looking to rebound tonight against A&M in their final home match of the season. Freshmen netters Blair DiSesa and Lauren Archer, who have both been dominant this season, lead Rice into tonight's match up. Archer has racked up a 20-11 mark in singles play, including a combined 12-6 dual record at courts No. 1 and No. 2.

Rice Assistant Coach Julie Scott Thu said her team is

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Ags host A&M Invitational

By Marcus White
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M men's and women's track and field teams will host the A&M Invitational Saturday at the Frank G. Anderson Track and Field Complex. The meet marks the Aggies' fourth event of the 2003 outdoor campaign.

Thanks to a newly extended outdoor season, the Aggies have been able to experiment with different line ups to achieve maximum effort in each event. A&M Head Coach Ted Nelson has been especially fond of tweaking the men's 400-meter relay team, adding different runners in each of the team's last three outdoor meets. Nelson said this week will be no different.

"The NCAA schedule changes have everyone trying new things and working things out," he said. "We're really going into this season blind. We have to approach it differently than in years past."

University of Texas Head Coach Bubba Thornton agreed with Nelson, saying that the prolonged schedule gives

more time to prepare for the NCAA meets.

"The new schedule definitely has its ups and downs," Thornton said. "We'll have more time to practice, but we are going to have to rest some athletes because they can't run every week."

The goal remains the same for both teams: to prepare for Big 12 and NCAA competition.

"We're looking ahead to preparing a team for the conference meet," Nelson said. "That's our main goal."

The Aggies will again rely on strong performances from one of the NCAA's best field crews. Last week, several A&M athletes shined at the 76th annual Texas Relays in Austin, none more than shot putter Ronny Jimenez. The junior Venezuelan native's throw of 60-6 3/4 captured an Aggie gold medal in the event. A&M had not finished first in the shot put at the Texas Relays in 17 years.

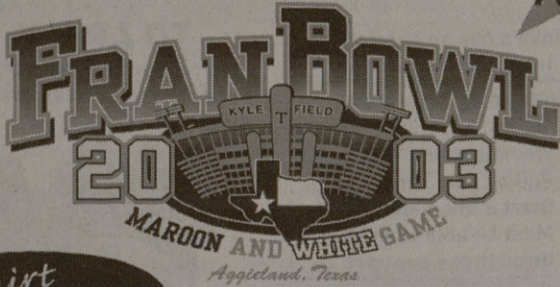
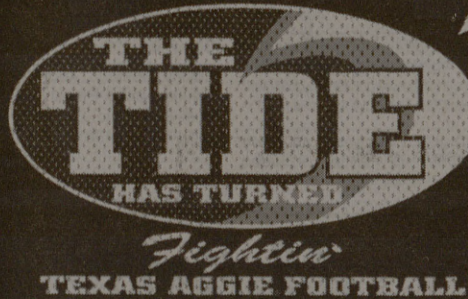
"Ronny's effort in the shot was quite a feat. Winning the Texas Relay is a very big deal," Nelson said. "We are expecting

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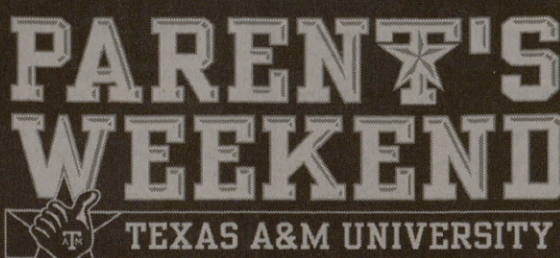


KID'S SIZES, TOO!



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