

Hedberg

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the first time, Ashley and Lindsey found themselves competing against each other in the Mountain West Conference, which, if anything, afforded them the opportunity to see each other during the season.

"We talked about college and we thought it would be better if we forged our own paths," Lindsey said. "A lot of schools looked at us together, like A&M, but both of us didn't want to stay in Texas. Ashley decided to go to New Mexico, and that was really good because her personality blossomed and she gained a lot more confidence in her game."

After successfully venturing out to New Mexico where she was named Mountain West Conference Freshman of the Year, narrowly beating out her sister for top conference honors, Ashley felt that she wanted to play for a more competitive school, and transferred to A&M, which had initially been her top choice.

"When Ashley came back to Texas, she was a far more sophisticated player," Dawn said. "I think that, like all kids, she wanted to get out on her own and get away, and when she figured out what all she really wanted for real, she decided to come back home."

Ashley has found her role on the team as a source of guidance, particularly with the freshmen this year. She knows what the shock of being away from home is all about because she has traveled that road. College tennis is

100 percent team tennis, an important distinction from competing in the individualistic waters of junior's tennis, something Ashley has helped her younger teammates understand.

As the only senior on the A&M women's tennis team this year, Ashley has managed to contribute at No. 2 singles, but more importantly she has been a leader that the younger players can look to for her leadership and her sense of humor.

"Things just didn't work out for Ashley and A&M in the beginning, and we were very fortunate that she came back to us her sophomore year," said A&M Head Coach Bobby Kleinecke. "Her sarcastic sense of humor is great and I know the girls have looked up to her all year."

As Ashley closes the door on a three-year career at A&M, there is still more to look forward to. With a share of the Big 12 title in their clutches, Hedberg and her teammates still have the Big 12 and NCAA tournaments ahead.

Tournaments and accolades aside, Ashley will see the sun set on the best year of her career, and just maybe she was destined to end her career the way it began when she was 5 years old: surrounded by a family of players who compete and play together, for the sheer fun of it.

"Being the only senior has been a lot of work because of the leadership role I was called to step into," Ashley said. "This has been a year unlike any other, though, and I've had more fun this year than I can ever remember, because this is an amazing team."

Tennis

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to do the things that have made us successful the whole year."

The second-seeded Aggies have a bye in the first round and will face the winner of Missouri and Nebraska, seeded seventh and 10th, respectively, in the quarterfinals on Friday at 2 p.m. The Aggies also received a slew of individual awards, announced earlier this week.

Junior Roberta Spencer and freshman Nicki Mechem are the Big 12 Conference champions at No. 3 and No. 5 singles, respectively. Senior Ashley Hedberg and sophomore Lauren Walker were crowned conference champions at No. 2 doubles. Hedberg was also named Big 12 Women's Tennis Co-Player of the Week after going 2-0 at No. 2 singles and No. 2 doubles last week.

Despite the attention and regular season accolades earned by the Aggies, Kleinecke said he is aware of the depth and competition that awaits his team this weekend in Kansas City, Mo.

"This year's tournament is amazing in the sense that any of eight teams could win the tournament," Kleinecke said. "We are gelling together, and I feel like we are competing at all nine spots. When I first started coaching here I had some teams that I took for granted, and I realize right now that this is a special group of girls."

The seventh annual 2003 Big 12 Tennis Championship will take place tonight through Sunday at the Plaza Tennis Center in Kansas City, Mo. The championship match, which Texas has won every year since the inaugural tournament in 1996, is scheduled for Sunday at 1 p.m.

"The season is not over by any means," Kleinecke said. "We begin the next part with the conference tournament, and I'm excited for the opportunity to go out there and put it all on the line again."

Golf

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that will be disappointing."

Despite the difficult playing field, the Aggies remain undaunted.

"We're going out there with a lot of confidence," said A&M Head Coach J. T. Higgins. "The Big 12 is as good as it gets, but we know we have our best golf ahead of us."

The spring season has been a roller coaster ride for the Aggies. After rallying from a 16-shot deficit to win the Border Olympics two weeks ago, the team derailed last weekend at the U.S. Intercollegiate, finishing 14th out of 16 teams.

Fortunately for A&M, the course that hosts the 2003 Big 12 Championship is much more suited to its style of play.

Traditionally, the championship takes place at Prairie Dunes Country Club in Hutchinson, Kan. This year, Big 12 officials decided to move the tournament to the illustrious Southern Hills Country Club in Oklahoma. Higgins said that Southern Hills, with its large greens and rolling hills, plays to the Aggies' strengths on the course.

"We had a lot of trouble with the greens (at the U.S. Intercollegiate) last week. Southern Hills is a lot like the Laredo course where we won the Border Olympics. We are expecting some low scores," Higgins said.

The two-day Big 12 Championship tournament swings into action Monday at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Okla. All Big 12 teams will be represented.

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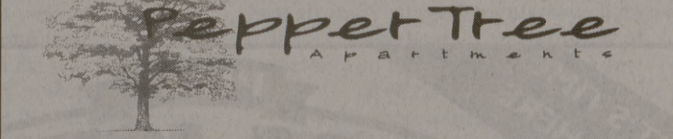
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