

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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A&M archery coach leads 2004 Olympic team

By Jeff Allen
THE BATTALION

Since its inception in 1976, Texas A&M archery has been no stranger to the Olympic Games. That year, a young man named John Williams drove to College Station bearing two things that weren't all that common to the Aggies of the mid-70s: a bow and an Olympic gold medal.

"Imagine A&M in the 1970s," said archery assistant coach Frank Thomas. "He (Williams) was a hippie with long hair and a micro bus. You can imagine how that went over, but he did a good job starting the program."

Williams started the archery portion of the activities program at A&M in 1976 but it wasn't until 1979 that Thomas arrived on the scene.

Thomas was fresh out of Arkansas Tech and came to A&M seeking a master's degree and a little gainful employment. It had been his goal to teach at a university and A&M seemed as good a place as any.

"As a graduate assistant teaching here I fell in love with the program," Thomas said.

But archery wasn't exactly tops on Thomas' list.

On arriving at A&M, he was asked by the programs director to list five sports that he could teach. The choices that came to mind were tennis, a sport Thomas played in college, badminton

and golf. That left a vacant spot at the bottom of the list, so he put archery.

"When I came to A&M all that I had in archery was two weeks in college. That was my entire introduction," Thomas said. "He (the director) sent me to talk to the man who was running the archery program. He could have been speaking Greek. I didn't have a clue what he was talking about, so he told me to assist for a semester."

One hour later, assisting became teaching. The director of the activities program scheduled Thomas to assist the experienced archery coach at noon, and teach his own class at 1 p.m.

"(Pretty much) whatever was said at noon was just repeated at one," Thomas said.

It was from these humble beginnings that Thomas began to climb the ladder to his current position as the head coach of the U.S. Olympic Archery team.

Thomas' beginnings in the archery program at A&M evolved into a coaching position on the A&M club team, which he still coaches today.

After a slow start, he found his footing and brought the program back to prominence, leading the team to eight consecutive national titles.

It was from this success that Thomas began to make an appearance on the national archery scene. In 1996, he began to prepare as a coach on the international level. Thomas was picked up

and mentored by Sheri Rhodes, the current women's Olympic coach, and Lloyd Brown, both prominent in the national archery program.

Thomas has also picked up duties assisting A&M head coach Kathy Eissinger with the women's varsity team.

Thomas went on to take the reins of the American national team in 1997 at the World Target Championships.

This started a long list of accolades including the 2002 U.S. Olympic Committee Archery Coach of the Year, thanks in part to a stirring win at the Turkish Grand Prix that year over international powerhouse and reigning Olympic champion Korea.

In May, Thomas' road to the top of American archery finally became complete, as he was named men's head coach for the American Olympic team in 2004.

"It's incredibly exciting. It's a dream I've had for a long time and have worked hard to achieve," Thomas said.

Now that he's at the top, Thomas still has a few goals he would like to reach.

First, he would like to qualify for the 2004 Olympics and second, he hopes to win a medal once he's there.

After he is finished there, he said he would like to head home and spend time with his family.

"(When it's all done) I'm going to try and get to know my kids and my wife again," he said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TEXAS A&M SPORTS INFORMATION
A&M assistant archery coach Frank Thomas gives advice to an Aggie archer at a recent event. Thomas was recently named the U.S. Olympic coach.

Spurs capture NBA championship, Duncan named MVP

By Chris Sheridan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — First came a blocked shot, one of eight rejections Tim Duncan had on the night.

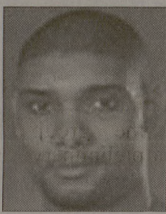
Next came a two-handed, overhead pass from the low post that found Stephen Jackson at the 3-point line. Swish, and the Spurs had their first lead of the night.

Finally, an almost identical pass found Jackson for yet another 3 — his third of the quarter — and Duncan's triple-double was complete.

The San Antonio Spurs won the NBA championship Sunday night behind a devastating all-around effort from Duncan, using a run of 19 un-

answered points in the fourth quarter to defeat the New Jersey Nets 88-77 to take the series 4-2.

Duncan finished with 21 points, 20 rebounds, 10 assists and eight blocks for a triple-double. San Antonio won the title for the second time in franchise history, sending David Robinson into retirement with the ultimate present.



DUNCAN

Robinson jumped and did a 360 as he punched his fist in the air and then hugged several teammates after being replaced with 35.6 seconds left.

The fourth quarter was stunning

for its turn of events, with the Spurs — after trailing for almost the entire game — using the 19-0 run to take the life out of the stunned Nets.

It was the fifth straight NBA title for a Western Conference team. The Nets showed none of the characteristics of a championship team as the game got away from them quickly.

Coach Byron Scott left several reserves in during San Antonio's big run, letting them play alongside Kenyon Martin as he struggled through one of the worst games of his career, shooting 3-for-23.

San Antonio outscored New Jersey 25-11 in the fourth quarter, with Duncan getting six rebounds, three assists and three blocks. San Antonio

Robinson completed his 14th season with a strong performance, grabbing 17 rebounds, scoring 13 points and blocking two shots.

As the buzzer sounded, he ran across the court looking for somebody to hug, and he found his son wearing a Robinson jersey and black-and-silver wig. He picked him up, then hugged his mother as silver, black and white confetti fell from the rafters.

"I was just trying to give us whatever energy I could. We finally hit some shots in the fourth quarter," Robinson said.

Duncan hugged and kissed his wife, Amy, while 19-year veteran Kevin Willis cried and gave a long hug to veteran Steve Smith — both of them having finally won a title.

Jackson finished with 17 points, nine of them on 3-pointers in the fourth. Speedy Claxton scored 13 and Manu Ginobili added 11.

Jason Kidd led the Nets with 21 points, and Kerry Kittles had 16 in his best game of the series. Kittles, however, was on the bench watching alongside fellow starter Richard Jefferson as the Nets collapsed early in the fourth with the struggling Lucious Harris and Rodney Rogers on the court together.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Two Aggies earn 2003 All-American track honors

Texas A&M hurler Chris Pinnock and shot putter Josh Ralston earned All-American status Saturday as they both placed second in their respective events. Pinnock ran the 110-hurdles in 13.40 and Ralston was runner up in shot put with a distance of 198.03.

Coach Nelson knew Pinnock had a shot to bring home a national title but fell just short.

"Pinnock just finished second in the 110 hurdles after running really well all week,"

Nelson said. "It looked like he had the lead at the seventh hurdle and it looked like he fell back at that time. 13.40 is a great time to finish second." Ralston, said he was confident going into his event.

"We were talking before the event and we figured that a 60 or 61 (meters throw) would win it," he said. "I have been up and down all season. If I am on then it is a good day and today I was on."

Ralston also finished second in the discus as well.

Nelson said he was extremely pleased with his performance.

"I thought he had his best day of the year," he said.

Furyk wins U.S. Open, ties record score

By Doug Ferguson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OLYMPIA FIELDS, Ill. — Say what you want about Jim Furyk's swing. It won him a U.S. Open with a performance that put him in the record books.

The toughest test in golf finally lived up to its reputation Sunday, and Furyk rose to the challenge with a gritty round of 2-over 72 to win his first major title in a landslide.

Furyk won by three strokes at Olympia Fields and joined Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Lee Janzen with a 272, the lowest 72-hole score in the 103 years of the U.S. Open.

The loopy swing might not be conventional, but the strategy was all too familiar: He sent the ball down the middle of the fairway and no one could catch him.

He missed a 6-foot par putt at 18 that would have given him the record outright,

but all that mattered was the silver championship trophy waiting for him.

Woods shot 12-under 272 three years ago at Pebble Beach, which played as a par 71. He remains the only player to finish a U.S. Open in double digits under par.

Furyk was on the verge of joining him until he failed to get up-and-down from behind the 17th green, then three-putted from about 40 feet on the final hole.

Stephen Leaney of Australia, in contention at a major for the first time, fell five strokes behind at the turn and couldn't catch up. He closed with a 72, but his runner-up finish assures him a PGA Tour card for next year.

Furyk is known as much for his grit as his unorthodox swing, and he relied on that throughout a sunny day south of Chicago. He never flinched the few times he was in trouble. He didn't come unglued when a streaker

ran out of the gallery on the 11th green.

"It's beyond some dreams," Furyk said on the 18th green, choking back tears as he looked at his father, Mike, who taught him a swing only a mother could love.

Furyk heard the snickers about his swing growing up in western Pennsylvania, as an All-American at Arizona, and even while winning seven times on the PGA Tour.

All he has to do now is show them the U.S. Open trophy.

The toughest part for Furyk was seeing his father when he arrived Sunday afternoon. He hugged him long and hard, intent on giving him the best Father's Day present available.

They were together on the practice green minutes before the final round began, just like old times — the father squatting behind the son, making sure everything was in place.

"Looks good," he told his son, and sent him on his way to win a U.S. Open.

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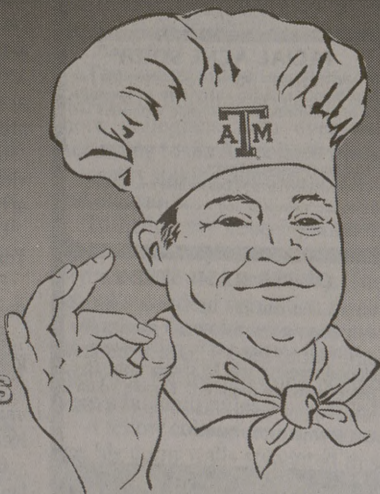
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