

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies set for home opener 'Horns and Huskers looking for revenge

By Jeff Allen
THE BATTALION

When University of Southern California third-year volleyball coach Mick Haley steps into G. Rollie White Coliseum this Saturday night, he'll know exactly what to expect. Haley spent 17 years leading the University of Texas into the "Holler House on the Brazos," during which he won 14 Southwest Conference titles, as well as two national championships.

"It's a great place to play," Haley said. "Once I tried standing up 15-20 times (to encourage 'Sit Down Bus Driver') and the crowd kept getting louder. You're not going to wear out an A&M crowd."

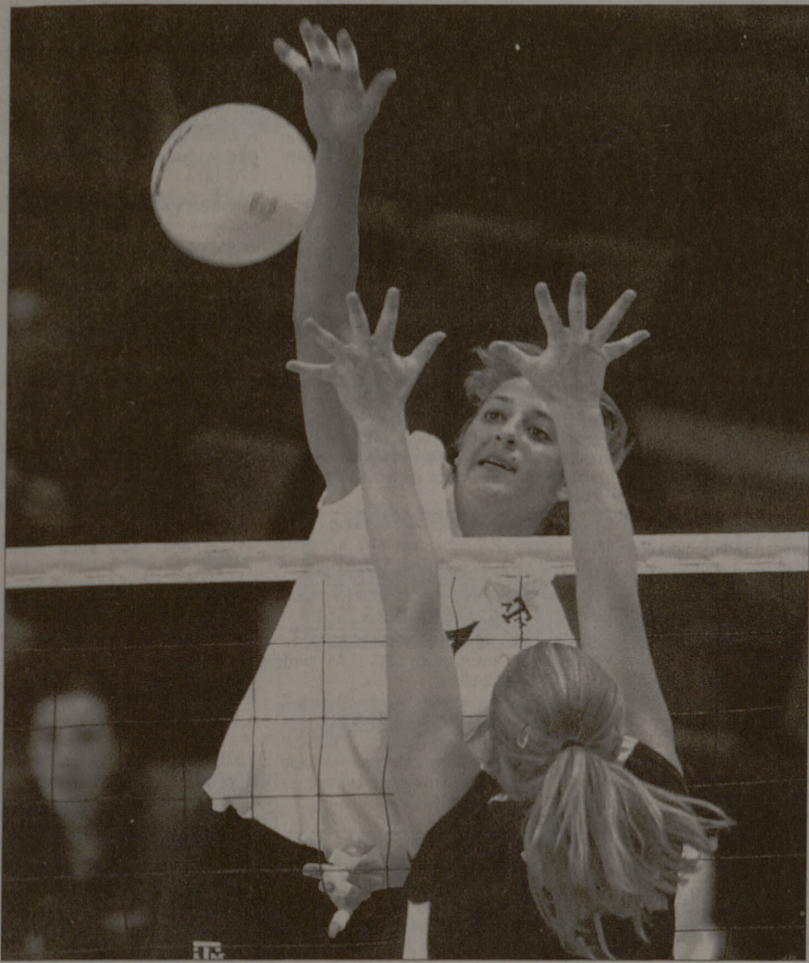
Since grasping the reins at USC, Haley has recreated the success he had in the Lone Star State. The Trojans will be toting with them the moniker of defending national champions as they take the floor against the Aggies Saturday night in the finale of the McDonald's Texas A&M Invitational. Since starting the season, USC has proved that it is worthy of the title.

The Trojans, who return their six mainline starters as well as their libero from last year's squad, have firmly secured themselves in the No. 1 spot in all the national polls by winning their first six matches in a flawless total of 18 games.

Add the fact that four of those opponents were top-10 teams, and it's easy to see why the Aggies have their hands full this weekend without having to play two other opponents.

"Right now we are focused on Friday night's match, and we're not thinking about USC," said junior setter Lexi Beers. "We just have to go into the game strong and not underestimate the team we're playing and know that if we aren't playing our game, we're going to get beat."

The Aggies learned that lesson the hard way last week in Ann Arbor,



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M middle blocker **Melissa Munsch** and the Aggie volleyball team begin their home schedule Friday against Southwest Missouri State. A&M plays No. 1 USC on Saturday.

Mich., when they faced an unranked Wolverine team after defeating then-No. 16 Louisville the night before. A&M coach Laurie Corbelli admits the Aggies may have underestimated their opponent after watching them struggle the night before. The mental lapse left the door open for the Wolverines' three-game sweep.

"They were a little misled by what their opponent was going to throw at them," Corbelli said. "We had our first

experience against a team that was not going to let up or go away until they had a victory. It was good for us."

This week, A&M is taking nothing for granted. Before facing USC on Saturday night, the Aggies have two difficult matches. First, their home opener Friday night against a solid Southwest Missouri State squad, and then at noon on Saturday against Centenary.

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Call it a premonition, but it seems that Gary Barnett and his No. 17 Colorado Buffaloes (2-0) are looking to prove that their appearances in the Big 12 championship games the past two seasons were no flukes.

Even after losing highly rated quarterback Craig Ochs, who transferred to 1-AA Montana, and highly rated backs such as Chris Brown to the NFL draft and Marcus Houston, who transferred to rival Colorado State, Barnett and company were more than willing to bypass the usual cupcakes of the Our Lady of the Lake University variety for more formidable non-conference opponents that will help boost their strength of schedule ratings in the Bowl Championship Series.

Already this year, the Buffaloes have faced Colorado State, a team that has beaten them two of the past three years, and UCLA, who notably gave Colorado fits last year in Pasadena, Calif.

However, unlike last year, the Buffaloes survived their first two non-conference encounters (42-35 over CSU and 16-14 over UCLA), only to find themselves headed into another tough match-up with Washington State. Although the Cougars will come in unranked, they are a force to be reckoned with after coming close to pulling off the huge upset against Notre Dame last week in the Irish's home opener in South Bend.

The Cougars still have some veterans left from their Rose Bowl team of last year, and they will be eager to rid themselves of the bitter taste of defeat that they garnered at the hands of the Fighting Irish last weekend.

Horns and Hogs meet again
Two old rivals will renew their

blood feud from years past when the Arkansas Razorbacks (1-0) go to Austin to face No. 6 Texas (1-0) at 11 a.m. on ABC.

The Longhorns enter the game with a chip on their shoulder. Mack Brown and company posted bulletin board material of Arkansas head coach Houston Nutt

showing the "hook'em" symbol upside down after Arkansas defeated Texas in the Cotton Bowl in 2000.

This time around, the Longhorns will be expecting a much different result as Arkansas is currently unranked, and Longhorn starting quarterback Chance Mock has already had a chance to prove himself in a 66-3 rout of hapless New Mexico State.

However, Mock's veteran status is dubious since he only went 7-15 for 156 yards against an overmatched New Mexico State defense. Even though they are unranked, Arkansas is still a dangerous team with the wily Nutt as head coach and an experienced quarterback in Matt Jones, who led the Hogs to the SEC championship game last season.

In addition, Arkansas has a slew of hardy tailbacks led by Cedric Cobbs and De'Arrius Howard who combined to rush for 210 yards and three touchdowns in the Hogs' rout of Tulsa last Saturday.

Nebraska seeks revenge

No. 18 Nebraska (2-0) will be looking to avenge its 40-7 loss against Penn State (0-1) that precipitated the Big Red's downward spiral last year. This year, the Huskers' vaunted Black Shirt defense is back, after giving up a combined 14 points in the first two games.

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NEW YORK SUB

In honor of the second anniversary of the tragic events of September 11th we will be donating ALL of today's profits to the September 11th fund.

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