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SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Series tied 3-3

Page 1B • Thursday, October 16, 2003

A&M tennis teams prepare for the fall

By Blake Kimzey
THE BATTALION

Rarely in team sports is the individual competitor at the nexus of the team concept. In fact, it is actually an oxymoron and the antithesis of every great halftime speech ever delivered; there is no "I" in team.

On closer inspection, however, this is the precept that the fall tennis season hinges on.

The Texas A&M men's and women's tennis coaches stress the importance of developing as an individual in the autumn months leading up to the team season that commences in January.

"I get a little more excited about the team part of the season in the spring, but in the individual season the guys really start to develop," said men's coach Tim Cass. "We really pinpoint a player's style in the fall and we look for fundamental adjustments, like not bending enough or changing a player's grip, which is why these individual tournaments are so important."

Those sentiments will be echoed across the state this weekend as the men head to Austin for the Texas Invitational and into West Texas for the Midland Invitational. Freshmen Marvin Rolle and Bryan Wooten along with sophomore John Nallon will be sent to the state capital to represent A&M at the Texas Invitational. Cass will also send sophomore Brett Nelson, junior Zack Malmgren and senior Khaled El Dorry to compete in the Midland

Invitational, another highly competitive tournament.

Meanwhile, this weekend the women will be playing for the opportunity to advance to the National Indoor Championships. The women are guided by coach Bobby Kleinecke for the 19th straight season, and will face the regional netters this weekend that will invariably challenge A&M's defense of the Big 12 title in the spring.

"We will see all of the schools in the region this weekend," Kleinecke said. "Last year we finished first in the Big 12, but this is a new year, and the region is a lot stronger this year."

If anything else, sending his entire team to the ITA Southwest Regional tournament will be a good litmus test. Furthermore, it will be an opportunity to test the mettle and competitive drive of his team in these individualistically competitive waters.

"Everybody will be going to this tournament," Kleinecke said. "This will be a good indicator of where we stand in our region."

The tournaments this weekend are the ideal platforms to put into play the doctrinal competitive preaching that typifies fall practice. All three tournaments will begin on Friday and run through Sunday. Cass uses the royal "we" when he refers to the individual success of his players in the infancy of the 2003-2004 season, whose history will be written this weekend and sealed this May.

"We are off to a great start this year," Cass said.

Ags hold on after near collapse

By Jeff Allen
THE BATTALION

Once the Kansas Jayhawks got rid of the butterflies, things got a little tight Wednesday night against the Aggies at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Jayhawks, who had failed in their first 15 tries to defeat the Aggies including eight losses in College Station, came out of the gate scoring three straight points, looking to set the tone and erase some of the ill fate that has plagued them on previous trips to Texas A&M. Unfortunately for the Jayhawks, those three points were followed by a nine point Aggie run that all but sealed the first game for A&M.

"I think it just took them a game to get in their rhythm and get comfortable with the facility," said A&M coach Laurie Corbelli.

The first game ended lopsided, 30-18, but from there on it was a tooth-and-nail battle, including 20 ties and nine lead changes.

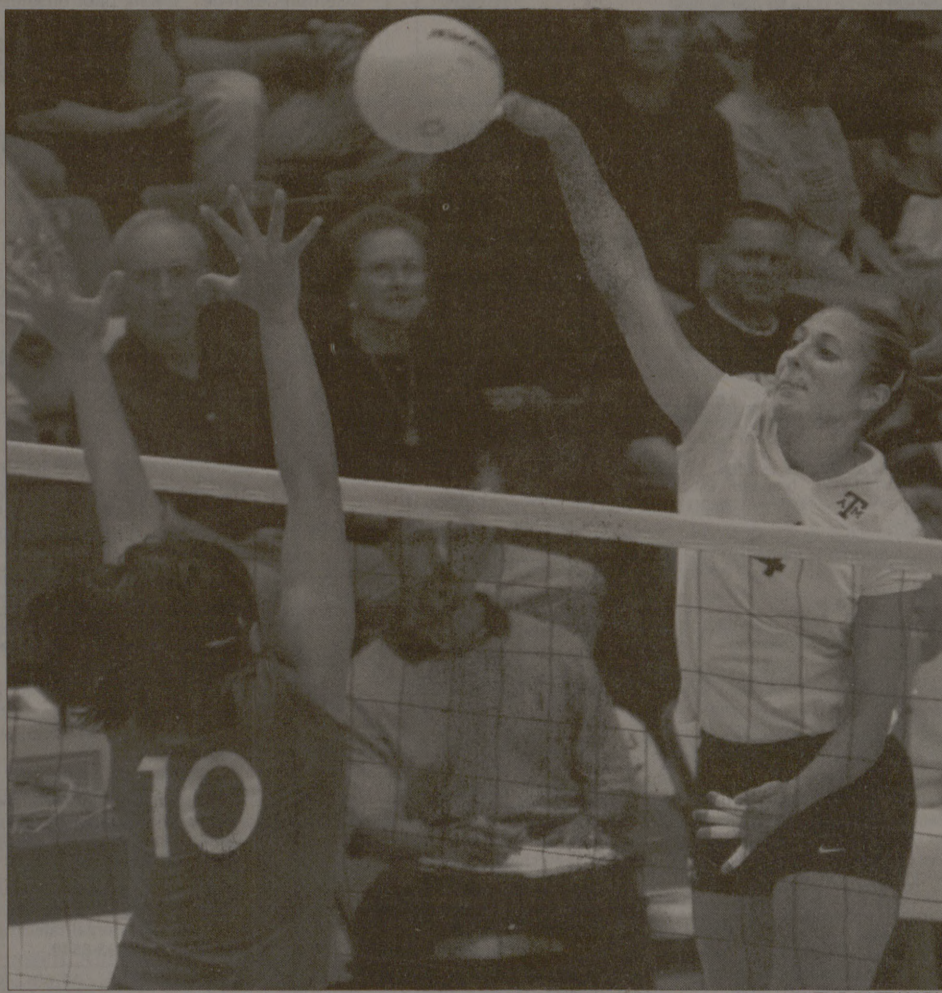
"I thought that in game two our defense and our blocking got a little sloppy and it didn't allow us to continue to attack them," Corbelli said. "I felt like that was really our fault, as close as the game was I thought it was a lot of things on our side not coming together."

Standing tall for the Aggies (13-5, 5-3) on the night was senior outside hitter Beth Skypala, who set another career high for kills, knocking down a game high 28. Skypala, who had set her previous best of 17 in a five game match against Nebraska in Lincoln, had 16 kills by the start of game four.

"It was really easy to get in a groove, the passes were dead on and then the sets couldn't have been more perfect," Skypala said.

In the second game, neither team could pull ahead. The Aggies managed at one point to put together a four point run to go up 14-10, but the Jayhawks (12-7, 4-4) simply would not go away. Kansas chipped away, eventually knotting the score at 15 before setting off a see-saw battle that seemed as if it would never end. Fortunately for all in attendance, it eventually did, but unfortunately for the Aggies the Jayhawks won, 34-32.

The distinct flavor of game two carried past halftime and into the third game. It was back and forth again, with both teams scraping within a point of each other for most of the game. The Aggies finally strung a few together late



JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M junior middle blocker **Melissa Munsch** goes for the kill Wednesday night against the Kansas Jayhawks. Munsch set a new season high in the match with 21 digs. A&M beat Kansas in five games.

and went on to win 30-24.

It was Skypala again in the fourth game for the Aggies. She put up nine of her kills in the frame, leading the team in another close game, one in which the Aggies trailed for the better part. Sypala's efforts however were not enough to keep the Aggies' head above the water.

After taking the Jayhawks to consecutive match points, the Aggies faltered and let Kansas slip by, 31-29.

The Aggies came out quick in game five, setting the tempo out of the gate, and quickly building a lead.

After going up 5-1, the game returned to the form set earlier in the match with each team going back and fourth, the early lead though was too much for the Jayhawks this time, as the Aggies put away their third straight match by winning game five, 15-11.

It was the Aggies 16th straight win against Kansas.

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