

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 4 • Friday, October 17, 2003

Iowa next for Aggies

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

In women's soccer, the Big 12 Conference has consisted of three formidable teams that trade the top spot and constantly find themselves in the NCAA Championship tournament each year: Texas A&M, the University of Texas and Nebraska.

The 2003 season seems to be the year that the rest of the conference has finally caught up.

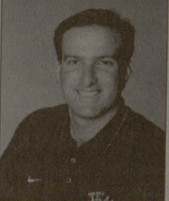
"I think the results that have happened so far are finally illustrating what we, Big 12 coaches, have been saying the last four years," said A&M coach G. Guerrieri. "It's definitely not easy to get a result in this conference, and any time that you go on the road you're definitely up against the wall."

Colorado (4-0-1 Big 12) is at the top of the Big 12 standings with Nebraska (4-1) and A&M (3-0-2) breathing heavily down its neck. The other usual suspect at the top of the standings, Texas, has fallen back by going 8-6 overall and 3-2 in the Big 12, losing to Oklahoma and Oklahoma State.

It seems that parity is beginning to take over in the Big 12, and with two road ties against Kansas and Oklahoma State, the No. 4 Aggies realize that being defending Big 12 champions makes them a target.

"We know, especially being defending champions, that every team is going to step on the field and play their hearts out," said A&M sophomore midfielder Laura Probst. "They know that a win against us will be key so we have to go into every game with the mentality that they'll be giving 100 percent, so we have to too."

The Aggies' (10-1-2, 3-0-2 Big 12) next conference test will be at 7 p.m. when they take on Iowa State.



GUERRIERI

Aggies taking on unfriendly road Lord leads 'Husker offense

By Michael Crow
THE BATTALION

In a college football season defined by parity, Nebraska was one of six undefeated teams to fall last week. After entering the season unranked and underrated, the No. 18 Cornhuskers had worked their way into the national top-10 before Saturday's loss to Missouri.

Now, they are hoping to get back on track in an important home matchup against Texas A&M on Saturday, and home is just where the Huskers (5-1, 1-1 Big 12) would like to be.

Nebraska's Memorial Stadium has been sold out every game since 1962, and this week should be no different as NU welcomes back its alumni for Homecoming weekend. The last time the Huskers lost a Homecoming game, Lyndon Johnson was president and Neil Armstrong had not yet stepped foot on the moon.

"(Nebraska has) only won 99 of the last 104 games they've played (at Memorial Stadium), so there's some pretty good odds in their favor in this one in that regard," said A&M coach Dennis Franchione. "It's never easy to go to Lincoln and play those guys."

Quarterback Jamaal Lord returns to Memorial Stadium as both the Huskers' leading rusher and top passer, averaging 75.2 rushing yards per game and 104.7 yards in the air. While Lord's passing numbers are nothing to gawk at, the running game is what Nebraska football is and has always been about.

The Huskers rank second in the country this season with a dominant 243 yards per contest on the ground. And, once

defenders are drawn in by the run, play-action passing becomes more effective.

"What they try to do is set up the pass with the run," said A&M defensive coordinator Carl Torbush. "So it's going to be really, really important for us to make sure we do a good job on the early downs of slowing the run down."

In last year's meeting, the Nebraska running attack sparked a 38-31 come-from-behind victory at Kyle Field. Returning Huskers Lord and David Home ran for 159 and 128 yards, respectively, rallying NU back from a 17-point third-quarter deficit for the win.

The Aggies (3-3, 1-1 Big 12) have continued to struggle against the run this season, allowing a gaudy 196.8 rushing yards per game in their first four games.

Still, the past two weeks have provided some reason for optimism. A&M held Texas Tech and Baylor to a combined 96 rushing yards. Texas Tech clearly had little need to run, but Baylor's Rashad Armstrong was the Big 12's leading rusher before the Aggies limited him to just 22 yards last week.

The A&M offense has been making a name for itself in recent weeks as well, thanks largely to last week's 73-10 blowout of Baylor. In their last three games, the Aggies have compiled 1,752 yards from scrimmage, the most for any three-game span in school history.

Along the way, wide receiver Jamaar Taylor has moved himself to within 36 receiving yards of Bethel Johnson's career receiving yardage record of 1,740 yards.

However, the Cornhuskers'



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Nebraska quarterback Jamaal Lord stiff-arms former A&M cornerback Sammy Davis during last year's game.

"Blackshirt" defense will do its best to limit any scoring opportunities for Taylor and the Aggies. The unit ranks first in the Big 12 and seventh nationally in total defense.

Linebackers Demorrio Williams and Barrett Ruud clog the middle of the field for Nebraska, combining for 114 tackles already this season. Williams' 6.5 sacks have also

discouraged opponents from passing the football and contributed to free safety Josh Bullocks' team-high six interceptions.

Nebraska coach Frank Solich said his defense faces a challenge with a steadily improving A&M offense.

"I think any time you have a new coach, a new staff, there is that transition period where

players are getting a feel for what you are doing," Solich said. "I think it is showing right now. I think they are playing better week by week."

In 10 meetings between the teams, Nebraska has held the Aggies to seven points or less five times — a trend the Aggies must overcome to stand a chance this weekend. Kickoff is scheduled for 11:30 a.m.

SPORTS IN BRIEF CC at Pre-Nationals

The Texas A&M men's and women's cross country teams will be in Waterloo, Iowa, Saturday for the NCAA Pre-Nationals.

The men's team will compete against 10 nationally-ranked teams, including No. 1 Stanford, while the women will match up against No. 2 Stanford and No. 6 North Carolina.

"This gives us an opportunity to set a standard where A&M distance running is recognized nationally like Arkansas or those boys at Stanford," said senior Tommy Bonn.

Tough competition awaits Aggies at Big 12 Relays

By Pete Burks
THE BATTALION

There is only one way to describe the competition at the upcoming Big 12 Relays for the Texas A&M men's and women's swimming teams: brutal.

After facing virtually no competition thus far, the Aggie swim teams will be thrown to the wolves on Friday when they head to Ames, Iowa to compete against the Big 12's best. With the likes of perennial powers Texas, Missouri and Kansas prowling the scene, there will be no time to relax for either team.

For the Aggie women's swim team (1-0), the Big 12 relays ought to provide the first real test of the season. Although it already has one win under its belt, it came against a young, and for the most part inexperienced North Texas team that has only been in existence for six years.

The Aggies blew past the Mean Green 171-109 in what amounted to little more than an exhibition meet compared to the competition the Aggies will see in Ames. This time around, the women's team will look to improve on last year after finishing second to arch-rival Texas.

"We'll see some tough competition,

no doubt," said A&M women's coach Steve Bultman. "This will be a good early season test. We're still learning about the freshmen, but we had some very good swims last week, and some were faster than I thought they'd be."

Meanwhile, for the Aggie men's swim team, the Big 12 relays will be the first chance to showcase its talent against conference competition after having only swam an intra-squad meet thus far. However, like the women's team, the men's team will be ready to come out and prove itself after last year's second place finish to Texas.

Although the intra-squad meet is all

there is to go on at this point, from some of the performances he saw there, Aggie men's swimming head coach Mel Nash has reason to be confident heading into the Big 12 relays.

"The guys really seemed to go after it when they got the chance to race," Nash said. "The freshmen really fought well in the intra-squad meet."

However, even with a good showing in the intra-squad meet, it is still uncertain just how good the men's team is at this point.

"The Big 12 relays will really give us a chance to see where we are," Nash said.

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