

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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A&M gets second NCAA tourney

By Blake Kimzey
THE BATTALION

The NCAA Championships will be coming to a court near you in May 2005.

The Texas A&M men's tennis team learned Monday that it will host the Division I Men's Tennis Championships at the newly named George P. Mitchell '40 Outdoor Tennis Center.

In a formula that could rival that of the Bowl Championship Series, a panel of decision makers did more than randomly pull names out of a hat to decide who would host the tournament in 2005. A&M coach Tim Cass, who has been the principal architect behind the success of the men's tennis team, said A&M fell into place to host the tournament again.

"There is a formula in place that looks at crowd history, facilities, weather and other factors," Cass said. "I think with all of our variables factored in it was a well-received championship. The committee decided that A&M would be ideal."

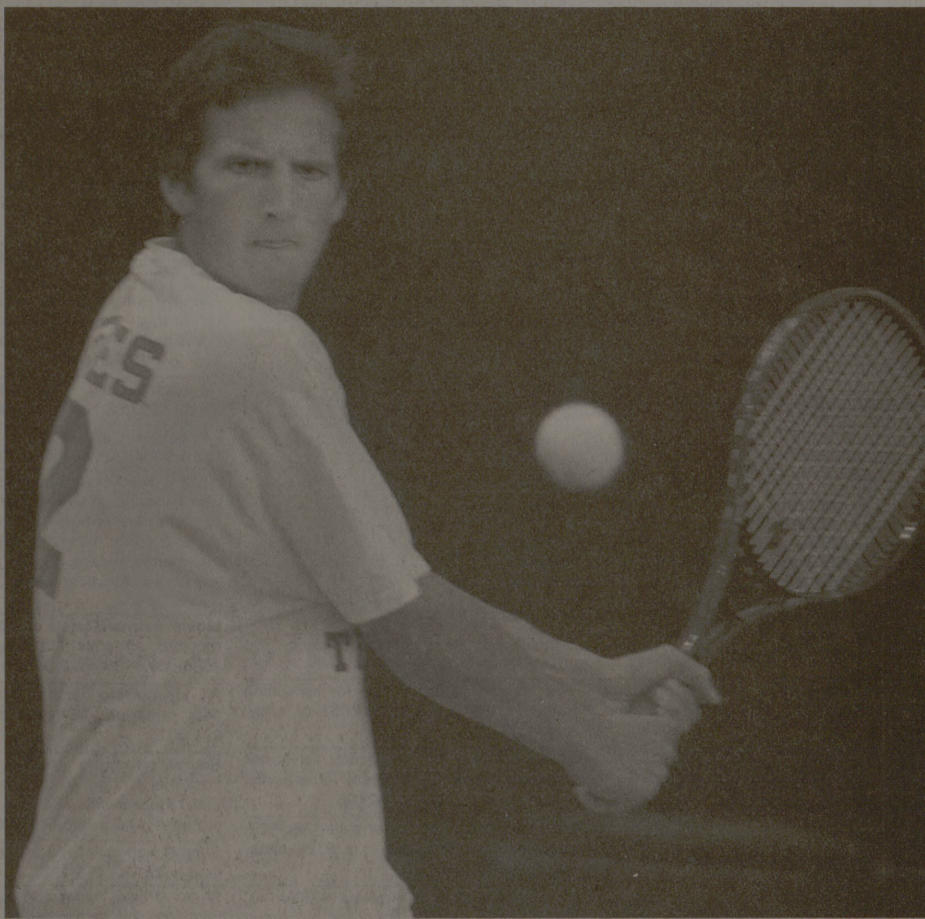
Cass set lofty goals for the program when he was named head coach seven years ago. Under his watch, Cass has snared four Big 12 Championships, four NCAA Round of 16 appearances and an NCAA Round of Eight appearance.

The men's tennis team is the nation's leader in home attendance.

Cass said he hopes to promote the tournament as an event that belongs to the student body as much as it belongs to the players.

"We really hope to market it to the student body even though they are between school sessions, so we hope that people will come back into town for a couple of the matches," Cass said. "For A&M to be hosting any NCAA Championship it is hopefully special for the University. It is the people in the stands and the atmosphere that Aggie fans create that make it special, and that is something that we are looking forward to."

A&M Athletic Director Bill Byrne has received his share of criticism in the last eight months for an increase in ticket prices. Byrne said he hoped to make A&M more nationally competitive across the board, and



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M sophomore **Ante Matijevic** returns a shot during a match last season. The NCAA awarded the 2005 Division I Men's Tennis Championships to A&M earlier this week.

if hosting another NCAA Championship is a sign of things to come, his strategy may already be paying dividends.

"We have one of the best tennis facilities in the country and hosted a very successful championship in 2002," Byrne said. "Only a handful of schools have hosted this event and it's a testament to our team, staff and tennis community that Texas A&M has been selected to host it again."

A&M is just the second school to host the tournament more than once since the current format was adopted in 1977. For

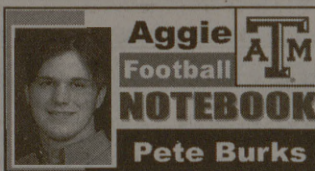
junior All-American Ante Matijevic, hosting the tournament a second time will bookend his career at A&M, as he was a freshman in 2002.

"When I played my freshman year it was so special to play in front of all of our fans," Matijevic said. "Next year it will be just as special as a senior. It is going to be awesome."

The tournament is scheduled for May 21-30, 2005. A&M will host the final 16 teams from a 64-team field, in addition to the top 64 singles players and 32 of the top doubles teams in a single elimination tournament.

Taylor injury couldn't come at a worse time

As the saying goes, when it rains it pours. After Saturday's game at Nebraska, the Aggie football team needs one hell of an umbrella.



Aggie Football
NOTEBOOK
Pete Burks

Trouble on the horizon?

The last time the Aggies faced a talented quarterback-wide receiver-

running back combination, they did not fare very well.

Pittsburgh's Heisman candidate wideout Larry Fitzgerald and quarterback Rod Rutherford terrorized the Aggie secondary through the air, while running back Jawan Walker bulldozed through the front seven.

In No. 18 Oklahoma State, A&M will face a similarly talented triple threat in quarter-

back Josh Fields, running back Tatum Bell and wide receiver Rashaun Woods. In their win over Texas Tech, the Cowboys put up some mind-boggling numbers: Fields threw for 320 yards, Woods had 146 yards receiving and Bell ran for 238 yards and three touchdowns.

With Bell running wild, A&M could be in trouble. The Aggie defense has been suspect at best against the run, struggling mightily in games against teams with premier backs (Utah, Virginia Tech, Nebraska), and Bell is certainly among the nation's elite. If the Aggies continue to struggle with stopping the run, it could be another long day for the maroon and white faithful.

For an Aggie offense in identity crisis, the loss of Taylor could not come at a worse time. The offense has suffered from a horrible case of schizophrenia. One day it is an efficient point-scoring machine (see Baylor), and the next it is about as scary as the Easter Bunny in a pillow fight (see Nebraska).

Regardless, Coach Fran and company will need senior wide receiver Tim Van Zant and junior A-back Jason Carter to step in for Taylor and contribute if the offense plans to get in sync. Needless to say, heading into the teeth of their schedule, the Aggies will need to figure it out quickly to get win number four.

Carter in the mix

For all the talk that Jason Carter received in the offseason about being the featured "A-back" in Coach Fran's offense, to the disappointment of Aggie fans, Carter has been mostly M.I.A.

After a fantastic spring game,

See Aggies on page 6B



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