

# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 4 • Friday, November 14, 2003

## Soccer team hosts SMU in first round action

By Troy Miller  
THE BATTALION

For the Texas A&M soccer team, hosting the first and second round of the NCAA Championship Tournament has become commonplace, but this season is different. After losing four of their last five matches, the Aggies were scared of being left out of the tournament altogether for the first time in eight years.

Now, with their fears put aside after getting in along with a Big 12 record eight teams from the conference, the No. 16 Aggies are gearing up to play their first round match against cross-state rival and Western Athletic Conference champion Southern Methodist University (17-3-1) at 7 p.m.

And yes, the Aggies (12-5-2) will be hosting once again at the Aggie Soccer Complex, but some of the Aggie players believe the reasoning could be their fans more than their play. "It's such an advantage (playing at home)," said A&M junior defender Amanda Burke. "Our fans and our atmosphere is what brought us a home game. I feel like it was handed to us, and now we have to do something with it."

SMU is becoming an all too familiar foe for the Aggies in postseason play. A&M has ended the Mustangs' season the past two years in dramatic overtime wins, sending the Aggies on to the Sweet 16.

Just a season ago, the Aggies

pulled out a 2-1 thriller as then-freshman goalkeeper Kati Jo Spisak made three saves in the shootout to send the Aggies on with a 3-2 shootout victory.

"We know a lot about SMU," said A&M coach G. Guerrieri. "Familiarity I think makes any game more difficult. As well as we know them, they in turn really know us. We've played them so many times and none of those games have been decided by more than one goal, and some of them have gone to overtime."

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— G. Guerrieri  
Aggie soccer coach

Not only have these two teams squared off in three straight post-seasons and their annual regular season match, many of the players battled with and against each other on teams before college.

In other words, this rivalry has firm roots that go beyond the two universities and into lifelong struggles for supremacy.

"The girls grew up playing against each other," Guerrieri said. "These are rivals not just from the college years, but these players have grown up against each other, many of them since they were 10 years old."

One such case is Burke and Mustang senior forward Kim Harvey. Despite Burke growing up in Spring and Harvey in Garland, the two faced each other plenty of times at the club level.

Both used to play center midfield and play directly off each other. Now in the college ranks Burke has moved to defense while Harvey has changed to

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## Aggies look for first win on the road

By Michael Crow  
THE BATTALION

There's no place like home for the Missouri football team. While struggling on the road, the Tigers have built a perfect 4-0 record this season at Faurot Field, the site of Saturday's matchup against Texas A&M.

Missouri has been stunned away from Faurot's friendly confines, averaging only 14.3 points per game in its three losses on the road to Kansas, Oklahoma and Colorado.

Meanwhile, the Tigers averaged 51.5 points scored in their two conference games at home, including a 41-24 victory over defensive power Nebraska.

This doesn't bode well for the struggling Aggies (4-6, 2-4 Big 12), who must win out against Missouri and Texas to avoid their first losing season in 20 years. Once renowned for its Wrecking Crew defense, A&M is allowing a gaudy 37.4 points per game this season. Last week, the No. 1 Oklahoma Sooners embarrassed the Aggies, 77-0, compiling 636 yards of total offense and scoring on 10 of their first 11 possessions.

Still, the Tigers (6-3, 2-3 Big 12) are not taking A&M lightly.

Missouri wide receiver Thomson Omboga said he expects a competitive matchup.

"They want to come out and prove that they're a better team than last week's score showed," he said. "So they're going to come at us with their best game, and we're going to give them our best game."

That means plenty of work for Tigers quarterback Brad Smith.

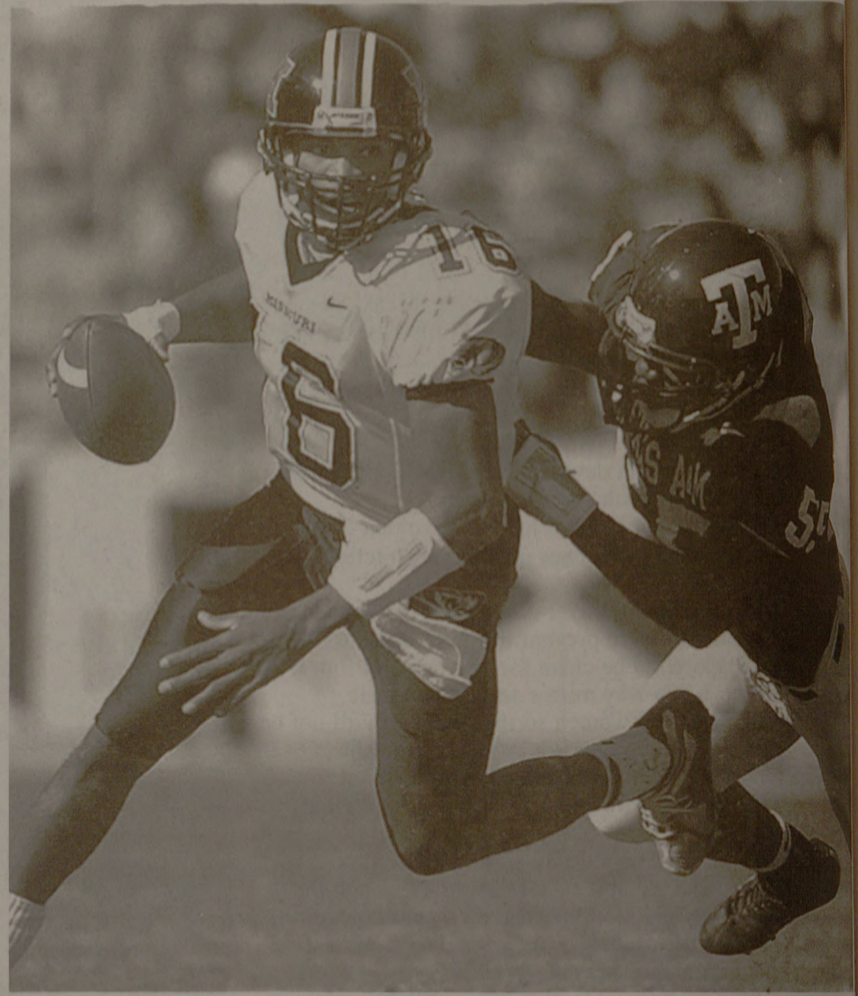
The sophomore has passed for 1,470 yards and 10 touchdowns this season, but it's his ability to run the ball that is the biggest challenge to opposing defenses.

Smith has rushed for 1,057 yards and 12 touchdowns in only nine games, numbers most running backs would be pleased with at the end of a full season.

Smith became the second player in division I-A history last season to throw for 2,000 yards and run for another 1,000 in the same season.

A&M coach Dennis Franchione said defending Smith certainly provides a challenge.

"(Smith) is hard to stop. He has certainly been a catalyst for their offense," Franchione said. "Nobody has really



Missouri sophomore quarterback Brad Smith scrambles from former Aggie linebacker Randal Webb last year at Kyle Field. The Aggies are hoping for a little payback after falling to the Tigers 33-27 last year.

stopped him very much." Missouri has a second candidate for a 1,000-yard rushing season in senior tailback Zack Abron. Abron has piled up 798 yards on the ground, reaching the end zone 10 times.

Defensively, the Tigers are led by a strong trio of linebackers. Senior Brandon Barnes is a potent pass rusher, picking up nine sacks already in 2003. Meanwhile, juniors James Kinney and Nino Williams have maintained a stronghold inside, tallying 108 and 78 tackles, respectively.

The Tigers have said one of their main objectives will be slowing down A&M quarterback Reggie McNeal. Like Missouri's

Smith, McNeal is a threat with his arm and his legs. The sophomore has passed for 1,539 yards while scrambling for more than 500 on the ground.

"He's a great player," said Missouri coach Gary Pinkel. "He's got great quickness and speed, and certainly he's a guy that can put a lot of pressure on us. We have a player like him on our football team so we understand what he means to them."

McNeal and the Aggies will do their best to overcome Missouri's home success and pick up their first win on the road this Saturday in Columbia, Mo.

Kickoff is scheduled for 11:30 a.m.

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