

## Preparation lands Aggies in NCAAs

By Kyle Davoust  
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M men's cross country team has faced many challenges this season. It traveled to places such as Cary, N.C., and Waterloo, Iowa, to prepare its team members for their goal of a top-15 finish at the NCAA Championships.

The Aggies will get their chance Monday as they return to Waterloo to compete at the 2003 NCAA Men's and Women's Cross Country Championships at Irv Warren Golf Course.

One opponent the Aggies haven't had a chance to train for this season is the cold. Freezing weather greeted the team as it arrived in Iowa Saturday, and conditions are not expected to improve. Meteorologists are predicting scattered snowstorms for the race.

This inclement weather, however, does not bother the Aggies. "I don't think it will be much of a factor," said senior Tommy Bonn. "No one really goes out and trains in this type of weather, so I don't think teams from colder areas really hold much of an advantage."

The Aggies earned their second straight trip to the event with a second-place finish at the NCAA South Central Regional Championships last weekend in Waco. Leading the way once

again for the Aggies was Bonn, who finished seventh overall.

"We got the job done," Bonn said. "We definitely wanted to come out and challenge Arkansas, and I think we did that. The important thing is that we got the automatic bid with our second-place finish."

A&M coach Dave Hartman said he was pleased with his team's effort.

"We ran really smart and stayed controlled early in the race," Hartman said. "Texas and Stephen F. Austin moved ahead early, but we were able to come on strong and overcome them."

The field consists of the top 31 teams in the nation with No. 1 Stanford as the overwhelming favorite. The Cardinal, which has held on to the No. 1 spot all season, won their eighth-consecutive NCAA West Regional title last week, and enters this race with extreme confidence.

"The guys are used to the pressure of this race," Stanford head coach Andy Gerard told the Stanford Daily in Friday's edition. "We're the defending champions, and everything has worked out well so far this year, so we don't feel like we have any particular thing to worry about."

Wisconsin and Big 12 champion Colorado are also expected to compete for the crown.

Team morale is high for A&M, as it has kept that same goal of a top-15 finish throughout the season.

"If we put together a great race, we can get our top-15 finish," Hartman said. "We just have to run smart, solid races and stick together. We have really trained specifically for that."



BONN

## Briskie, Rose lead swimmers

By Pete Burks  
THE BATTALION

In a meet that included six of the top 30 swim teams in the country, the Texas A&M men's and women's swim teams shone throughout the weekend, setting several season and all-time bests.

The No. 17 Aggie women's team got a stellar performance from freshman Rebecca Sturdy, who made four NCAA qualifying times. In addition to her NCAA qualifying times, Sturdy broke numerous A&M pool records, and captured the third-fastest time in the world in the 200-meter individual medley Friday night.

Undoubtedly, Sturdy's performance made a big impression on A&M women's coach Steve Bultman.

"Rebecca Sturdy had an outstanding weekend," Bultman said. "She placed first three times, made four NCAA cuts and swam really well in her other events."

The Aggie women finished the team portion of the meet in second place, as No. 11 UCLA took top honors.

However, Sturdy was not the



JP BEATO III • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M sophomore Erin Briskie finished in second place in the women's 200-meter breaststroke finals Sunday at the A&M Fall Invitational.

only Aggie swimmer to turn in an exceptional performance. Sophomore Erin Briskie broke the A&M 100-meter breaststroke record with a time of 1:13:44, while fellow sophomore Alida DiPlacido qualified for a second postseason diving event.

As evidenced by the record-

breaking performances this weekend, Bultman was pleased.

"We've been working on making time improvements, and we've definitely done that this weekend," Bultman said. "We expected a lot of season bests and lifetime bests, and that's been exactly what we've

gotten this weekend. Seeing competition like this in this meet should help us in conference swimming as the season goes on."

Similarly, the No. 13 men's team saw some records broken and great performances of its own. Senior Matt Rose, originally from Lindsay, Ontario, set a Canadian record in the 50-meter freestyle on Friday with a time of 21.95 seconds in addition to becoming the first male collegiate swimmer this year to break the 22 second barrier in the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 19.8 seconds.

"I didn't really know what to expect coming into the meet," Rose said. "I had goals of getting close to 19.8 in yards and going under 22 seconds in meters. Now I'm going to have to reset my goals."

The Aggie men topped No. 23 Florida State and No. 8 Virginia for the team title.

A&M men's coach Mel Nash said the story of the weekend was the balance and dedication shown by the men's team.

"We really showed just how well balanced we are as a team this weekend," Nash said. "In my 25 years here, this is the hardest working team I've had."

## Aggie men host Golden Lions in season opener

Staff & Wire  
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M men's basketball team opens its 2003-04 season against the Arkansas-Pine Bluff Golden Lions Monday at 7 p.m. at Reed Arena.

The Aggies won both of their exhibition games, beating Team ezybonds, 98-82, on Nov.

12 and downing the EA Sports Midwest All-Stars, 103-98, on Nov. 17. The Golden Lions are 0-1 after opening their season with a 63-40 loss to Air Force on Saturday at the USAF Academy in Colorado.

"We are all excited about finally opening our season," said A&M coach Melvin Watkins, who is 3-2 in season openers and 4-1 in home open-

ers at A&M. "The players have been working hard and I thought we learned a lot in our two exhibition games."

"We expect Pine Bluff to press and try to take us out of our offense. With their defensive traps, we need to be able to handle the ball well, be patient and look for the best available shot," Watkins said.

Arkansas-Pine Bluff finished

4-24 last season in its first season under coach Van Holt and finished 10th in the Southwestern Athletic Conference with a 4-14 mark.

The Golden Lions are led by senior guard Chris Parker (6-5), who averaged 8.0 points last season but scored only four points after making just one of eight shots from the field against Air Force.

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