

AGGIE BASEBALL FRIDAY
DOMINO'S PIZZA
AGGIE CLASSIC
3 p.m. vs. Arkansas
7 p.m. vs. New Mexico
Olsen Field

SPORTS

AGGIE SOFTBALL FRIDAY
ST. JOSEPH AGGIE INVITATIONAL II
2:30 p.m. vs. Oregon
4:45 p.m. vs. Penn State
Aggie Softball Complex

THE BATTALION

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Weekend tournaments roll into Aggieland

Aggies try to keep winning streak alive over weekend

By Kyle Davoust
 THE BATTALION



A&M redshirt freshman pitcher Jason Meyer pitches in the Aggies' 4-3 win over South Alabama Friday at Olsen Field. Meyer is 3-0 on the season coming out of the bullpen.

The No. 14 Texas A&M softball team has started the season as impressively as its 7-0 record indicates. The start has left fans to wonder what has been more impressive: the Aggie pitching or offense?

In giving out its weekly awards, the Big 12 Conference was not able to make this distinction as it awarded senior pitcher Justin Moore and sophomore shortstop Cliff Pennington Phillips 66 Pitcher of the Week and Player of the Week honors, respectively.

Moore, who battled back from a shoulder injury that limited him to eight total innings in 2003, continued his impressive comeback by allowing two hits in eight innings of work in an 8-1 victory over South Alabama.

Pennington helped keep the Aggie bats hot, as he had a .647 batting average with five RBIs and a .882 slugging percentage.

While it took the Aggies a little more than a week to play their first seven games, the next six will come in a three-day marathon as the Aggies host the 2004 Domino's Pizza Aggie Baseball Classic, which begins Friday.

The weekend tournament will be a double round robin, with three games against both the University of Arkansas and the University of New Mexico.

"I think it will be a big challenge for us, and I hope I don't have to play a lot of guys six games, that's not the plan. The plan is to go quite a few guys in the bullpen," said A&M coach Mark Johnson. "Six games in three days, nine innings a piece, it takes a lot of mental toughness, it takes a lot of teamwork, it takes a

lot of accountability that you have to show up and be able to play."

First up for the Aggies in the tournament will be Arkansas, which the Aggies have not faced since the Razorbacks defected to the Southeastern Conference back in 1991. The Razorbacks have also started the season hot, compiling a perfect 8-0 record behind an offense that is generating 10.6 runs per game.

"Arkansas is putting up a lot of runs, but I don't think they'll be able to do that against our pitching because our pitching is really good," said sophomore

first baseman Coby Mavroulis. "It will be a contest to see if their offense is better or if our pitching is better, and I think that our pitching is better."

Arkansas coach Dave Van Horn believes that this experience will prepare his team for the road ahead.

"Playing a team like A&M on the road three times should help get us ready for what we'll see in (the Southeastern Conference): good pitching, good hitting and probably some rowdy fans," Van Horn said. "It should help get us ready and let us know what we're going to be up against."

Almost forgotten in the three-team tournament is the University of New Mexico (0-2-1), which enters this weekend looking for its first win. Van Horn cautions, however, that the team should not be overlooked.

"I've been telling our players that New Mexico can hit," Van Horn said. "They've only played three games, and they tied one and got beat by a good Nebraska team. They're going to come in here hungry to play. Believe me, we're not looking past them. We're throwing one of our best pitchers out at them."

Softball hopes to rebound in Aggie Invitational II

By Ryan Irby
 THE BATTALION

With its second home tournament scheduled in two weeks, the No. 23 Texas A&M softball team will bring three new opponents into Aggieland this weekend to compete in the second half of the St. Joseph Aggie Invitational.

No. 17 Oregon, Southern Mississippi (5-7) and Penn State (0-5) will bring stiff competition to the diamond as the Aggies (8-7) look to gain valuable experience before moving into conference play. Last weekend, A&M defeated Boston University twice, dropped two to Illinois and finished out the weekend strong with a four-hit shutout over Texas A&M-Corpus Christi to compile a tournament record of 3-2.

Of the three teams squaring off against the Aggies this weekend, one has already lost to A&M. Oregon (8-4) fell to the Aggies, 8-3, in the Fiesta Bowl Tournament played in Phoenix, Ariz. on Feb. 13. Head coach Jo Evans said she hopes history will repeat itself.

"We have already played Oregon," Evans said. "We played well against them, and I hope we can get back to that level."

Evans' comments come as a result of play over the past two weeks that she viewed as being less than the Aggies' best.

"In most of the games, we did not play very well," said A&M junior shortstop Adrian Gregory. "Once we get a few more games under our belts and find our comfort zone, we will be good to go."

A&M dropped a double-

header to Houston two weeks ago when they were outscored 9-5 and let a four-run lead slip away in the first game. In tournament play last weekend, A&M outscored opponents 12-9 and came away with two shutouts. After focusing on improving defensive play in the Aggie Invitational I, Evans said the squad has pinpointed offensive production as its objective this weekend.

"I want us to be more aggressive at the plate, because I don't see us doing that right now," Evans said. "I am looking forward to it."

The improved A&M offensive attack is something that this weekend's opponents will not be looking forward to as the Aggies continue to dominate on the base paths, compiling stolen bases at a blistering pace. The Aggies have racked up 41 stolen bases on just 43 tries, acquiring an impressive .953 stolen base percentage. Freshman centerfielder Sharonda McDonald is a perfect 11-11 on the bases and leads the team with 16 hits.

Gregory leads the team in RBIs with 14 and is tied with senior Sherah Atkins for the team lead in homeruns with two. A&M's 8-3 victory over Oregon marks their highest offensive output of the season.

The Aggies will do battle with Oregon at 2:30 p.m. Friday, followed by a match with Penn State at 4:45 p.m. at the Aggie Softball Complex.

A&M will play twice again on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. and 4:45 p.m. against Penn State and Oregon. The Aggies will finish with Southern Mississippi Sunday at 12 p.m.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Texas comes back in day two of championships

The main event of the Big 12 Swimming and Diving Championships in Austin took place Thursday night, but Texas senior Ian Tucker took all the excitement out of the 200-yard freestyle as he set a new Big 12 record with a time of 19.18 - 0.59 behind Texas A&M senior Matt Rose.

Going into day two, the Aggies held a 74-40 lead over Texas on the strength of their plays. The 24-time defending Big 12 champion Longhorns came back strong on day two winning four of the day's five events.

The lone Aggie win was impressive though, as the A&M 200-yard freestyle play broke the Big 12 record in a time of 19.17.

The No. 14 A&M women entered the day with a first place tie with Texas, but the Longhorns also took four of the five events on the women's side.

A&M freshman Alida DiPlacido won the 100-meter diving competition to give the Aggies their lone gold medal of the day.

Day three preliminaries start at 10 a.m. with the finals starting at 6 p.m.

Aggies expect close game from Colorado

By Troy Miller
 THE BATTALION

When the Texas A&M men's basketball team takes the court against the University of Colorado 12:30 p.m. Saturday at Reed Arena, the Aggies will only be playing for pride.

With only three games left to play, A&M (7-17, 0-13 Big 12) is guaranteed to finish last in the Big 12 while the Buffaloes (16-8, 8-5) are currently tied for fourth and are on the bubble for an NCAA tournament bid.

"For that (CU to finish in the top five of the conference) to happen, and us not to go (to the tournament), they'd have to take (Texas) Tech or (Oklahoma), and we beat both of them," said Colorado senior guard/forward Blair Wilson. "They haven't beat anyone we haven't beaten. We've got close to 20 wins, and if you throw in a couple of sorry teams, we would have had that, but we chose

not to go that route."

Wilson is actually incorrect in one of his statements. The only team that Texas Tech and OU have beaten that Colorado hasn't is A&M - not that Colorado is shaking in its sneakers.

A&M is in the midst of a 13-game losing streak with its final three games against two teams fighting for an NCAA berth and Oklahoma State University, who is currently tied atop the Big 12 in first place.

"We can't manufacture an attitude," said A&M head coach Melvin Watkins. "It's just hoping you're going to win, and in this conference you can't hope you're going to win - you've got to get it done."

The Buffaloes have been able to stay close to the top of the Big 12 due to the play of seniors Wilson and guard/forward Michel Morandais and junior center David Harrison.

Harrison leads the Buffaloes with 16.8 points and 8.9 rebounds per

game. Morandais is right behind Harrison averaging 16.3 points and three assists per game.

Colorado head coach Ricardo Patton praises his top three players, but he said the team's other players have made Colorado a better ball club.

"In order to win basketball games, you have to be able to depend on your top players to show up every night," Patton said. "One of the things that helps the top players show up is that we are getting contributions from other players to relieve some of the pressure off the top players."

A&M, on the other hand, hasn't received top play from its stars. After garnering Big 12 Freshman of the Year honors for the 2002-03 season, A&M sophomore guard/forward Antoine Wright has hit just 36 percent of his field goal attempts this season, 28.5 percent from beyond the three-point arc.

Senior forward Andy Slocum has averaged only 5.17 points in the last six

games despite starting off the season averaging close to a double-double.

Senior forward Jesse King has fallen off after a hot start to the season after suffering a foot injury.

"We had the ball in the hands of the people we want shooting it, and it doesn't go down," Watkins said after Wednesday's 67-61 overtime loss to Baylor. "Players have got to make plays."

Nobody has been making plays for A&M all season, while Colorado players have been stepping into the limelight to lead their team to a probable NCAA tournament appearance.

That's probably why A&M is in last place and Colorado is fighting for a conference title.

"It would hurt not to go to the tournament," Wilson said. "You never know what happens, and everybody needs to play with that urgency and enjoy this because it may not come again."

12th Man Team REWARDS PROGRAM

...Invites you to:
WEEKEND "STAMP" FEST!
EARNING REWARDS IS EASY
3 DAYS * 6 SPORTS * 18 EVENTS

Friday, Feb. 27	Saturday, Feb. 28
12:00 p.m. - Women's Tennis vs. UTSA	12:00 p.m. - Men's Tennis vs. UTSA
2:30 p.m. - Softball vs. Southern Mississippi	12:30 p.m. - Men's Basketball vs. Colorado
3:00 p.m. - Baseball vs. Arkansas	2:30 p.m. - Softball vs. Penn State
3:30 p.m. - Equestrian vs. Auburn	3:00 p.m. - Baseball vs. New Mexico
4:45 p.m. - Softball vs. Penn State	4:45 p.m. - Softball vs. Oregon
6:00 p.m. - Women's Tennis vs. Iowa St.	6:00 p.m. - Men's Tennis vs. SELA
7:00 p.m. - Baseball vs. New Mexico	7:00 p.m. - Baseball vs. Arkansas

Sunday, Feb. 29
11:00 a.m. - Baseball vs. Arkansas
12:00 p.m. - Softball vs. Southern Mississippi
1:30 p.m. - Women's Tennis vs. Missouri
7:00 p.m. - Baseball vs. New Mexico

Spirit Weekend

2004

Yell Practice @ Olsen After TONIGHT'S Baseball Game

SATURDAY @ THE REC

5k Fun Run/Walk Benefiting Special Olympics \$5.00 entry fee includes a T-shirt Sign up TODAY from 11am-3pm @ Rudder or Tomorrow at the race: Start time 8:30am

SUNDAY @ OLSEN PAVILION

4:30-7pm Silent Auction Benefiting Special Olympics
 4:30-6:30pm Baseball BBQ
 12MSF and AAI Members are Free
 Guest are \$5.00 for BBQ

any questions please call: 846-8193