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Roland-led Aggies host Texas for Big 12 title

By Jon Gilbert THE BATTALION

Texas A&M women's tennis ad coach Bobby Kleinecke id there have not been many layers, if any, who have come rough the A&M tennis proram and done what senior ssica Roland has done in her ur years at A&M. Kleinecke nd the team just hope there is ore to come.

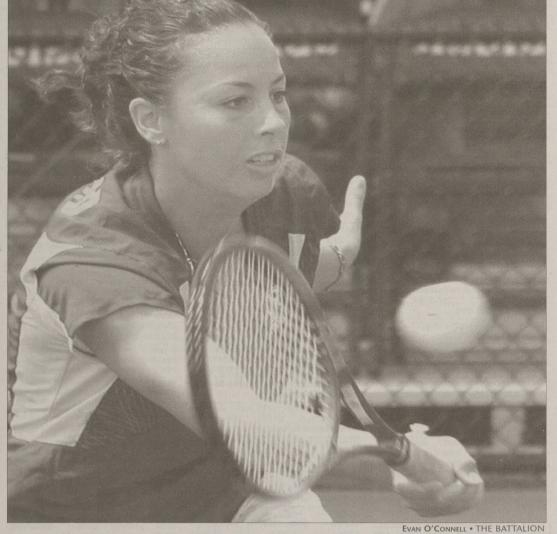
Roland, from Hollywood, alif., is the team leader of the . 16 Aggies. On Tuesday, the am will attempt to repeat as Big champions for the first time ver as it hosts No. 12 University Texas Tuesday night. Roland id winning the conference title the team's No. 1 goal.

"We want to win the Big 12," cord Roland said. "That's our top al, and once we do that we'd te to go to the Sweet 16. We now that it's a goal that is very tainable. Once we get there, ho knows what will happen.'

Roland has played in the No. spot all four years in ggieland. She has compiled a -46 dual record in singles while playing each match against e opposing team's best player. "Playing No. 1 brings a cerin responsibility," Roland said. Everyone looks up to me and ere is a certain amount of leadship that I have to be aware of. ou have to be willing to show ood work ethic because everyne feeds off you."

There is not much that oland has not accomplished luring her career at A&M. She as been an All-Big 12 selection ree consecutive years and has ompeted in two NCAA Championships, one in singles and one in doubles.

In her sophomore year, she nd teammate Ashley Hedberg vere ranked as high as No. 14 in oubles and competed in the CAA Championships. This past ear, Roland competed in the CAA Championships in singles nd advanced to the second round efore falling to Stanford's



Texas A&M senior **Jessica Roland** returns a volley during her doubles match against Kansas State during A&M's 7-0 win Saturday at the George P. Mitchell Tennis Center

Amber Liu, the eventual national champion. Roland is also the alltime career leader for A&M in doubles' wins with 95.

'What she's done here has been phenomenal," Kleinecke said. "The progress she's made these past years has inspired me. I watched her come into her own as she got older and become the player she is. She has made such a great mark on this program."

Roland agrees that she has improved her last two years, but she said it hasn't been easy.

"I've gotten to the level I'm at

I've put in the last two years," Roland said. "My freshman and sophomore years I wasn't really coming into my own. But, junior and senior year I've put in the work and the hiring of Alison (Ojeda) has really helped. She has made a difference in my game and has helped the team in our work ethic.'

Roland said that Ojeda has made the biggest impact on her athletic career.

"She's helped out so much in our approach to the game and now because of the hard work how we go into matches,"

Roland said. "She has made us excited about playing tennis, and every day she encourages us and gets us ready to play.'

This is Roland's last chance to lead the Aggies into the Sweet 16. They fell short last year as the University of California eliminated them in the second round.

"We work great together," Roland said. "We're one of the most determined teams in the nation. We may not be playing our best tennis, but we compete and fight to the end and that sets us apart from others."

A&M, Texas battle for Big 12 championship

6 We couldn't

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Texas A&M

By Jon Gilbert THE BATTALION

This is the match the No. 16 Texas A&M women's tennis team has been waiting for the entire season. The University of Texas will be in College Station Tuesday to take on A&M at the George P. Mitchell Tennis Center at 6 p.m. The winner clinches a share of the Big 12 season regular championship.

A&M 17-6, 9-0 Big 12 will have the honor of hosting the championship match and will be attempting to repeat as conference champs. No. 12 Texas (17-4, 8-0) will be shooting for its women's tennis head coach seventh Big 12 championship since the confer-

ence was formed in 1996.

'This is it," said A&M women's tennis head coach Bobby Kleinecke. "We couldn't have asked for a more ideal situation. We're playing Texas, our rivals, at home for the championship under the lights. We're undefeated; they're undefeated. It doesn't get any better than that.'

Kleinecke said he and the A&M team want to see the George P. Mitchell Center packed full of loud and rowdy fans Tuesday night.

"We're really expecting a huge crowd," Kleinecke said. "This is a great opportunity, and it's going to be great tennis being played between two great programs. It's going to be fun to watch. We really want the student body to be here. We want them to come ready to cheer and to get rowdy. These girls have worked hard for this and they deserve to have good support.'

Meanwhile, the Aggies continue to waltz through confer-ence play. They defeated Kansas State University Saturday for their eighth straight win. They are getting solid play and the team said it knows it will take that type of play to beat Texas.

"Its a huge match," said A&M senior Jessica Roland. "We don't have an underdog

mentality. We feel we should beat Texas. We're going to go in with the mentality that we should beat them. We beat them twice last year and know we can do it again."

h T e Longhorns have been on a similar journey as the Aggies in

conference play, but have lost two non-conference matches to Duke University and Tulane University recently. Through the years, they have consistently beat A&M. But last year, the Aggies changed that by beating the Longhorns once during the season and once in the conference tournament.

"This is even ground and whoever plays better will win it," Kleinecke said. "Our girls are playing against an excellent team.

A&M men's tennis head coach Tim Cass spoke to the girls last week about what is at stake

"He basically came and told us about how awesome this opportunity is," said sophomore Nicki Mechem. "He told us that every other A&M athlete would die to be in our shoes - playing Texas for the championship.'

