

Friday, April 23, 2004

A&M lady netters finish season with Kansas, Abilene Christian



Texas A&M junior **Helga Vieira** returns a forehand Tuesday in her match against University of Texas soph-

omore **Katie Ruckert** at the George P. Mitchell Center. **Vieira** won, 6-1, 6-1, but the Aggies lost.

By **Jon Gilbert**
THE BATTALION

Something has got to give Saturday as Texas A&M's women's tennis team hosts the University of Kansas. Both teams are coming off tough losses to their rivals and will attempt to get back on the winning track.

The Aggies (17-7, 9-1 Big 12) host the Jayhawks (6-13, 4-5 Big 12) in A&M's final conference match of the season at noon Saturday at the George P. Mitchell Tennis Center.

Kansas is coming off a 5-2 home loss to its border state rival, the University of Missouri. Meanwhile, the Aggies are attempting to rebound from a heartbreaking 4-3 loss to the University of Texas, a match they seemingly had control of until the end. They will try to put the missed opportunity of winning a share of the Big 12 championship title behind them.

After enduring the draining match against Texas, it may be a

challenge for A&M to come out with the same enthusiasm. A&M head coach Bobby Kleinecke said he hopes his girls come out ready to play with the toughness they have displayed throughout the season.

"This team is going to go out and compete," Kleinecke said. "They have been doing it all season. They're going to fight you until the end."

Despite the setback against Texas, the Aggies' season still looks promising. They have an outside chance of earning a share of the regular season title, and, if they defeat Kansas Saturday, they will clinch the No. 2 seed in the Big 12 Tournament.

After losing four out of six singles matches to the Longhorns, A&M will try to reverse those fortunes on Saturday.

A&M freshman Anna Lubinsky lost her first conference singles match ever on Tuesday, while senior Jessica Roland lost only her second.

On the other hand, sophomore

Nicki Mechem won her match against Kansas, 6-1, 6-1, but the Aggies lost. Mechem improved to 9-0 in the conference in singles. Shortly after the match against Kansas, the Aggies host Abilene Christian University (23-5, 9-0 Lone Star) in a conference tune-up for the Big 12 Tournament.

The Wildcats should prove to be a formidable opponent as they are rich in tradition and advanced to the quarterfinals of the NCAA Division II Championship last year.

On the other hand, Kansas has a sub-par year. The Jayhawks have shown improvement, and head coach Amy Hall is encouraged by the team's play of late.

"We just want to keep momentum alive and keep going well going into the Big 12 Tournament," Hall said. "It is a talented team, and they be a tough opponent. Our girls are upbeat and are looking forward to the challenge. Regardless of the outcome, it will be a good experience."

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