

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Texas first roadblock for Aggies

By Nikki Knight
THE BATTALION

Vying for first place in the Big 12, the No. 24 Texas A&M softball team will face rival University of Texas in its last home game for the season Wednesday night at the Aggie Softball Complex.

The Longhorns (23-19, 5-9 Big 12) are coming off a tough loss against Oklahoma State University last Sunday to face the Aggies (30-16, 12-1), who beat University of Missouri at home last weekend.

The Aggies will be looking to gain their 11th straight win before the challenge of conference leader University of Nebraska (34-12, 12-0) this weekend.

Aggie senior pitcher Jessica Kapchinski is coming into this game with confidence and a league-low ERA of 0.29. She has been strong in conference play with a record (11-1) that almost matches the team's.

"We are looking forward to continuing our success," Kapchinski said. "The challenge will be to stay focused, stay relaxed and concentrate on this game."

Kapchinski was named Big 12 Softball Pitcher of the Week Tuesday. This was the second time this season she has received the honor.

A&M head coach Jo Evans said her team is confident going into this week but focused on Wednesday's game.

"We have been really good about not looking ahead and playing it a game at a time," Evans said after the Missouri game.

Freshman pitcher Christina Gwyn will start for the Longhorns and bring a 3.48 ERA to the mound. Gwyn pitched Saturday for Texas and allowed four runs and four hits in 3.2 innings, taking the loss.

The A&M defense has been solid, but its current batting average slightly trails the Longhorns. The Aggies are batting .270 this season. Sophomore outfielder Rocky Spencer and freshman Sharonda McDonald lead the team with batting averages of .359 and .319, respectively. Junior infielder Adrian Gregory has three home runs and nine RBIs on the season.

The Longhorns will bring a .309 batting average to the plate and look to use that as the



Aggie senior pitcher **Jessica Kapchinski** struck out four people against University of Missouri last Saturday. The Aggies won 2-0. Kapchinski won Big 12 Softball Pitcher of the Week Tuesday, for the second time this season.

team's biggest advantage. Junior third baseman and last week's player of the week for the Longhorns, Wynter Turner, has a .311 batting average and said the key to a win would be to score as many runs as possible.

"The A&M game is always a good, competitive, fun game," Turner said. "We will be successful if we play good offense and get into the mindset to score runs."

Longhorn sophomore shortstop Amber Hall will also pose a threat to the Aggies. She's

batting a team-high .398 with two home runs and 17 RBIs.

A win against Texas will pave the way for the Aggies' trip to face conference leader Nebraska this weekend. Trailing Nebraska by only one game, these last few conference matches will prove to be critical in determining the Aggies' placement in the league and national standings.

The first pitch in the mid-week face-off is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday night at the Aggie Softball Complex.

U.S. men's soccer takes on Mexico

DALLAS (AP) — When the U.S. men's national team takes the field against Mexico on Wednesday, the Cotton Bowl may not feel like home territory.

The air horns, drums and flags that are found at most of Mexico's games are sure to be out in force — just as they were during Mexico's last Dallas stop — giving the game the look of a homecoming for the Tri-Colores.

"You might as well be playing away, since it's in Dallas it will be a predominantly pro-Mexico crowd," U.S. forward Josh Wolff said. "It's going to be chaotic."

The U.S. team hopes the friendly exhibition game will simulate the intensity of the upcoming CONCACAF World Cup qualifying matches, which start June 13 against Grenada in Columbus, Ohio.

"I don't know what the environment is going to be exactly, but I expect the crowd will be predominantly a pro-Mexico crowd," said U.S. coach Bruce Arena. "But, we're used to that. I think it's a good environment for our players to be around in preparation for the bigger games."

Mexico last played in Dallas 14 months ago in a friendly match victory over Bolivia at Texas Stadium, in front of a crowd dominated by Mexico fans.

After Mexico, the U.S. team has one final tune-up match, June 2 against Honduras in Foxboro, Mass. Should the U.S. team advance through its preliminary qualifying round, its six-game, four-team semi-final round competition will begin in August.

With 17 of team USA's 18 players from Major League Soccer teams, there will be some familiar faces.

But two players will be out with injuries: defender Cory Gibbs, the only player on the roster from the hometown Dallas Burn (groin); and defender Dan Califf of Los Angeles (MCL). Colorado Rapids' defenders Pablo Mastroeni and Ritchie Kotschau have been selected as replacements.

Wolff is one of the five current U.S. players who was on the team that beat Mexico in the 2002 World Cup. The United States has won five of the last seven games in the series, each by shutout.

"We're definitely getting better," Wolff said. "We know how to dig in when we get a lead, we have to be patient and wait for a goal."

Six members of the U.S. team have never played against Mexico, and Arena feels the exhibition will be a key game for inexperienced players.

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