

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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High hopes

Men's tennis looks to break records in Big 12 Championship

By Kyle Davoust
THE BATTALION

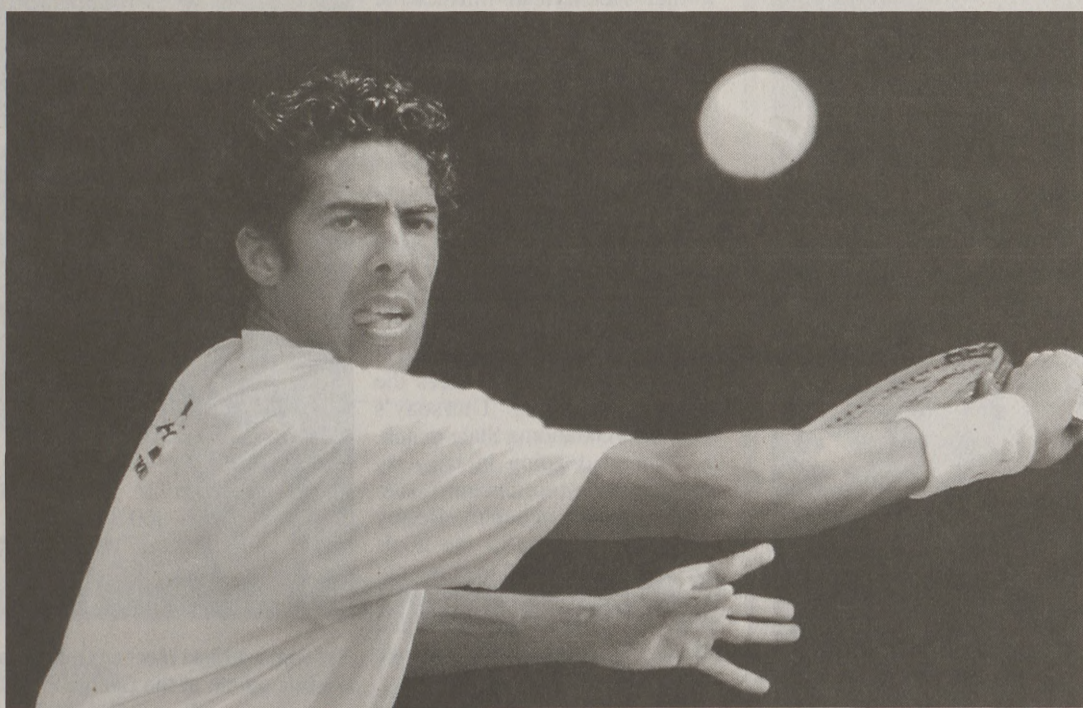
The Big 12 Men's Tennis Championship represents another opportunity for underdogs to unseat top teams and a chance for the top teams to improve in national standings.

For the No. 22 Texas A&M men's tennis team (20-7, 6-1 Big 12), a good showing could be the difference between finishing in the top 16 and being picked to host a round of the NCAA Tournament.

These opportunities will take place in Norman, Okla., at the University of Oklahoma Headington Family Tennis Center starting Friday.

No. 2 Baylor University (22-2, 7-0) clearly established itself as the Big 12's top team by breezing through conference play unscathed. The Bears were hardly challenged in obtaining a perfect record, winning with a combined score of 45-4, which include shutouts against the University of Colorado, University of Nebraska, No. 33 University of Texas and No. 29 Oklahoma State University. In fact, the closest conference match Baylor played was a 5-2 road win over A&M on April 3.

"Baylor is maybe one man better than anyone else in the conference," said OSU coach James Wadley. "But that doesn't mean that one man can't have a sprained ankle, bad attitude or even a girlfriend make them mad. And when you have one guy not show up, it affects you by two points, and you only



EVAN O'CONNELL • THE BATTALION

Senior Mohamed Dakki returns a volley against Oklahoma State last Saturday at the George P. Mitchell Tennis Center. need four to win."

While Baylor has clearly established itself as the favorite, A&M has positioned itself as the Bears' top challenger after coming on strong to finish second in the conference. The Aggies have won nine of their last 10 matches, a streak most teams would like to avoid dealing with. Their 5-2 road win over Texas and 6-1 home domination of Oklahoma State put the Aggies in position to avoid Baylor until the last round of the tournament.

"We've been playing better," said A&M senior captain Khaled El Dorry. "We defied a lot of odds against (No. 12 Rice

University). We lost the doubles point and came back against Texas on the road when we were getting killed for the first hour and a half. And now we beat Oklahoma State, which is a really good team, really bad."

Despite the previous accomplishments, the regular season means little when entering tournament play. The Big 12 is possibly the toughest conference in the nation, and each team must play its best to remain standing.

"The Big 12 is a great conference, obviously the best conference in the country," said Baylor coach Matt Knoll. "We always have teams competing for the national championships

in every sport. As far as tennis, we had four teams in the Sweet 16 last year. It's just a tough conference all around."

The Aggies understand this as well, knowing they cannot simply overlook other teams on their way to a possible final round showdown with Baylor.

"We have to think about teams like Oklahoma State and Texas," said A&M junior Lester Cook. "There are some tough teams, so we can't just think about Baylor. There are a whole lot of good teams in the Big 12."

The tournament will begin at 9 a.m. Friday when No. 2 seed Texas A&M faces No. 7 seed University of Colorado.

A&M softball blows out Texas

By Nikki Knight
THE BATTALION

The Longhorns weren't even given a full seven innings to try to defeat the Aggies Wednesday night. No. 24 Texas A&M (31-16, 13-1 Big 12) run ruled the University of Texas (23-20, 5-10) in five innings in front of an all-time record crowd of 1,470 at the Aggie Softball Complex, 11-1. The win moved A&M to No. 1 in the Big 12 Conference.

"Tonight was awesome," said junior infielder Adrian Gregory. "We hit the whole lineup, one through nine. The energy was high because the fans really packed the stands."

Carrying momentum from the weekend win over the University of Missouri, the Aggies started out strong, allowing no hits in the first inning and then scoring three runs on four hits.

Freshman Sharonda McDonald singled to left field and advanced to second on an error. Sophomore outfielder Rocky Spencer reached base on a walk, and then junior outfielder Jana James singled through the left side, scoring McDonald.

Later in the inning, sophomore utility player Kristin Gunter doubled, knocking in two more runs.

In the top of the second inning, Longhorn junior

infielder Wynter Turner reached base on an error and was advanced to third on a double by sophomore infielder Chez Sievers. Junior first baseman Alexis Garcia reached first on another error, which scored Turner for the Longhorns first but only run.

But, senior pitcher Jessica Kapchinski kept her cool and did not allow any earned runs.

"It was a little more of a battle," Kapchinski said. "We just had to get the outs and get out of the inning."

Kapchinski is now 12-1 in Big 12 play and was named Big 12 Pitcher of the Week Tuesday.

Texas head coach Connie Clark said Kapchinski's pitching was phenomenal.

"Christina (Gwyn) and Lizi (Sowers) are not strikeout pitchers," Clark said. "We have to play defense and score runs for them, and we didn't do that."

The Aggies returned in the bottom of the second to put four more runs on the board, including a three-run home run to left field by Gregory. Sophomore outfielder Rocky Spencer's stolen base brought the team total to 113 for the season, setting a new team record. Junior Texas pitcher Lizi Sowers then came in to pitch for the Longhorns and end the inning.

In the next three innings,

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