

SPORTS

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Sweet Revenge

A&M women's tennis beats Texas, wins Big 12 Tournament Championship

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The No. 17 Texas A&M women's tennis team turned the tables on the University of Texas Sunday as the Aggies won the Big 12 Tournament Championship, avenging the loss to the Longhorns they had suffered less than two weeks before.

Despite losing the doubles point, A&M (22-7) rallied back for an exciting 4-3 win over the Longhorns (22-5) at the Headington Family Tennis Center in Norman, Okla. In the process, the Aggies captured the team's first-ever conference tournament championship.

"We talked about it before and decided that there was just no way that we are letting them have this match.

— Bobby Kleinecke
Texas A&M
women's tennis head coach

"This was just a great college match," said A&M head coach Bobby Kleinecke. "Our team laid their hearts out there and I was just so excited to come away with it this time. We felt like last time we played (Texas) it slipped away from us and I'm proud of this group for sticking through it."

In contrast to the match on April 20, the Longhorns jumped out to the early lead. Texas took the doubles point and won the first set in each of the first four singles matches. This time it was the Aggies who rallied from behind.

"We talked about it before and decided that there was just no way that we are letting them have this match," Kleinecke said. "We felt like the doubles point was ours too and we let that slip away. We said there is no way we are going to let it happen; we had worked too hard for it."

In the Aggies' 4-3 loss to Texas dur-



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M junior Helga Vieira returns a forehand in A&M's 4-3 loss to Texas on April 20 at the George P. Mitchell Tennis Center. Vieira clinched A&M's 4-3 win over Texas Sunday in the Big 12 Tournament final by beating Texas sophomore Katie Ruckert, 6-7, 6-3, 6-4.

ing the season, they seemingly had the match nailed down with a commanding 3-0 lead. A&M used that loss as motivation on Sunday.

"(The team) was so upset at our loss two weeks ago to (Texas) and we were just hungry and we wanted to beat them exactly the way they beat us last time," said A&M junior Helga Vieira. "We won the doubles point last time and they won, and this time we lost the dou-

bles point and beat them. It was great, it was revenge."

With the overall match knotted at 3-3, Vieira won the decisive singles match over Texas sophomore Katie Ruckert 6-7 (6), 6-3, 6-4.

"I'm so proud of Helga, the way she handled the pressure," Kleinecke said. "She has ice in her veins, and I don't know if I could have done that. I'm really proud of this group for laying it

all out there."

A&M senior Jessica Roland notched a key 2-6, 6-2, 6-4 singles victory over Texas freshman Petra Dizdar, avenging her tough loss to Dizdar in singles in the regular season match.

Combined with sophomore Nicki Mechem's 6-0, 6-0 win and freshman Anna Lubinsky's 6-1, 1-6, 6-2 win over Texas freshman Ristine Olson, the Aggie comeback was complete.

Texas head coach Jeff Moore said A&M's senior leadership was important Sunday.

"I think this is the best Aggie team I've seen them have and they owe a lot to their senior leadership," Moore said. "I've watched Roland and (Roberta) Spencer develop over four years. They weren't highly recruited, but they are all heart and they're the heart and soul of that team."

Nebraska, Texas win Big 12 titles at Track and Field championships

Aggies fall to Baylor in Big 12 title match

By Jeff Latzke
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NORMAN, Okla. — A balanced Nebraska men's team won the Big 12 championship, but a speedy Texas women's team ran past the Cornhuskers' women's team Saturday to repeat as conference champions.

Discus thrower Carl Myerscough was the only Big 12 champion for the Cornhuskers, but Myerscough's effort was backed by strong team performances in other events. The Cornhuskers had three medalists in the high jump and the 110-meter hurdles.

"I think that it's a very good team," Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said. "It's a team that in my mind really covers the bases well. It does have quality; it has NCAA champions on it."

The Texas women's team, which was in sixth place and 51 1/2 points behind first-place Texas A&M entering Saturday, piled up the points in track events. The Longhorns got wins from Jerrika Chapple in the 400-meter dash, Nichole Denby in the 100-meter hurdles, Sanya Richards in the 100-meter dash and Raasin McIntosh in the 400-meter hurdles.

"I keep having this vision that one day I won't have to stress throughout the whole meet," Texas coach Bev Kearney said as she pulled out a piece of scratch paper on which she had scribbled the Longhorns' scramble for the championship. "I

don't think you will see anyone rack up as many points as Nebraska or even Texas A&M did in the first two days."

The Longhorns clinched the title on the final event with Richards, Chapple, McIntosh and Alyssa Aiken winning the 1600-meter relay in 3:34.26.

"This feels awesome," Kearney said. "It is always hard when you compete against a team like Nebraska. We made mistakes in the indoor championship that cost us the meet and they made mistakes in the outdoors that cost them the meet."

"I think in track and field, whichever team makes the least amount of mistakes wins."

The Longhorns won their sixth Big 12 title. They also won the title last year and consecutive championships from 1996 to 1999.



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M senior Jason Matthews pole vaults at the Frank G. Anderson Track and Field Complex during the College Station Relays March 20. Matthews placed third in the javelin at the Big 12 Championships. A&M finished third in both men's and women's competitions.

Texas finished with 151 points. Nebraska was second with 139 1/2, followed by Texas A&M, Missouri, Texas Tech and Kansas State. Baylor was seventh, with Oklahoma eighth and Colorado, Kansas, Iowa State and Oklahoma State rounding out the field.

On the men's side, Nebraska scored 172 points to win its fourth Big 12 men's title. The Cornhuskers also won the conference champi-

onship in 1998, 2000 and 2002. Texas Tech was second with 106 1/2 and Texas A&M finished third with 104 1/2. Texas was fourth, followed by Kansas State, Baylor, Oklahoma and Iowa State. Oklahoma State was ninth, with Colorado 10th, Missouri 11th and Kansas 12th.

Baylor's Jeremy Wariner ran the fastest time in the world this year in the 400-meter dash at 44:48, but was disqualified for running outside of his lane.

Without dropping a point throughout the Big 12 Championship Tournament, the No. 22 Texas A&M men's tennis team couldn't gain one in the title match as it lost to No. 2 Baylor University, 4-0.

The tournament championship is the fourth straight for Baylor (26-2).

"It's huge to win four in a row, and it has been so great for (the players)," said Baylor senior Matias Marin. "The competition keeps getting better and better every year. I hope we have a chance to compete for the title next year."

Neither the second-seeded Aggies (22-8) nor the first-seeded Bears dropped a point through the first two rounds of the tournament setting the stage for an exciting final. Although Baylor swept A&M, only two singles matches were decided in the minimum two sets.

"It's an exciting win for us," said Baylor head coach Matt Knoll. "Texas A&M was a tough team, and they have such good tennis players. It was very competitive and I'm proud of our guys for fighting hard and pulling out the win."

A&M started strong as juniors Lester Cook and Ante Matijevic, the No. 2 doubles team in the nation, defeated Baylor's duo of junior Benedikt Dorsch and freshman Matija Zgaga, 7-6. Baylor would still win the doubles point, however, with a pair of 8-5 victories in the other two matches, giving Baylor an 1-0 lead.

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"Lester and I played really well today," Matijevic said. "We beat (Dorsch/Zgaga), 9-8, the last time. We played better this time."

Dorsch quickly avenged his loss to Cook and Matijevic as he defeated Cook quickly at No. 1 singles, 6-1, 6-2. Baylor senior Reinor Neurohr also made quick work of A&M freshman Brett Joelson, 6-3, 6-4, to give Baylor a 3-0 lead.

With the other four matches all entering a third set, Baylor needed only one win to claim the championship.

The Bears didn't have to wait long as Marin rebounded from a second set 6-1 loss to A&M senior Mohamed Dakki to win the match, 6-3, 1-6, 6-2.

"It's so great that we won," Marin said. "Everybody was saying that we were going to win, but it was tough with a lot of the matches in three sets. I was happy to pull off the win for my team."

The other three matches, all tight, were stopped after Marin clinched the victory for the Bears. The only Aggie leading at the time was Matijevic, who was ahead of Baylor junior Benjamin Becker, 3-6, 6-3, 4-2, at the time of the stoppage.

A&M and Baylor will find out Wednesday who they will play in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, and whether they will host the first and second rounds.

"I like the character we have now," said A&M head coach Tim Cass. "Obviously, Baylor is an extremely good team. I really thought we played with focus and purpose in both doubles and singles. It was a good college tennis match."