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4B

Tuesday, May 4, 2004

Baseball

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carry the team to the College World Series. This year, the Aggies haven't been able to fully rely on sophomores Dan Donaldson and Robert Ray and senior Justin Moore, who have looked strong in some outings and terrible in others.

The Aggies also have seven games left in the season, as well as the Big 12 Tournament. Losing as many as four of those games would not only have a drastic outcome on A&M's standing, but would also likely affect the team's mentality. In 2003, A&M entered the regional tournament after losing four of its last seven and shockingly lost to the University of Houston.

Will the Aggies make it to Omaha this year? It's still too early to answer that question. A&M hasn't distinguished themselves from the rest of the field to say that they are definitely going to be there. But if they keep hitting the ball well and get better pitching performances down the stretch, Aggie fans might just be reliving 1999 again.

Tennis

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for only the second time in A&M school history.

Most A&M coaches would dream of a season like that. Imagine if the men's basketball team had finished near the top of the Big 12. Former head coach Melvin Watkins would be adding another story to his house instead of looking for a new home altogether. If head football coach Dennis Franchione elevates his team to the level that Cass' team has played at this season, he will be treated as even more of a god.

As it stands, the Aggies will enter the NCAA Tournament disappointed with how the team's regular season went. As it is in Kansas, the bar of excellence has been set high, and finishing the season ranked out of the top-10 (all the way down at No. 22) is not acceptable, especially with this year's mixture of talent.

The Aggies, though, still have the postseason to turn things around. Tennis can be broken down into three seasons: non-conference play, conference play and the postseason. Non-conference play was tough on A&M. It is what caused the team to drop in the rankings, and it drew concern from their followers. The team, however, redeemed itself with a strong conference showing. Baylor was the only team the Aggies couldn't solve, but this wasn't due to any failures on A&M's part. Baylor is probably just the better team. If the Aggies can continue on their current trend, this postseason could be a successful one, even by their standards.

Regardless of how the team fairs in the national tournament, the Aggies should not hang their heads for long. If this has been a down season, then their fans have much to look forward to in an undoubtedly bright future.

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Garnett wins NBA MVP in a landslide vote over Duncan

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - Kevin Garnett got 120 of 123 first-place votes to beat two-time winner Tim Duncan for the honor Monday, three days after his Minnesota Timberwolves won a playoff series for the first time.

Garnett's teammates attended a packed news conference at the Timberwolves' arena, and he praised them repeatedly.

"I wouldn't be nothing without those knuckleheads, believe me," Garnett said. "It's a team game, and I've always kept that perspective."

He has played at an MVP level for years, but this was a breakthrough season for the Wolves. They earned the top seeding in the Western Conference playoffs with a franchise-best 58-24 record, then ended a string of seven straight first-round exits from the postseason by beating the Denver Nuggets.

"This is best situation I could ever think of, or dream of," Garnett said.

Playing everywhere from center to point guard, the 7-footer averaged 24.2 points, a league-leading 13.9 rebounds and 5.0 assists this season - and his playoff stats are even better.

Garnett joined Larry Bird as the only players to average 20 points, 10 rebounds and five assists for five consecutive years.

He received 1,219 points in voting by sports writers and broadcasters in each of the league's cities. San Antonio's Duncan was next with 716 points, and Indiana's Jermaine O'Neal finished third with 523. Peja Stojakovic and Kobe Bryant were next.

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