

# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 1B • Tuesday, May 4, 2004

## Cass' troops have sights set on NCAA Championships

Success, it can be said, is all a matter of perspective. Upon being ousted in the Elite Eight of this year's NCAA Men's Basketball



KYLE DAVOUST

Tournament, Kansas head coach Bill Self told his team that while the team may feel it was a down year, he'd welcome finishing in second place in the Big 12 and advancing to the final eight on any down year.

In Lawrence, Kan., the standard of basketball excellence has been set high, and a successful season for most is deemed a failure for the legion of Jayhawk fans.

At Texas A&M, a similar standard has recently been set for the men's tennis teams, and the Aggies are now caught in the same dilemma of what to consider a successful season.

The Aggies have had their share of disappointments this season. A perennial top-15 team in head coach Tim Cass' eight-year tenure, A&M has spent the last month clinging to a top-25 ranking. Nearly two months ago, a sullen Cass lamented over this fact.

"I had a lot of pride that our teams are pretty much consistently in the top-15 for four years, and this team is certainly at that level," Cass said. "This team, in my opinion, can play with anybody."

Early on, the Aggies had a



EVAN O'CONNELL • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M junior Ante Matijevic returns a forehand in A&M's 6-1 win over the University of Oklahoma on March 26 at the George P. Mitchell Tennis Center.

hard time living up to these expectations, as they struggled on the road and against top-ranked competition. Despite having the No. 1-ranked doubles team of juniors Lester Cook and Ante Matijevic for most of the season, the Aggies failed to consistently win the doubles point.

The team, most importantly, beat itself on more than one occasion.

On the flip side, the Aggies have now won 11 of their last 13 matches, with both losses coming at the hands of No. 2 Baylor, a team that stormed its way through the Big 12 unscathed.

Despite A&M's disappoint-

ments, these facts remain: The Aggies clearly established themselves as the conference's second best team, won over 70 percent of their games and beat the rival Longhorns in Austin

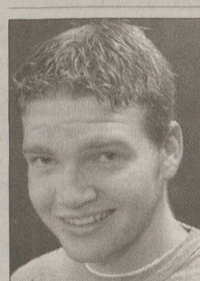
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## Baseball draws similarities to '99 CWS team

There are still some Aggie fans around campus who took part in events during the magical year of 1999. Y2K rumors were running rampant, election debates were heating up between George W. Bush and Al Gore and the Texas A&M baseball team was going to the College World Series.

It was the first time the Aggies had made an appearance at the College World Series in six years. And since then, that's about the only thing Aggie baseball fans have: memories. But after a four-year absence from the World Series lineup, the Aggies may board a plane to Omaha, Neb. once again.

The stats between the 1999 season and this season are eerily similar. In 1999, the Aggies had nine players who had at least 150 at-bats with a batting average of .300 or higher. Pitching was especially strong, as four of the regular starters had earned run averages of four or less, with two of those striking out 125 or more batters and the other two only giving up 35 runs or less.



JORDAN MESEROLE

In the four full seasons since, the Aggies have only once come minimally close to matching those statistics - in 2003 when A&M made a regional tournament bid for the first time since 1999. In 2000 and 2001, A&M had only three hitters with averages of at least .300, and in 2002 they only had one. In all of those seasons, no starting pitcher had an ERA less than four.

This season, A&M has almost matched the 1999 season. Currently, seven batters with at least 125 at-bats have an average of .300 or higher. Of the starting pitchers, one has an ERA below two and another with an ERA below four, with both on the verge of breaking the 100 strikeout mark.

But two main problems lie in A&M's path to Omaha: no strong third pitcher (or fourth or fifth at that) and seven games remaining on the schedule, including three against top-ranked Texas.

The Aggies have relied heavily on junior Zach Jackson and redshirt freshman Jason Meyer in games this season, who both have double the innings pitched of any other pitcher on the team. A two-man squad won't get any team far into the post-season, no matter how good the hitting is. In 1999, A&M was able to

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