

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Wednesday, June 30, 2004

Winds of change

A&M Athletic director Bill Byrne is remaking the face of sports for the better



JORDAN MESEROLE
SPORTS EDITOR

The winds of change are blowing through Texas A&M sports and by the way they're blowing, you would think it's a hurricane. Lay down the tarps on the field, board up the windows on the athletic office and if you have a name plaque on your desk that reads "coach," find a place to hide because hurricane Bill Byrne is here.

The latest changes in the path of the storm are Ted Nelson, head track and field coach, and Mel Nash, head men's swimming coach. Just like that, a combined 63 years of A&M coaching experience gone. Byrne didn't fire them; Nelson retired after a 38 year career at A&M and Nash resigned after 25. And since Byrne has taken office, a com-

bined 88 years has been wiped away from the A&M head coaching ranks. Others that have been swept up and out include R.C. Slocum, Melvin Watkins and Peggie Gillom.

But unlike other hurricanes that cause millions of dollars of damage and leave people with horrible memories, the aftermath of hurricane Byrne may be for the better.

Byrne's changes stem from an attempt to make A&M a national contender in all sports, and eventually win the Sears Cup, which is awarded to the school that accumulates the most points for excelling in sports. Byrne would probably compare winning the Sears Cup to winning the Super Bowl.

Byrne's changes should not only benefit fans by giving them a new look on A&M sports—hopefully a better one—but will also see increased competition from an in-state rival known to many in College Station as "t.u."

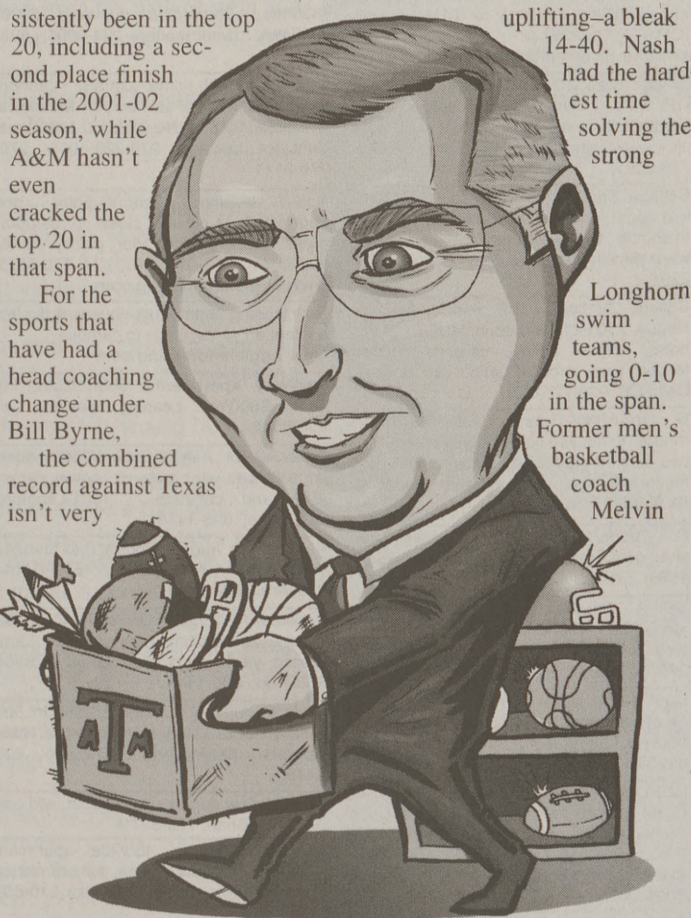
In the past 10 years, A&M has slowly fallen farther behind the University of Texas in almost every sport. The same goes for the Sears Cup; for the past five years Texas has con-

sistently been in the top 20, including a second place finish in the 2001-02 season, while A&M hasn't even cracked the top 20 in that span.

For the sports that have had a head coaching change under Bill Byrne, the combined record against Texas isn't very

uplifting—a bleak 14-40. Nash had the hardest time solving the strong

Longhorn swim teams, going 0-10 in the span. Former men's basketball coach Melvin



GRAPHIC BY RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

Watkins had an equally tough time, going 1-11.

Former football coach R.C. Slocum left with a sour taste in his mouth from his last three games against Texas, losing all three by a combined 114 points.

Last season, Texas had eight teams ranked in the top 10 nationally, including the baseball team that recently lost in the College World Series. Only a total of three A&M teams held a top 10 spot last season for more than a week.

Fans shouldn't expect to see immediate results from new coaches. If coaches were only given one year, A&M would already have a new football and women's basketball coach.

Coaches need time to recruit and establish their programs. But fans should expect a considerably different look at sporting events within the next five years, all thanks to Byrne. And new incoming freshmen might begin to realize and experience the true rivalry between A&M and Texas once again on the sports battle field.

A&M coaches, be advised: Hurricane Byrne is still looming on the horizon. But for the

changes Byrne has already made, the programs can now start rebuilding for a better future. This might be the only hurricane from which people won't be seeking disaster relief and actually begin to welcome.

The Bill Byrne Legacy

Football
Old: R.C. Slocum - 14 years
New: D. Franchione

Basketball
Old: (m) Melvin Watkins - 6 years
(w) Peggie Gillom - 5 years

New:
(m) Billy Gillispie
(w) Gary Blair

Swimming & Track
Old: Mel Nash - 25 years
Old: Ted Nelson - 17 years

Rockets complete McGrady trade

By Joel Anderson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In a blockbuster deal that gives the Houston Rockets one of basketball's most intriguing tandems, Tracy McGrady was traded to Houston in a multiplayer deal that sent Steve Francis to the Orlando Magic on Tuesday.

The long-anticipated deal also sent forward Juwan Howard, and guards Tyrone Lue and Reece Gaines to the Rockets. The Magic also got guard Cuttino Mobley and forward Kelvin Cato.

The trade was finalized after Francis' meeting with Magic general manager John Weisbrod in Orlando on Tuesday.

McGrady, a two-time NBA scoring champion, now joins 7-foot-5 Yao Ming to form a duo that could potentially be as dominant as the Los Angeles Lakers' three-time championship two-some of Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant.

Tired of carrying a mediocre franchise, McGrady vowed to exercise the opt-out clause in his contract that was to go into effect at the end of next season.

McGrady, 25, becomes the fourth defending scoring champion in NBA history to be dealt away, and the first since the Buffalo Braves sent

Bob McAdoo to the New York Knicks in 1976.

Francis, a three-time All-Star, averaged 16.6 points, 5.5 rebounds and 6.2 assists last season to join Oscar Robertson, Magic Johnson and Hill as the only players in league history to average at least 15 points, five rebounds and five assists in each of their first five years.

Francis, Mobley and Yao led the Rockets to the playoffs last season for the first time in five years. Houston lost to the Los Angeles Lakers in the first round.

But Francis, who flourished in an up-tempo offense for the previous four years, was put on the summer trading block after posting the worst numbers of his career in new coach Jeff Van Gundy's slower-paced scheme.

When reports of the deal first surfaced last week, Francis balked at leaving Houston for rebuilding Orlando. But Francis' agent, Jeff Fried, said a talk between the point guard and Weisbrod after Thursday's draft helped alleviate some of the All-Star guard's concerns about joining the Magic.

Fried said Weisbrod convinced Francis that the Magic could improve quickly with the additions of No. 1 draft pick Dwight Howard and Jameer Nelson, a point guard from St. Joseph's.

Garrido apologizes for post-game snub

By Jim Vertuno
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Texas baseball coach Augie Garrido apologized Tuesday for the "unfortunate perception" of his team after the Longhorns didn't attend a postgame ceremony to receive their second-place trophy at the College World Series.

"I deeply regret what has happened," Garrido said in a statement released by the university. "I hope that this team will be remembered for what it did throughout the year, not for an unfortunate incident that came at the end of a great College World Series."

Texas' failure to accept its trophy Sunday caused a furor among some Longhorns fans over what many perceived to be poor sportsmanship.

Garrido insisted it was not a show of poor sportsmanship but the result of a misunderstanding with NCAA officials.

"Throughout my career, I have placed high values on my role as a teacher," he said. "It is important to convey the values, ethics, sportsmanship and purpose in which I believe."

"That said, I would like to apologize for every member of the University of Texas family, and the fans of the College World Series and Cal State Fullerton for the unfortunate perception that has been created."

Garrido has said he did not know there was a trophy for second place and insisted that he did not intend to snub champion Cal State Fullerton, the school where he won three national titles before taking over the Texas program.

When approached by an NCAA official after Fullerton's 3-2 victory, Garrido said he was told the ceremony was optional and didn't send his team out.

An NCAA official at the tournament said it was the first time in 17 years that the runner-up did not accept its award.

Texas, which has played in 31 College World Series, keeps two runner-up trophies from 1984 and 1989 in a display case outside the athletic director's office.

"None of us associated with our baseball program would intentionally do anything to bring embarrassment to the game or to our university," he said.

"I deeply regret what has happened."

— Augie Garrido
University of Texas coach

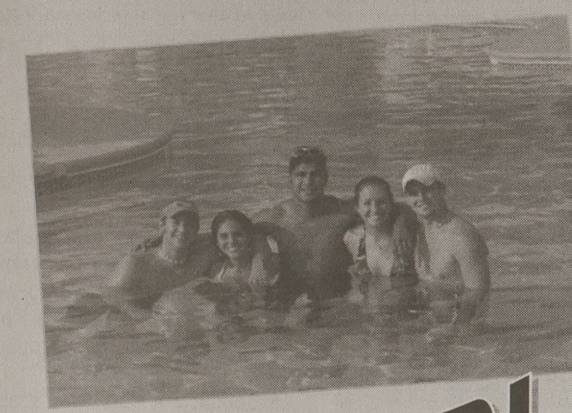
Howdy Aggies!

The Home for Texas Aggies!

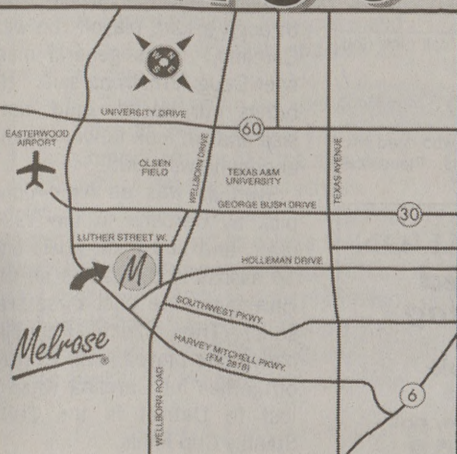
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