

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Double Eagle

A&M men's golf team has sights on Big 12 and NCAA trophies

By Shawn Millender
THE BATTALION

After four years of obscurity on the Texas A&M campus, head golf coach J.T. Higgins and his squad of unsung student athletes are hoping to take advantage of new facilities and new talent to turn heads and bring some recognition to the golf program.

Discussion about the men's golf team may be one-sided, since many students aren't aware that golf is a team sport, to say nothing about A&M actually fielding a team.

But fourth-year head coach J.T. Higgins and his squad of student athletes are hoping to turn heads and bring some recognition to a golf program at a mostly football-oriented school this season.

Higgins said a lack of experience might be the team's

biggest question mark heading into its opener at the Central Regional Preview Sept. 17 at South Bend, Ind., since academic All-American David Tasker and senior team leaders Stephen Reed and Parker Briley graduated.

"On one hand, we lost a lot of experience with three of our top six players gone," Higgins said. "Talent-wise, though, (the newcomers) may be able to fill those guys' shoes and take us even higher than we were last year."

To fill the void, Higgins brought in a talented haul of freshmen and two transfers. Jerad Harklau and Mark Conlon came to A&M this summer from Southern Methodist University and Louisville, respectively.

Higgins' highly touted recruiting class includes Chris Thompson of Rockwall, Matt Van Zandt from Missouri City, Martin Piller of Duncanville and American Junior Golf champion Robert Gates, Jr. from Gainesville, Fla.

"Robert Gates is talented enough to have an immediate impact. This group is as talented as I think we've brought in since I've been here," Higgins said.

To improve, Higgins said the team "needs to be more consistent and to compete on a week-to-week basis; not be so up and down like we were last year."

To do so, Higgins must integrate his new talent with a solid core of returning players, including junior Andrew Parr and senior David Schultz. This shouldn't be a problem for Higgins, since the new crop has drawn rave reviews from the upperclassmen.

"Well, obviously they're all really good golfers with a lot of experience at the junior level and they're all really good guys," Parr said. "They should be great for continuing to build a really strong program."

Parr and Schultz will be counted on as team leaders this season.

"I played almost every tournament last year," Parr said. "That kind of experience I hope will help me to be an example to them in terms of work ethic and attitude."

The team came on strong at the end of last year to finish in the top 15 nationally after a poor performance in the Big 12 tournament, where they finished 10th. The team hopes it can parlay momentum from its strong finish into this season, Schultz said.

"We have the capability," Schultz said. "Everyone on the team is talented enough to play great golf. We just have to all come together at the right time."

Parr said hopes of a national championship for the squad is a realistic expectation.

"Winning at NCAA is the ultimate goal, and I think for this team it's attainable. We'd also like to win the Big 12 championship, because if you can compete there you



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Redshirt freshman **Trey Todd** attempts to get out of a sand bunker and onto the green at Traditions Golf Course.

can compete nationwide," Parr said.

Schultz has set his personal bar higher. "I want to be first team all-American and be competitive enough to win in every tournament," Schultz said. "A small goal of mine is to be the Big 12 player of the year and win an individual national championship."

One thing is for sure: With these raised expectations, people everywhere should take notice of this group of Aggies.

"A&M hasn't really had a lot here before," Schultz said. "But the coaches are doing a real good job recruiting talent and building a good reputation. When we go to tournaments this year people will know who we are and we're for real."

SIDE NOTES

On 7

For the next week, staff writers will take a quick glance at A&M's upcoming football opponents. Today features Wyoming.

The Houston Astros stayed in contention for a wild card playoff spot after tagging Cincinnati for 11 runs.

COMING WEDNESDAY

Sophomore running back Courtney Lewis caught a lot of attention last year and the shy, introverted athlete is out to grab even more attention this season.

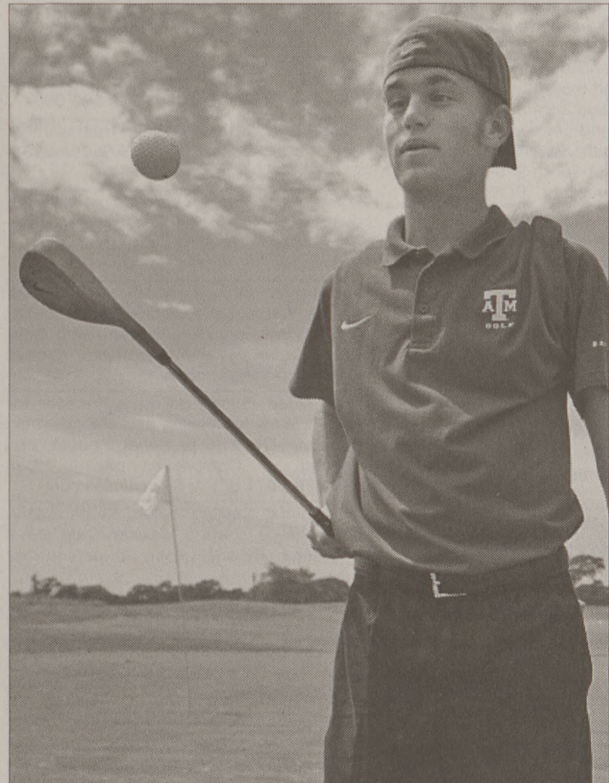
BRIEFLY

Four Texas A&M archers were named to the 2005 U.S. Archery Team Monday. Senior Amber Dawson, junior Jessica Grant, freshman Cassie Raffaelli and recent graduate Mary Zorn were selected to represent the United States.

Recent gold olympians Michael Phelps, Justin Gatlin and Carly Patterson will all adorn future Wheaties boxes.

The Cubs defeated the Expos 5-2, giving Chicago starter Greg Maddux win No. 302. The win also helped the Cubs retain first in the N.L. Wild Card race.

In preseason action, the Dallas Cowboys defeated the Tennessee Titans 20-17. Cowboys quarterback Vinny Testaverde threw for 240 yards and one touchdown in the first half.



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A&M redshirt freshman **Kristopher Devlin** takes a minute to do his best Tiger Woods impersonation.

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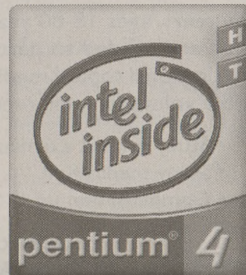
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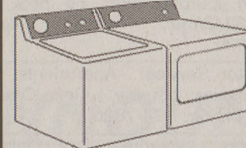
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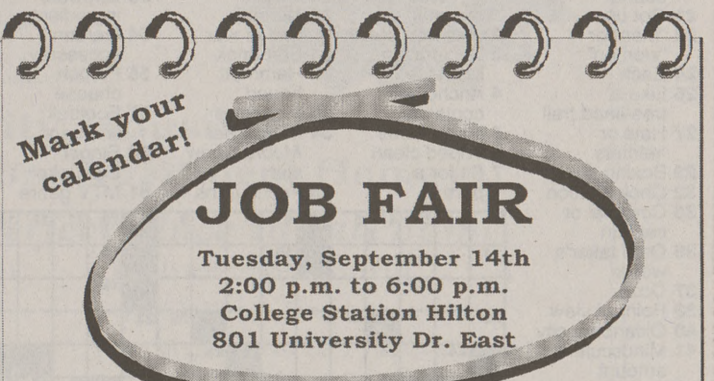
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