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# Volleyball kicks off Big 12 season

By Nikki Knight  
THE BATTALION

With a 4-2 preseason record and a national No. 12 ranking, the Texas A&M volleyball team looks to start its conference season strong in Ames, Iowa, tonight as it faces the Iowa State Cyclones.

During the preseason, ISU captured the tournament title at the Mizumu/Auburn Challenge with wins over Birmingham Southern University, East Tennessee State University and Auburn University.

The team also competed in the University of Texas-San Antonio tournament Saturday and Sunday. The Cyclones notched wins against Prairie View A&M and UTSA in the tournament. ISU's only preseason tourney loss came against Rice University.

Cyclones head coach Linda Crum said her team enters into the conference season with confidence built during the preseason on offense and defense. However, she said at this point, she and her players will take a step back and regroup.

"We look at it as a whole preseason before we start the Big 12," Crum said. "It's time to put the preseason behind us and focus on conference."

One of the biggest strengths Crum said her team brings to the match is its ball control and serving.

Key players for ISU include redshirt sophomore Nicole Lorenzen, redshirt junior Ashley McWee and junior Amanda Craig. In the final match of the UTSA tournament, Lorenzen achieved her third double-double for the season, hammering out 17 kills to go with her 17 digs and a team-leading five serves. McWee had 16 kills with a .300 hitting percentage and Craig totaled a season-high 64 assists.

Crum said the biggest challenge her team would face would be the overall athleticism of the Big 12 conference.

"The first conference match will be an adjustment on offense



SHARON AETSCHBACH • THE BATTALION

A&M junior Kari Kelley blocks a shot by McNeese State senior Cici Anderson. A&M defeated McNeese 3-0 at G. Rollie White.

and defense," Crum said. "The ability of the teams in the Big 12 is greater than what we faced in non-conference."

The Aggies' only losses in the preseason were to No. 3 UCLA and No. 13 UC-Santa Barbara. A&M head coach Laurie Corbelli said her team's great performance has boosted their confidence.

"We've had the opportunity to experience a total team effort," Corbelli said. "Everyone has been on the same intensity level, and that will be a great asset as we start the conference season."

Corbelli said her only concerns for Wednesday are the normal concerns: Lack of aggression on passing and reluctance on serving. However, she is confident the team is focused and prepared to play with a relaxed intensity.

Aggie senior middle blocker/outside hitter Melissa Munsch said the team is always ready to start the Big 12 conference. She said the team is focused right now, but plays better when it is having fun.

"We just have to let it come naturally," Munsch said.

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