

TENNIS

The freshman Frenchman

Rinderknech helps knock off top teams in first year

By Alex Scott

Arthur Rinderknech, a 19-year-old from Paris, France, has made a bigger impact on Aggie men's tennis this season than he or his coach anticipated.

The freshman has played vital matches for A&M this season, leading them to two victories over top-5 ranked teams and a 6-1 record.

Rinderknech began playing tennis at the age of six in an attempt to follow in the footsteps of his parents. His mother, Virginie Paquet, and father, Pascal Rinderknech, are accomplished tennis professionals in France.

The journey to College Station for Rinderknech began with a recruiting trip from head coach Steve Denton.

"I was in Paris to see him and after I watched Arthur hit three or four balls I knew that he was our level and knew that he could really help us," Denton said. "So then it was just really a question of talking him into coming over here and playing."

The impression he had of Denton helped seal the deal, Rinderknech said.

"After he met with my family and everything I had a good feeling with Steve and I decided to come here," Rinderknech said.

Rinderknech's 6-foot-3 frame allows him to kill the ball, making a return shot difficult for his opponents. Rinderknech was looking for a university with a top-15 tennis program, high level of education and a place with good weather. Despite Thursday's low temperatures, it seems he found the perfect fit.

During the process of getting Rinderknech to College Station, a minor speed bump presented itself when eligibility was withheld for his first year.

"For him to be able to stay in there mentally and continue to do things on his own and be motivated for that year — you know, it was really hard for him watching our guys play in matches with him not being able to compete, but obviously he's certainly made up for it in this first month and a half," Denton said.

Rinderknech has only one singles loss on the season, which came in a three-set battle against a TCU opponent early on in the year. In the time since, he has won two of the most impor-

tant matches of the year for A&M. Both came against top five opponents and in both situations, he was the last man standing.

Denton said Rinderknech performs when it matters most.

"As far as I can tell, the more the pressure, the better he plays," Denton said. "And that's obviously really good for us."

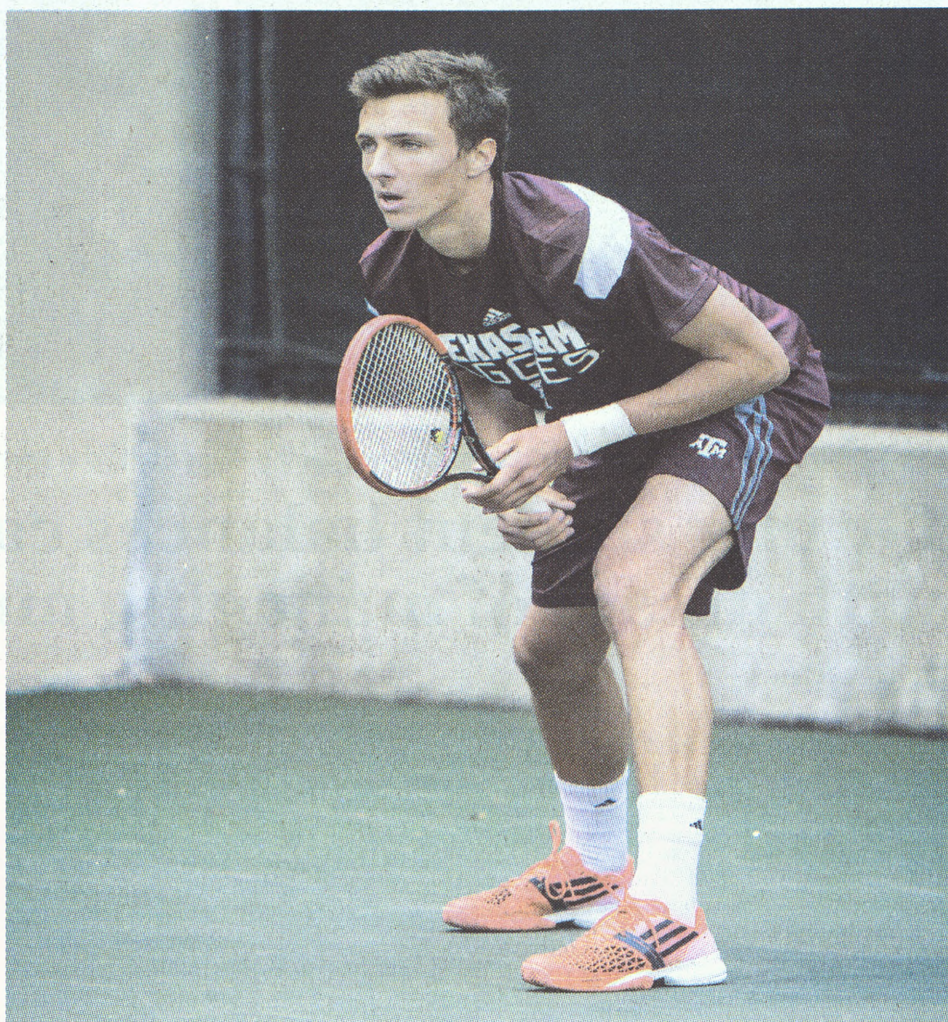
It is rare to have the chance to upset the No. 1 team in the nation. It is even rarer when it is a freshman that clinches the match. Upon finishing off his milestone match against No. 1 Oklahoma, he was greeted by his teammates who stormed the court to celebrate with him. It will be a memory that he won't forget.

Rinderknech and the team will travel to No. 4 Georgia at 1:30 p.m. Friday. The No. 10 Aggies look to extend their winning streak to seven matches in a row.

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TENNIS TRAVELS TO GEORGIA FRIDAY

Men's tennis, riding a six-match win streak, plays No. 4 Georgia. Read the story at tx.ag/batt10.



Cody Franklin — THE BATTALION

In his first year of eligibility, freshman Arthur Rinderknech has made a splash.

BASEBALL

13-0 A&M to meet stiff tests in Houston

Houston, Nebraska, Baylor on slate for series at Minute Maid

By Andre Perrard

► The Aggies have yet to lose this season, but as they leave the confines of Olsen Field they prepare to meet their toughest tests to date.

The Texas A&M baseball team rides a 13-0 record heading into the Minute Maid Classic in Houston this weekend. A&M will face off against Nebraska, No. 8 Houston and Baylor over the weekend.

The No. 11 Aggies feature a deep, powerful lineup that is a pitcher's nightmare — seven Aggie starters have double digit RBIs on the year, and eight of them have hit at least one home run this season. Sophomore right fielder Nick Banks leads the team with 14 RBIs on the year. Logan Taylor leads the team with five home runs this year.

Three Aggie hitters are batting with an average over .400, led by Mitchell Nau, who has a .450 average.

The classic gets started on Friday afternoon, as A&M will face off against former Big 12 foe Nebraska. The Cornhuskers (6-4) are led offensively by Blake Healdey, who is batting .351 with 13 RBIs and has also legged out five doubles and one triple.

AJ Minter will most likely be on the mound for the Aggies on Friday. Minter leads the team in ERA (0.56) and in



Vanessa Pena — THE BATTALION

strikeouts (23). Nebraska will send out Chance Sinclair.

Saturday, the Aggies face a ranked opponent for the first time this season, taking on the No. 8 Houston Cougars. The Cougars (8-5) have a lineup that features three players with double-digit RBIs. Connor Wong leads the team with 14 RBIs, but the player to watch is infielder Chris Iriart, who has 11 RBI with three home runs while batting .348.

Houston will send Jake Lemoine to the mound on Saturday. A&M will send out Grayson Long. Long is 2-0 on the season in three appearances with 12 total

strikeouts.

In the finale on Sunday, A&M will take on rival Baylor. The Bears (6-5) have had a rough beginning to the 2015 season. Logan Brown leads the Bears, batting .359 with 8 RBIs. The Bears are 0-3 away from home.

A&M will send junior Matt Kent out to pitch. Kent is 3-0 in three appearances this year, with a 2.29 ERA and 17 strikeouts. Baylor will send Austin Stone to the mound on Sunday.

This marks A&M's eighth appearance in the Houston College Classic.



Tim Lai — THE BATTALION

Senior pitcher Rachel Fox leads the team in innings and strikeouts through 21 games.

A&M kicks off SEC play at home with No. 9 Kentucky

By Milkyas Gashaw

► For an Aggie softball team riding high, there's no better way to open SEC play than a home series against a top-10 team.

The No. 20 Texas A&M softball team will take its 10-game winning streak into its SEC home-opening series this weekend against the No. 9 Kentucky Wildcats in a top-25 clash at the Aggie Softball Complex.

The Aggies (17-4) last lost against No. 2 Oregon in early February. The pitching has been a constant for A&M as senior Rachel Fox and junior Katie Marks combine for a 16-3 record with Fox leading the club in innings with 81 1/3 and strikeouts with 67.

Kentucky (13-3) counters on the mound with junior Kelsey Nunley, who leads the club with a 1.97 ERA, and sophomore Meagan Prince, who leads the team with seven wins.

"They have a great pitching staff," head coach Jo Evans said. "Our pitchers are going to need to be able to compete with their pitchers. We need to keep the game close to give us a chance to make some adjustments offensively."

The Wildcats are a club that does not lack firepower. Kentucky is hitting .319 as a team this season with 102 runs scored and 29 stolen bases. Junior outfielder Sylver Samuel paces the team with a .404 average with 18 runs scored and a .456 on-base percentage. Senior Griffin Joiner is hitting .396 with four homers and a team-leading 23 RBIs, while sophomore Breanne Ray is hitting .355 and junior Christian Stokes is hitting .340 with two doubles, three homers and 14 RBI. Junior Nikki Sagemann has three homers and 13 RBI.

Fox said the team will approach the high-powered offense carefully.

"Well, I think it's important to know the strengths and weaknesses of each team," Fox said. "Each team is different so we play off that. Obviously we played Kentucky last year so we have some information on that. They do have some home run power, but if we're able to keep the ball down and in the park, we have a good chance of beating them."

Junior Cali Lanphear said she looks forward to the atmosphere the 12th Man provides.

"Our 12th Man atmosphere is one of a kind," Lanphear said. "It's something that Kentucky has never experienced because this is their first time coming to our home field since we've been in the SEC. They don't want to know what they're in for."

First pitch is at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

ALABAMA CONTINUED

performance in conference.

House has been dynamite ever since for the Aggies and now leads in scoring, but his early SEC ways came back to haunt him in the past couple games. Against Auburn, House shot 6-for-20 from the field, and in A&M's last game against Florida, the junior guard was blanked for the first time all season, shooting 0-for-10.

In the final minutes against the Gators, Aggie head coach Billy Kennedy elected to pull him out, and he was seen on the sideline battling an apparent ankle injury.

A win for the Aggies would secure a double-bye in the SEC tournament, which begins next Wednesday. But a loss could sink A&M below the fourth-place spot, as Georgia sits a game behind, having beat the Aggies earlier in the season. With Georgia facing Auburn in its season finale, A&M will almost definitely need to win in hopes of not playing an earlier game on Thursday instead of Friday.

Ending senior night with a bang won't only guarantee



Tanner Garza — THE BATTALION

Junior forward Jalen Jones missed the first game against Alabama to injury.

a good spot in the SEC tournament for A&M, but could save its chances of earning a berth in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2011. After the Aggies' loss to the Gators, they stand as a 10-seed in Joe Lunardi's lat-

est bracketology and sit in his "Last Four Byes."

The SEC Tournament will be played next week at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, with the first two contests being played Wednesday night.

HOME FINALE

when
1 p.m. Saturday

where
Reed Arena