

Palmer in Masters' top 10

Aggie grad closes Day 1 at No. 8

By Lawrence Smelser

Former Texas A&M golfer Ryan Palmer played on the biggest stage in golf Thursday — The Masters.

Palmer, who played for Texas A&M from 1996 to 1999 after transferring from North Texas, sits tied for No. 8 at three strokes under par after shooting an opening-round 69.

The No. 23 ranked golfer in the world caught fire early, birdying four of the first eight holes, putting him one shot off the lead at the time. He made the turn to the back nine in only 32 shots, which tied Jordan Spieth's front nine for the lowest score out of the entire field for the first round.

Palmer's 69 was the lowest opening round he's ever had in five appearances at the Masters, and it was tied for his best round at Augusta in his career. The only other time he broke 70 was when he shot a 69 in the third round of the 2011 Masters.

Palmer spoke with Lance Lahnert of the Amarillo Globe-News

regarding his round.

"I'm happy with it," Palmer said. "Anytime you break 70 here on a Thursday, it's a good day."

Palmer will tee off his second round at 9:13 a.m. Friday.

Twenty-one-year-old Jordan Spieth, who attended the University of Texas, finished the day as the first-round leader after shooting an eight-under 64. He was one shot shy of tying the course record at Augusta.

Defending champion Bubba Watson and world No. 1 Rory McIlroy both shot one-under par 71s, while three-time Masters champion Phil Mickelson shot two-under for his round, putting him tied for 12th.

Tom Watson, 65, became the oldest player to shoot an under-par round at the Masters. The record was previously held by Sam Snead, who was 61 years old when he shot a 71 in 1974.

Fourteen-time major winner Tiger Woods, who entered the tournament at the last minute, finished the day in 41st place after shooting a one-over par 73.



Ryan Palmer

TENNIS

A&M secures regular season championship

Aggies get top seed in SEC tournament hosted at home

By Seth Stroupe

The No. 7 A&M men's tennis team clinched the SEC regular season championship Thursday when it swept the No. 24 LSU Tigers, 4-0, in Baton Rouge.

The win for the Aggies (18-3, 11-1 SEC) was the 10th in a row as the SEC tournament is now on the horizon. The momentum built by the men's squad is due in large part to the play of freshman AJ Catanzariti, who clinched the match Thursday with a 7-5, 6-2 win over his Tiger opponent.

A&M will travel at 1 p.m. Saturday to Fort Worth to wrap up the regular season with the team against which it kicked the season off, the No. 10 TCU Horned Frogs.

The last time the Frogs and Aggies met, it was TCU (18-6, 2-2 Big 12) who came away with the 4-2 victory in College Station. Since the season opener, the Aggies have seen improvement from the bottom of their lineup and will be a different team than they were in January.

Following their match Saturday, the Aggies will look forward to the SEC tournament hosted in College Station where they will hold the No. 1 seed when it begins April 17.

While the men take to the road, the women will stay home to host their final two conference matches of the season before the SEC tournament.

The A&M women's team (13-4, 9-2 SEC) will return home after defeating the No. 7 Baylor Bears Wednesday. After trailing 1-3, the Aggies fought back to finish off a 4-3 victory that completed a two-game sweep of the Bears this season.

Looking ahead, the Aggies will host two ranked teams this weekend — No. 8 Vanderbilt and No. 21 Kentucky.

First up on Friday afternoon will be the Commodores (15-5, 10-1 SEC), who boast a six-match conference win streak. On Sunday, A&M will welcome Kentucky (15-9, 6-4 SEC) at noon. The Wildcats will enter College Station having dropped their last three matches, including their final home match versus South Carolina. In their past three matches, the Wildcats have only managed to record two points and have been outscored 12-2.

Following this weekend, the A&M women will look ahead to the SEC tournament held at South Carolina starting April 17.

GOLF



Valerie Gunchick — THE BATTALION

Adria Arnaus puts during the Aggie Invitational at the Traditions Club last weekend.

Men's golf to host Reveille Challenge this weekend

A&M looks to regain edge at home after weekend slump

By Cole Stenholm

The Texas A&M men's golf team returns to its home course, the Traditions Club in Bryan, this Sunday to host the Reveille Challenge.

The challenge serves as A&M's last opportunity to tune up its game prior to the SEC Championships next week.

Nine teams are expected to compete this Sunday, including several in-state programs such as the University of Houston, North Texas, Stephen F. Austin and Texas State.

Tournament play will feature 36 holes, all of which will be played on Sunday at the par 72, 7,146 yard Traditions course.

Last weekend, the Aggies walked away from their home course empty

handed as they shot +16 (304) as a team in final round action of the Aggie Invitational to drop from first to fifth place.

The A&M golf team is ranked No. 41 in the nation as it prepares for the home stretch of the 2014-15 campaign.

However, A&M does not have anything higher than a fourth-place finish this season in standard tournament play with fields of at least 12 teams.

Only one Aggie, senior Greg Yates, who won the Valspar Collegiate Invitational in March, owns an individual title this season. His victory was the third of his career.

The Aggies only possess four top-five individual finishes this season, two on which belong to junior Adria Arnaus.

Arnaus and Yates are the highest-ranked Aggies, coming in to the weekend as No. 56 and No. 101, respectively, in the nation, and boasting A&M's lowest scoring averages of 72.26 and 72.75.

SOFTBALL

SEC West at stake in home series against Auburn

Strong midweek performances propel Aggies to date with No. 6 Tigers



Kathryn Perez — THE BATTALION

Tori Vidales led A&M to a win over UNT Wednesday with a 4-for-4 outing.

By Milkyas Gashaw

The Texas A&M softball team will host the Auburn Tigers this weekend in a top-25 matchup that could solidify the SEC West race.

The No. 23 Aggies (31-10, 7-5 SEC) come into the meeting on a roll after consecutive victories against UTSA and North Texas in midweek matchups. The weather might play a role in this series, however. Rain is forecasted in College Station this entire weekend, causing potential rain delays and possible postponed games.

The Aggies are led offensively by freshman Tori Vidales, who has been hitting the cover off the ball recently. The Aggies go as she goes, with Vidales going 4-4 with a homer in Wednesday night's meeting with North Texas.

Cali Lanphear showed some pop on Wednesday along with Breanna Dozier as they added homers of their own. Head coach Jo Evans praised the production she's getting from Vidales.

"It's great to see her have a game like that," Evans said. "She's just such a good hitter. She's particularly great with two strikes and she's a tough out. When pitchers get ahead of her she finds a way to come back and hit home runs. She hits tough balls in the gap. Just a great job by a great hitter. She's very, very good and I expect that we'll see these kind of nights from her for the next four years."

The No. 6 Tigers (38-5, 10-2 SEC) are led on offense by Emily Carosone and Kasey Cooper, both of whom are tied for the club lead in homers with 16 on the season. Carosone leads the club with 63 RBIs and Cooper is not far behind with 50 of her own. Senior Rachel Fox and the rest of the Aggie pitching staff will have their hands full with this potent Tiger lineup.

First pitch on Friday is scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

BASEBALL CONTINUED

Through that span, Nau has a .409 average with seven RBIs. A&M also has had four consecutive games with multiple home runs, and have hit 12 home runs during its five-game win streak.

The Aggie pitching staff has been one of the best in the country this season, tied for second in the nation in team

ERA. Friday night, junior Grayson Long will take the mound for A&M. In his last outing against Kentucky, Long got the win in 4 1/3 innings of work, with one run on six hits while striking out six. He leads the team in strikeouts (56). Game time is set for 6:35 p.m.

Saturday, Kyle Simonds will make his second start of the season after beginning the year in the bullpen. In his first start against Missouri, Simonds worked

five innings, surrendering two unearned runs on only three hits. Simonds will throw the first pitch at 1:05 p.m.

Matt Kent will get the nod for A&M on Sunday afternoon. Last time out against Kentucky in the double header, Kent went 3 1/3 innings, allowing three runs on five hits in the game. Kent will get the game started at 12:05 p.m.

A&M is 23-1 within the friendly confines of Olsen Field this season.