



Kaitlyn Griffith hit three home runs and three RBI to help the Jags sweep Texas-Arlington over the weekend.

USAJAGUARS

Women's tennis captures SBC title

Jaguars sweep conference tournament, win league-leading 17th championship

By DREW SCELSE
Sports Editor

The University of South Alabama women's tennis team won the Sun Belt Conference Championship last weekend, defeating Texas State, Louisiana-Monroe and Texas-Arlington en route to its first conference title since 2003.

USA 4, TXSU 1

On Friday, the No. 1 seed Lady Jags defeated No. 8 seed Texas State 4-1 on the singles courts. The teams did not finish the final singles match or play the doubles matches, as USA had already clinched the match. Texas State finished the year 9-7.

"Coming off last weekend, we lost two heart-breaking matches," USA head coach Jaco Keyser said. "To put that behind us and take on a Texas State team that played at a pretty high level today, absorb that and come out with a win, I was very impressed."

Laura Valkova started the day for the Jaguars with a 6-3, 6-2 win on court No. 1.

Laura Matuskova was the next to finish, adding a 6-2, 6-2 win on court No. 6. Monica Mitta (6-4, 6-2) won in straight sets on the second court, then Michaela Meszarosova won 6-3, 0-6, 7-5 on the fourth court to seal the win for South Alabama.

"Michaela is a great competitor," Keyser said. "Sometimes she gets a little distracted along the way, but today she was able to dig in and take on a player who played a really quality match. For her to squeeze that out, that's pretty impressive."

USA 4, ULM 3

On Saturday, the Jaguars defeated No. 4-seeded Louisiana-Monroe 4-3 in the semifinals matchup to earn a spot in the conference finals. The two teams split the singles matches 3-3, but South Alabama swept the three doubles matches to take a 4-3 victory.

Laura Valkova was again the first Jaguar to earn a singles victory, defeating Amy Olivier 2-6, 6-1, 6-3 on the first court. Laura Matuskova then added a straight-set victory on the sixth court (6-1, 6-0), and Emily Newton took a court three win, 6-7 (6-8), 7-5, 6-4 to tie the score at 3-3.

"That was impressive," USA head coach Jaco Keyser said of Newton's performance. "Any time you can bounce back from a first set like that and, under crisis, trust and keep trying to execute your game plan takes a lot of mental toughness. That's something she's grown with in the last year or two."

"I just tried to stay the course and play my game," Newton said. "I knew she had some gaps in her backhand that would eventually break down; I tried to attack that. And when Laura Matuskova came out and won her second set, it was huge that she got on and off the court; it gave me some momentum."

Mary Angela Martin and Mi-

chaela Meszarosova won the first doubles game 6-1 for the Jaguars, then Monica Mitta and Paula Sanchez added a 6-2 win to clinch the Jags' spot in the conference finals.

USA 4, UTA 3

On Sunday, the Jaguars earned their first conference title in 12 years, defeating No. 2 seed Texas-Arlington 4-3 in another hard-fought game.

The Jags' 17th conference title is the most in Sun Belt history, and earns South Alabama an automatic bid in the NCAA Tournament. UTA finished its season 16-6.

"It's been a while, so this is probably one of the most emotional conference wins I've ever had as a player or a coach just because we've come a long way," said USA head coach Jaco Keyser, who earned his second conference championship as a head coach. "I honestly believed we deserved this conference tournament; there's no one who works harder

than this team in this conference, I know that for a fact. For them to be rewarded is pretty satisfying.

South Alabama again split the singles games 3-3 and took both doubles games to win the Sun Belt title.

Mary Angela Martin (7-5, 7-6 (7-1)), Monica Mitta (6-4, 2-6, 6-1) and Michaela Meszarosova (7-5, 3-6, 7-5) took singles wins for South Alabama, while the teams of Laura Valkova and Emily Newton (8-3), and Mary Angela Martin and Michaela Meszarosova (8-5) won in doubles.

"We played good doubles, that's our strength," Keyser stated. "I was surprised that we jumped on them in singles, but they're a good team and I knew they were going to come back. I thought we might squeeze them for a while, but that was wishful thinking; UT Arlington is a tough team, every time it comes down to the last match. It probably went as scripted."

Baseball drops series at Evansville, falls to 25-15

By DREW SCELSI
Sports Editor

The University of South Alabama baseball team started its week off well, taking the first game in its series against Evansville, but lost both games Saturday to drop the series 2-1.

The Jaguars' game against Nicholls State on Wednesday was cancelled due to rain, and may be rescheduled.

USA 7, EU 3

On Friday, the Jags got off to a hot start in Evansville, Indiana, outscoring the Purple Aces 7-1 after the first inning.

Kevin Hill (6-0) continued his strong season, striking out seven batters and allowing three earned runs in 5 2/3 innings to earn the win. Ben Taylor struck out the side in the ninth inning to earn his fifth save of the season.

Evansville struck first in the game, taking a 2-0 lead in the first inning on a two-run homer by Kevin Kaczmarek, but South Alabama answered in the third on a grand slam by Ben Gann to make the score 4-2.

In the fourth inning, the Purple Aces pulled within one on a two-out RBI single by Shain Showers, but that was as close as EU would get. South Alabama would add one run in the fifth, seventh and ninth innings to pull away with a 7-3 victory.

Gann finished the game 2-for-5 with a

career-high four RBI and a run scored, and Bud Collura was 3-for-5 with three RBI.

Patrick Schnieders (2-5) took the loss for Evansville, after allowing nine hits and six earned runs in six innings of work.

EU 6, USA 5

In game one of Saturday's doubleheader, the Jaguars took an early 2-0 in the third inning, but let the lead slip away to fall 6-5.

Matt Bolger and Ben Gann both hit RBI singles in the third to put the Jags up by two runs, but did not score again until the seventh, and by then, it was too little, too late.

Cameron Cochran (1-1) got tagged with the loss after giving up five runs, all unearned, on three hits in one inning of work.

Gann was 3-for-4 with three RBI to lead the Jaguars at the plate. Bud Collura and Matt Bolger were both 1-for-4 with an RBI each.

EU 9, USA 5

In game two of the doubleheader, South Alabama again fell behind early, but could not make up the deficit, losing 9-5.

In the first inning, Kevin Kaczmarek and Billy Lipari both hit two-run singles to put the Purple Aces up 4-0, and Josh Jyawook hit an RBI double in the second inning to make the score 5-0. Kaczmarek added another run later in the inning on a sacrifice fly to give Evansville a six-run

lead headed into the third.

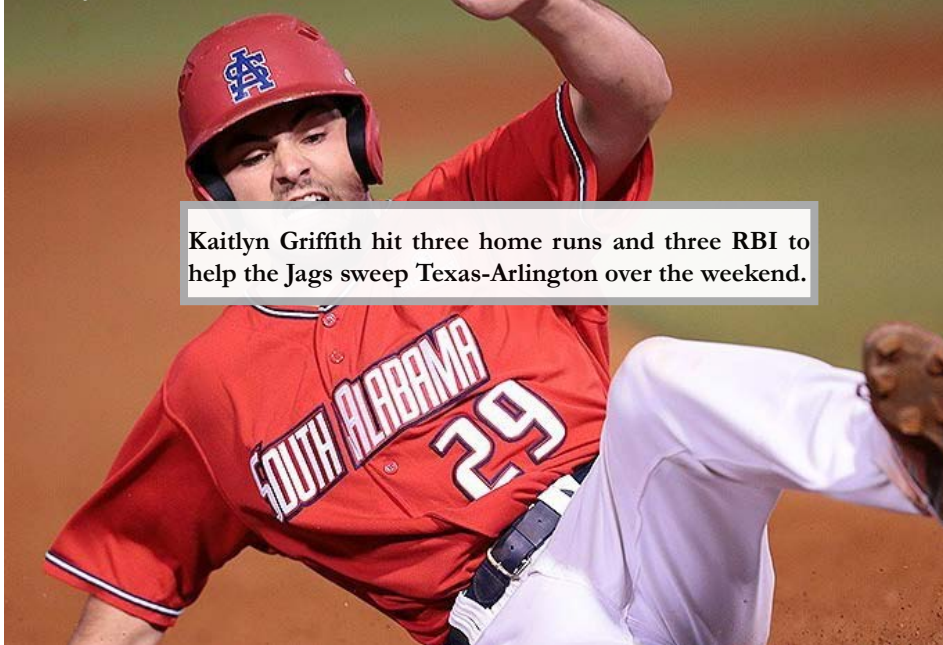
The Jaguars did not record a hit until the top of the fifth inning, and did not score until the sixth. USA added five runs in the sixth inning, but that would be all they could muster for the game.

Ben Gann continued his strong weekend, going 1-for-5 at the plate with a home run, two RBI and a run scored. Cole Gleason and Matt Bolger were both 2-for-5 with a run scored apiece.

Jared Gates (3-2) gave up four earned runs on five hits in the first inning, recording just two outs before being relieved by Joey Jones. Evansville's Connor Strain (2-4) pitched 5 2/3 innings and gave three runs to earn the win for the Purple Aces (20-16).

South Alabama (25-15, 11-7) play at Jacksonville State Tuesday and Wednesday, then host Georgia State this weekend at Stanky Field.

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Column: Cheerleading is a competitive sport

By TORIE BEMBRY
Contributing Writer

When most people think of a college cheerleading team, they may picture the people on the sidelines cheering for the real athletes, but the sport of cheerleading involves so much more.

To be a college cheerleader, it takes a well-rounded individual athlete. School comes first. Team membership requires full-time student status and a consistent GPA at 2.0 or above.

Cheerleading athletes, like most university athletes, practice at least three days a week and start the day with an early-morning workout.

The cheerleading team primarily leads the college or university crowd at athletic competitions and pep rallies. The team choreographs routines to please the audience and get them into the game.

USA cheerleaders advertise and support the university at a variety of public appearances hosted by local middle schools or large corporate conventions. The team intends to make sure the University of South Alabama is presented as the great establishment it is. Last, but not least, they train to compete for

a spot at National Colligate Association Collegiate Nationals.

The NCA College Nationals are held in Daytona Beach, Florida. This competition has been put on annually for more than 20 years. College cheerleading teams from all over the country compete for the national champions title. The competition offers different divisions to accommodate teams from community colleges to Division I universities. Most college cheerleaders start training for nationals the day after they make the team.

During tryouts, coaches search for the most diverse group of athletes to fulfill certain spots for floor competition. Talented people are needed for each position. These athletes not only need to know how to be an energetic cheerleader and inspire the crowd with energetic spirit, but they must also have a knowledgeable background in tumbling and stunts.

Tumbling is another word for flips. Certain stunts, like a standing tuck, are mandatory. A tuck is a standing back flip with no hands. Stunting allows the team to build pyramids and throw girls into the air.

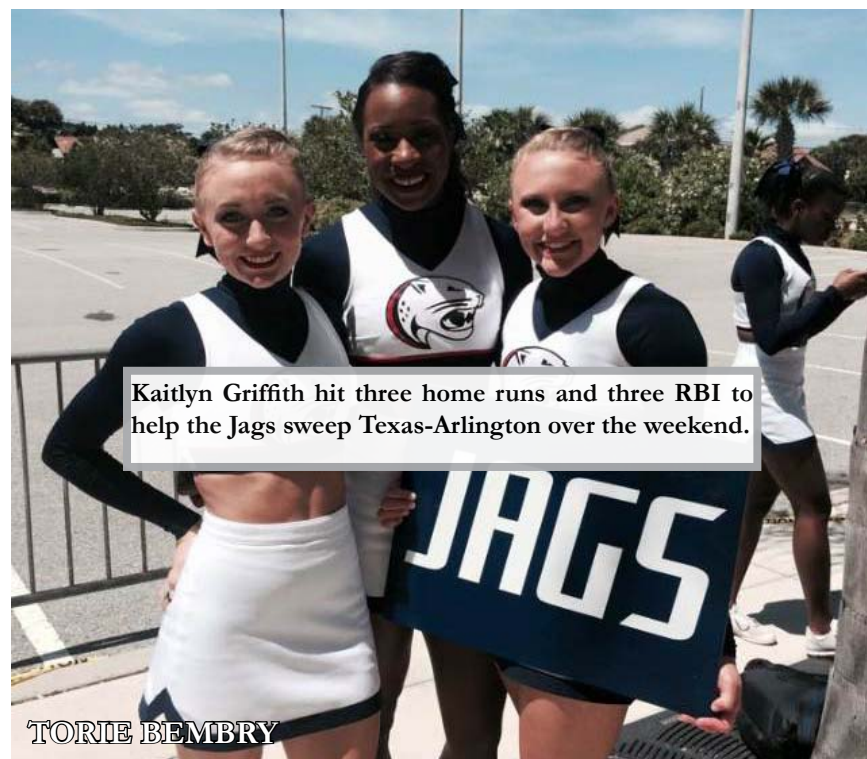
After making the team, the cheerleader must prepare for summer camp at a large university, which attracts teams from a vari-

ety of universities and colleges

At camp cheerleaders are taught extreme skills that may help prepare them for nationals.

So, next time take a good look at the

cheerleading team. Those college cheerleaders are more than a group of people who cheer at games. They are dedicated athletes who work hard to support other teams at their university.



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TORIE BEMBRY

SPORTS BRIEFS

Softball takes down

Mississippi State, cancels series

By AARON POIROUX
Sports Reporter

The University of South Alabama Softball team defeated the Mississippi State Bulldogs 3-2 on Tuesday. Kalen McGill earned the win for South, with Farish Beard recording the save, her first of the year.

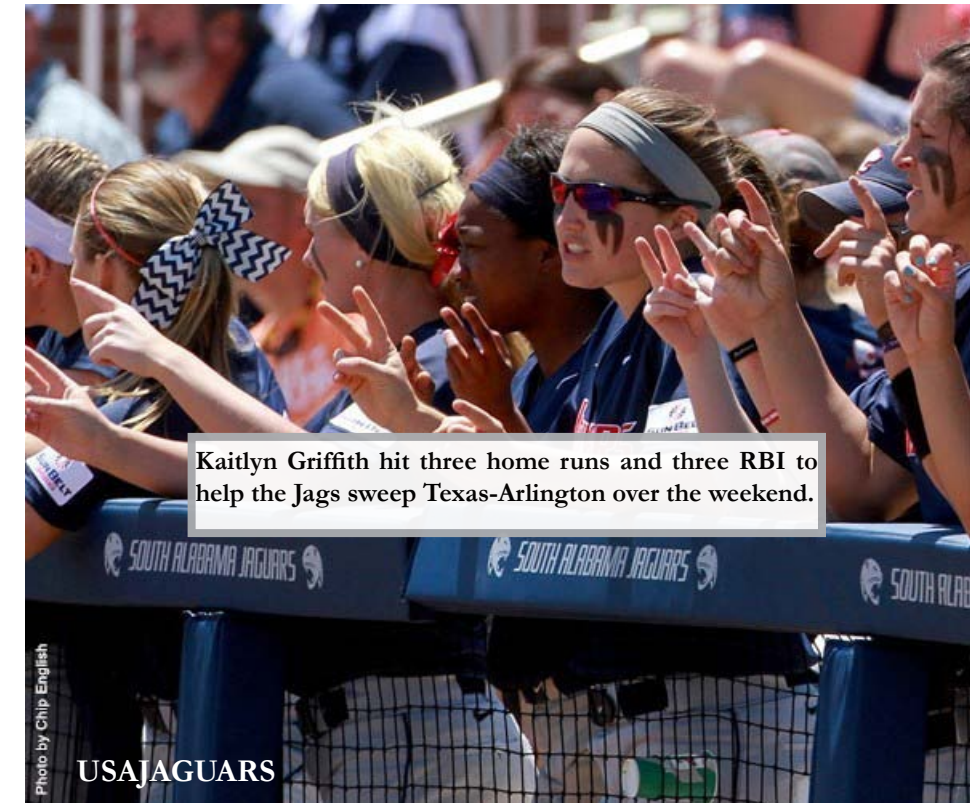
"This was a really well-played game tonight — it kind of had a postseason feel to it," said USA head coach Becky Clark. "It was a great win for us on the road. I felt like our kids were prepared, I felt like they competed, and I felt like they were composed the entire game. I'm proud of our effort tonight."

Stephanie Pilkington had 1 run and 1

hit during the game. Kaitlyn Griffith finished with a run and a hit, and Kaleigh Todd recorded a single run. Chloe Rathburn had 1 hit and 2 RBI. Amanda Minahan had 1 hit, and Blair Johnson had 1 RBI.

For Mississippi State, Madison Arroyo and Loryn Nichols had a single run each. Katie Anne Bailey added 2 hits, Caroline Seitz had a hit and an RBI, and Kayla Winkfield finished with a single RBI.

The Jags were set to take on the Georgia Southern Eagles in a weekend series, but the series was cancelled due to inclement weather. The team, now 32-7 overall and 14-3 in conference play, will return to action on Wednesday, April 22 against the Southern Miss Golden Eagles in Hattiesburg.



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Women's golf places sixth at SBC Championship

By AARON POIROUX
Sports Reporter

The University of South Alabama women's golf team participated in the Sun Belt Conference Championship last week in Loxley, Alabama. The team turned in a final-round team score of 311. Due to the weather, only two rounds were able to be played. The Jags concluded the event with a total score of 617.

"The weather finally cooperated, and I thought the girls gave it a really good effort," USA head coach TJ Jackson said. "All year we've been working on getting mentally tough, and they showed that today even though the score doesn't reflect it; I saw a lot of improvement in that area. Ingrid had a really rough front nine, but came back with four birdies on the back nine — that was indicative of the whole team and their effort. I was pleased with that part of it, but we'd like the scores to be lower obviously."

Ingrid Hagen led the team in the first round, posting a 78 for the second 18 holes. She finished the tournament tied for 15th out of 40 participants, with a final score of 153.

I started off a little rough with a lot of bogeys, but I made the turn determined to finish strong," said Hagen. "I made up my

mind to go low and everything rolled in from there.

"I hit some iron shots that came in close. I made a birdie on No. 2, and I chipped in on the next par three, which was a clutch up-and-down there. I had some putts that finally rolled in that didn't fall on the front nine."

Caroline Beebe (76-78) and Carianne Wright (77-78) both carded a second-round, 6-over par 78. Beebe finished with a total score of 154, while Wright finished with a total score of 155. Beebe finished tied for 18th overall. Both Wright and freshman Madison Connell (78-77) finished tied for 21st. Freshman Kaeli Jones (79-80) turned in a two-round total score of 159 and finished 31st overall.

"We made some strides in the mental game, and that's what we were wanting to do," Jackson said. "These girls are very talented — they can hit any shot out there — but it's how we're thinking around that golf course that makes the difference. I feel we've made strides there, so going into next year I'm really excited. We've got some young players who can play, I'm ready for next year already."

Troy (301-292) won the tournament with a team score of 593, while Arkansas — Little Rock's Stina Resen (72-70) won medalist honors with a 2-under par total of 142.

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Three Jags top career marks at California meet

By **AARON POIROUX**
Sports Reporter

Three USA Jags recorded their best career marks during a three-day trip to California last week.

On Thursday, during the Bryan Clay Invitational, Renaldo Frechou recorded a 68.74m mark in the men's hammer throw. Frechou won the event and surpassed the Sun Belt Conference record by nearly half a meter, while out-throwing the runner up by over seven meters. Frechou again broke the record when he threw posted a 68.79m distance during the Mt. SAC Relays on Saturday.

"Renaldo had a couple of great meets," said USA head coach Paul Brueske. "This is going to put him atop the [Sun Belt] Conference. It seems like he's getting better each week and at each meet. He struggled early on with some of his throws — I think because the atmosphere at the event was a little nerve-wracking — but he settled down and got the job done."

Patrick Rohr placed fourth in the men's 3,000-meter steeplechase Thursday with a career-best time of 8:55.79. On Friday, Christoph Graf finished 7th collegiately and 10th overall with a time of 14:06.43 in the 5,000-meter run. His performance moved him the fifth all time

on the school's performance list for that event.

"Patrick and Christoph have been leaders for us since the cross country season," Brueske said. "They did what they needed to do and are on track to finish the season strong."

On Friday, Jan-Louw Kotze placed seventh in the men's discus, throwing a distance of 57.00 meters. He also placed 16th in the men's hammer throw with a distance of 56.35 meters.

For the women, Phoebe Dowson placed in the top-20 in two events during the Bryan Clay Invitational on Friday. She placed sixth in the women's discus with a distance of 50.03 meters, and was also 20th in the women's hammer throw, throwing 45.63 meters.

Kaitlyn Beans placed eighth in the women's triple jump with a leap of 12.22 meters on Friday.

"I thought it was a very productive trip, these guys went out and competed at a very high level," Brueske said. "I think this will give them confidence going into the postseason — at the conference, NCAA Regional and hopefully NCAA Championships — because they went up against some of the best people in the world."

The Jags will end the outdoor regular season on Friday and Saturday at the Golden Eagle Classic at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Men's tennis falls in SBC Championship finals

By **DREW SCELSE**
Sports Editor

The South Alabama men's tennis team defeated Appalachian State and Texas-Arlington last weekend to reach the finals of the Sun Belt Conference Championship, but fell to Troy to take second place.

USA 4, ASU 1

On Friday, the No. 3-seeded Jaguars beat the No. 6 seed Appalachian State Mountaineers 4-1.

The Jaguars earned straight-set wins on its four singles victories to defeat the Mountaineers. During the conference tournament, teams only play doubles matches if necessary.

Tuki Jacobs was the first to finish, winning 6-0, 6-1 on the No. 4 court over Zach Bost. Juan Troglia was next, taking a 6-2, 7-5 over Jack Maddocks on court 3. Olivier Gingras (6-4, 7-5) and Daniel Leitner (7-6 (7-5), 6-4) followed on the fifth and first courts, respectively, to give the Jaguars the victory.

"Getting the win today as a team was great," Leitner said. "For me individually, I wasn't playing my best tennis, but I kept

looking around at the other guys doing really well so that gave me confidence on the big points. Winning the first-set tiebreaker was crucial. If you want to win a championship, those are the points you need to win."

USA 4, UTA 1

On Saturday, the Jaguars again took four straight-set singles victories, beating No. 2-seeded Texas-Arlington 4-1 to reach the finals of the Sun Belt tournament.

Daniel Leitner started the day off with a 6-4, 6-0 win on court No. 1, followed by straight-set wins from Juan Troglia (6-1, 6-3), Tuki Jacobs (6-4, 6-1) and Gerhard Grindeligh (6-1, 6-3).

Troy 4, USA 1

On Sunday, the Jaguars fell to top-seeded Troy 4-1 in the Sun Belt Conference final. The Jaguars finished the year 16-9 and ranked 69th in the nation.

The doubles teams took the court first, with Troy taking two of the three matches. Daniel Leitner and Gerhard Grindeligh earned the only doubles win for USA.

In singles, Tuki Jacobs was the only Jaguar to get a victory, taking down Daniel Bustamante 6-4, 6-3.



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