

# Aggie assistant adds local flavor to March madness festivities

By **Joey Falkoff**  
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While most of the local attention for this year's NCAA tournament will be geared toward Kansas and Kansas State, Colby residents may also want to keep a close eye on Texas A&M.

Being that its campus is located 818 miles south of Colby, Texas A&M wouldn't seem like much of a local draw.

But no team in this field of 65 has closer ties to the area than the Aggies.

Besides their head coach Mark Turgeon, who hails from Topeka, the Aggie coaching staff features Colby High graduate and former Colby Community College assistant coach Mike Rohn.

After spending 18 years working his way up through the coaching ranks, Rohn followed Turgeon from Wichita State to Texas A&M in the spring of 2007 and works as the Aggies director of basketball operations.

"For coach Turgeon, it was opportunity he couldn't pass up and it was the same for myself," said Rohn. "You have to love the opportunity to be able to advance in your career and coach in the Big 12."

Rohn says his duties as the director of basketball operations deals less with coaching and more with organizing schedules, academics and recruiting visits.

"I just kind of oversee everything that goes on in the program," said Rohn.

"Mike has been with me for a long time and is very loyal," said Turgeon on the Texas A&M athletic web site. "He understands

what I want from him in the office and how I like to do things. I lean on him pretty heavily for a lot of things. He handles probably the most important thing we do here, which is academics. He's an excellent recruiter and a big-time coach."

Though he won't be sitting directly next to Turgeon as he did for seven years at Wichita State, Rohn goes to every game and will be in attendance when the #9 seeded Aggies open tournament play 6:25 p.m. tonight against #8 seed BYU in Anaheim, Calif.

It's been a long journey to reach the height of college basketball, and one that started for Rohn in Colby.

Rohn grew up here in the late 60s and 70s, and like many of his childhood friends, spent countless summer nights at the park perfecting his jump shot or playing catch.

"I had great friends and all we did was play sports," said Rohn. "I had a lot of really good coaches I played for. It was a great place to grow up and go to school. Growing up there, coaching is what I figured I wanted to do."

Rohn graduated from Colby High in 1985 and was a starter on the 1983-84 Eagle basketball team that finished third at state.

"We had a good stretch going there. That's for sure," said Rohn.

Rohn played two years of college basketball at Dodge City



Rohn

Community College and finished his career at McPherson College.

Rohn was a two-time all-conference selection at McPherson. He was named the league's newcomer of the year as a junior and was the conference player of the year as a senior.

Rohn stayed as an assistant coach at McPherson for three years before coming back home and taking an assistant coaching job at Colby Community College under Bill O'Connor in 1990.

He stayed in Colby just one season, leaving to become a graduate assistant coach at Fort Hays State.

After three years at Fort Hays, Rohn moved back to Dodge City where he was an assistant coach from 1993-1996 and the head coach for the Conquistadors from 1996-2000.

In his only head coaching stint, Rohn compiled a 55-38 record.

It was at Dodge City where Rohn became acquainted with Turgeon through a mutual friend named Chad Wintz, who also graduated from Colby High in 1983. Wintz was Turgeon's roommate while they played together at Kansas from 1984-1987.

Turgeon was the head coach at Jacksonville State at the time, but left to take the job at Wichita State in 2000 and Rohn soon joined him as his assistant.

"Chad is the reason why coach Turgeon hired me," said Rohn.

Turgeon and Rohn took over a Shocker program that had had just two winning seasons in the previous 11 years.

Things couldn't have gotten off to a rockier start either.

Wichita State began the 2000-2001 season 0-11 before making a late-season push to finish 9-19.

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Mike Rohn,  
Texas A&M director of basketball operations

Slowly but surely though, Turgeon and Rohn started to turn things around.

The next season Wichita State improved to 15-15. In 2003, 2004 and 2005, the Shockers earned a birth in the National Invitational Tournament (NIT).

Then came 2006; a truly benchmark year in the history of Wichita State basketball.

The Shockers finished 26-9 and won their first Missouri Valley Conference championship since 1983.

They knocked off Seton Hall and Tennessee to reach their first Sweet 16 since 1988 before bowing out to eventual Final Four participant George Mason, 63-55.

"Going to the Sweet 16 was the culmination of a lot of hard work," said Rohn. "We just kept getting better and better. Each year we won a few more games. It was one of those special years that don't come along very often."

Wichita State climbed to as high as #8 in the polls the following year before slumping to 17-14 and missing out on the post-season. Nevertheless, Turgeon was still a hot commodity.

A domino effect that started with Tubby Smith surprisingly leaving Kentucky for Minnesota and Aggie head coach Billy Gillespie

bolting for the Bluegrass state left an opening at Texas A&M.

Almost immediately, Turgeon was hired to replace Gillespie. Rohn was named to his position a week later.

"It pretty much all happened in a span of 48 hours," said Rohn. "Next thing you know, we're working and coaching in Texas. Obviously, there were some people that were disappointed and didn't want to see him go. Most people understood that's the nature of college basketball."

Since that hectic period in April, Rohn has been able to settle down in Texas and fit in nicely to his new role.

For someone used to the vicious Kansas winters, living in College Station has been a nice perk.

"This area is a great place to live," said Rohn. "You don't have to worry about snow. Coach and I miss seeing our families. That's the hardest part is not being closer, but they all understand Texas is a great place to live. I don't miss the weather. That's for sure."

Rohn has a wife, Stephanie, and two daughters, Raegen and Rylee, who live with him in College Station. But his parents, Kenneth and Joyce Rohn, still reside in Colby.

As for his responsibilities, Rohn says the transition to a bigger,

more recognizable school hasn't necessarily made things easier.

"The difference here is the pool of players is a lot smaller," he said. "You have to have the best players in the country. There's a lot less guys who can play in the Big 12 compared to the Missouri Valley. To not have as many bodies to choose from makes for a different ball of wax when it comes to recruiting."

On the hardwood, Turgeon and Rohn have had a tough act to follow, but have held up well.

The Aggies finished sixth in the rugged Big 12 and enter the NCAA tournament with a 24-8 record.

"Billy did an unbelievable job. It's amazing some of the things he achieved," said Rohn. "Mark's doing a great job putting his stamp on the program. It's never easy to follow a guy who did great things, but coach has been the perfect guy to do it."

Starting tonight, the Aggies will see if they can duplicate last year's run to the Sweet 16.

For Rohn, it's just another stepping stone in his ascension to the top of the college basketball world.

Northwest Kansas may not be known as a hotbed for Division I coaches or high-ranking athletic department personnel, but Rohn's achievements should prove to young athletes or aspiring coaches in the area that anything is possible.

"You can do anything you put your mind to," said Rohn.

"People are no different in Colby than anywhere else. I've had a lot of people help me out and I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them."

## Freshmen sensations set to meet in first round

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Michael Beasley was standing in a narrow hallway outside the Kansas State locker room. Suddenly, O.J. Mayo appeared at the end of the corridor.

"Yo, Michael!" Mayo yelled.

"Juice!" Beasley screamed back.

They shook hands and embraced, these two freshman stars, both of them stopping by the NCAA tournament on their inevitable journey to the NBA.

Don't expect things to be so cordial Thursday when Mayo's Southern California Trojans face Beasley's Kansas State Wildcats in a game oozing with star power, the kind better suited for the Final Four than the opening round of the tournament.

They've been friends since their early teens — unless they're on opposite teams. That's when things get serious. It doesn't matter if it's a pickup game in a deserted high school gym or a pressure-packed NCAA game in a sold-out arena.

"I have no friends on the court," Beasley said.

Mayo confirmed the intensity of their rivalry.

"Hopefully we're going to fin-

ish this game," he said, "because usually when we play one-on-one games there's a lot of arguing and fighting. We hardly ever get to finish the games."

If not for a change in draft rules, the two freshmen surely would have been NBA rookies this season.

But they were required to spend at least a year in college, time spent honing their games and quickly establishing themselves as two of the country's best players — even if it's for one season only, as everyone expects.

Mayo led the sixth-seeded Trojans (21-11) in scoring at 20.8 points a game, as well as assists, steals and 3-point shooting. Beasley had an even better season at Kansas State, averaging 26.5 points and 12.4 rebounds to contend with North Carolina's Tyler Hansbrough for player of the year honors.

Beasley vs. Mayo.

Now that's a matchup every-

one can get excited about, even if you're on another team.

"Mayo and Beasley, you've got to give it to them," said Darnell Jackson of top-seeded Kansas, which had its own game to play Thursday against Portland State. "The guys are great players."

Considering their superb skills, it was inevitable Beasley and Mayo would hook up on the AAU and high school all-star circuit. They met when they were 13 or

14 and quickly hit it off.

"After games, we got to meet each other," Beasley said.

"We're the same kind of guys. We like the same kind of things. We pretty much clicked right away."

Mayo is even better friends with another Kansas State freshman, Bill Walker. They're both from Huntington, W.Va., and have known each other since preschool.

## Lady Trojans sweep McCook

The Colby Lady Trojan softball team swept a doubleheader from McCook, Neb., 5-0 and 9-1 Wednesday at Carl Adams Field to improve to 10-11 on the season.

No statistics were available at press time.

The Lady Trojans return to action 3 p.m. Wednesday for a doubleheader with Hutchinson at Carl Adams Field.

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**Arron Rondeau** shot his first 300 game on Tuesday, March 11. Arron bowls for Colby Automotive on both Tues and Thursdays. He carries a 193 average. Arron is employed by the Colby Com. College in the maintenance department and has bowled since he was a young child.

March 11th - Pinbusters	Won	Lost	Place
Team	58	26	1
Pepsi	52	32	2
Colby Automotive	46	38	3
United Commercial Travel	46	38	4
Killer Bees	40	44	5
Cummins Central Power	36	48	6
Gambino's	36	48	7
Colby Bowl	22	62	8
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First high individual game: Arron Rondeau, 300  
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