

UTA MAGAZINE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON | spring/sum 2005

UTA enjoys the ride

WOMEN'S SPORTS

March gladness

Tournament appearances by The Lay

UTA INSIDER WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

It's all about rebounds for UTA

Rebounding and defense are the keys to success for the UTA women's basketball team. The team has been successful in these areas, leading to a strong performance in the NCAA tournament. The team's rebounding and defensive efforts have been a major factor in their success.

UTA women earn first NCAA berth

The UTA women's basketball team has earned its first berth in the NCAA tournament. This is a historic achievement for the program, and it is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the players and coaches. The team will represent the University of Texas at Arlington in the upcoming tournament.



REUNION ARENA

\$15.00

127 SEC E 9 ROW SEAT

NCAA BASKETBALL 2

2005 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FIRST/SECOND ROUNDS DALLAS, TEXAS UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AND TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

NO REFUNDS • NO EXCHANGES • NO READMITTANCE

SATURDAY MARCH 19, 2005 GAME TIME TBD

86907822412432

127 SEC E 9 ROW SEAT

DALLAS 2



HOOPS HISTORY

Headed to the dance UTA makes strides IN MY OPINION UTA, coach have come along way Second effort earns UTA first invitation Don't know, but "my girls" from UT-Arlington are "dancing" tonight, and I'm clapping right along with them. How many young girls do UTA's true grit EDITORIAL: OUR VIEW Super Women shot on big stage women's basketball team for reaching

Women advance to first NCAA Tournament

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ON THE COVER
The women's basketball team made headlines during the 2004-05 season by winning the Southland Conference championship and advancing to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in school history.

LENSCAPE
Photographer Robert Crosby captured this architectural detail of Preston Hall on a May afternoon.

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IN THIS ISSUE

10 Changing lives

An abusive relationship, the death of a spouse, financial crises, dead-end jobs, a crippling illness. Meet five graduates who used their UTA educations to overcome these obstacles and transform their lives.

by Sherry W. Neaves, Mark Permenter, Kim Pewitt-Jones, Sue Stevens and Danny Woodward

16 Hoops history

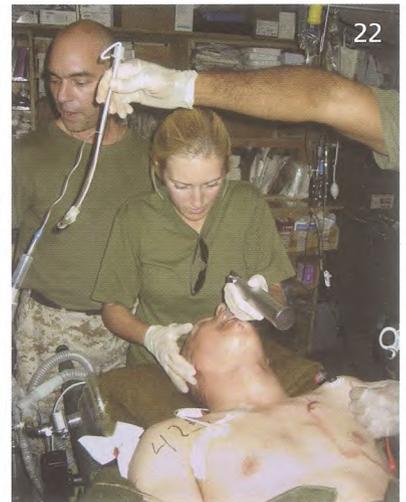
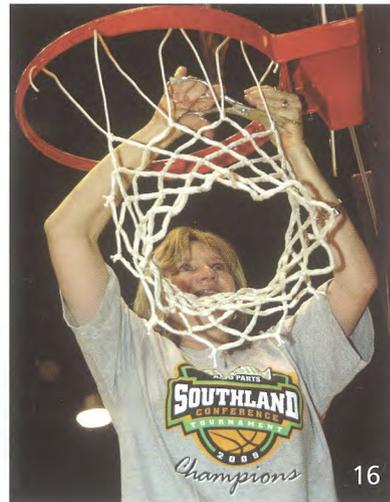
By earning UTA's first trip to the NCAA Tournament, the women's basketball team attracted local and national media attention and established itself as a major player in big-time college hoops.

photographs by Robert Crosby

22 Critical care

The scene could be straight from a M.A.S.H. episode: A medical team attends to wounded soldiers as mortar shells explode too close for comfort. Such was life for Kelly Bowman ('03) as a nurse in Iraq's war zones.

by Becky Purvis



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- IBC Yesteryear *A page from UTA's past.*

JESUS ALAMILLO



Mind over body

Pain was Jesus Alamillo's constant childhood companion. Surgeons, too. For 14 years, doctors repeatedly tried to fix the damage that polio inflicted on his lower legs. Each operation brought physical—and emotional—scars.

"I went through so many surgeries," he says, "that I can't remember them all."

He could walk, even run a little, but not like the other kids. The disease ravaged his muscles, weakening them to where Alamillo eventually needed braces and sometimes a wheelchair.

At age 11, his parents decided their youngest son required better treatment. They moved from the small Mexican town of Valparaiso to California, where some of Jesus' 12 brothers and sisters lived.

Neither he nor his parents spoke English. His father worked construction jobs while his mother babysat his nieces and nephews. Despite mounting medical bills, they made ends meet while living modestly in east Hollywood.

"It wasn't a real bad neighborhood," said the 35-year-old UTA graduate. "But it was near other bad neighborhoods with a lot of crime."

Alamillo preferred school to the

gang activity. He didn't realize it then, but his junior high coach opened the door to a better life by introducing him to wheelchair basketball.

Having never used a chair before, he crashed often. But by high school, he had become one of the best young players in the country.

Jim Hayes remembers the first time he saw Alamillo. It was a helpless experience for the longtime UTA Movin' Mavs coach.

In 1987, he took a team of junior players to a tournament in Minnesota. One of their opponents was Whitney High School from Long Beach, Calif.

"There were two kids on that team who tore us up," Hayes recalled. "We thought we were good. But compared to them, we were not."

One of the two was Alamillo; the other was Willie Hernandez. The coach wanted both to play for UTA

but had only one scholarship, which he offered to Hernandez in 1989.

"Willie said he'd come, but only if Jesus could come, too," Hayes said. "So I came back and raised enough money for a second scholarship."

The backcourt duo led the Movin' Mavs to three consecutive National Intercollegiate Wheelchair Basketball championships. Alamillo was a four-time All-American; Hernandez a two-time All-American. Both had their jerseys retired.

But what impressed Hayes more than their basketball abilities was their performance in the classroom. Both players earned mechanical engineering degrees.

"It was [academically] risky at best to bring both of them in," Hayes said. "I knew they'd have to learn how to be students. I expected them to struggle. To make a long

story short, they made the most of their opportunities."

They're not struggling now. Hernandez is co-founder and vice president of Per4MaX, a wheelchair manufacturing company. Alamillo is a senior project engineer for Trinity Industries in Dallas. They live a few blocks from each other in south Arlington and often practice together in a semi-pro league.

Aside from basketball, Alamillo uses a wheelchair only when going long distances. He still wears braces on his lower legs, and he needs hip replacement surgery. Earning a college degree was his ticket to "being somebody," to becoming a productive member of society.

"With my disability, I can't do manual labor. I need a white-collar job," he said. "UTA played a major role by giving me an opportunity to get a free education. I'll always be grateful."

Reflecting on those agonizing early years, Alamillo admits he's amazed at how his life turned out.

"I went through a lot of surgeries and a lot of pain and suffering. To be able to accomplish what I've accomplished means a whole lot," he said. "I've come a long way since then." ■

— Mark Permenter

"I went through a lot of surgeries and a lot of pain and suffering. To be able to accomplish what I've accomplished means a whole lot."

— Jesus Alamillo ('95)