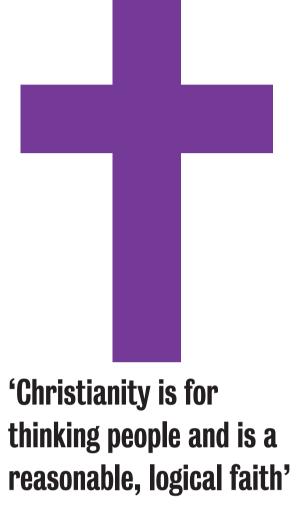
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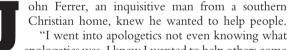
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Beliefs collide as three panelists discuss heavy hitting topics like human morality, the nature of evil and the existence of God



Natalee Blanchat The Battalion



## **'The lack of strength** of any other argument makes me an atheist'

Austin Burgart The Battalion

hawn Hanrahan has the air of someone who doesn't feel the need to question his religious beliefs. Representing the atheist-agnostic worldview, Hanrahan brings a laidback attitude, a steadfast commitment to his ideology and an eagerness to encourage discussion to the God Dialogues.

Hanrahan splits his time as an entomology doctoral student and as vice president of the Agnostic and Atheist Student Group on campus and considers himself an oddball atheist.

"Growing up I was more than welcome to be whatever I wanted," Hanrahan said. "Religion never had a hold on me like many other atheists and agnostics around me. I grew up and spent my whole life in a secular household." Hanrahan said the issue boils down to cold hard facts.

"There is no evidence for religion so the lack of strength of any other argument makes me an atheist," Hanrahan said.

Atheists, like Hanrahan, believe there is no God. Agnostics, on the other hand, do not know or hold that it is impossible to know if there is a God.

Growing up in Texas, Hanrahan admits others often did not accept his worldview. On multiple occasions, he lost friendships because of his beliefs.

Hanrahan was an outspoken advocate for his atheism in middle school. He has been making an impact on campus with the Agnostic and Atheist Student Group, facilitating group discussions at meetings for the past five semesters.

"The only time I won't mention [my beliefs] is to prevent a conflict," Hanrahan said. "Revealing that you're an atheist doesn't always end up well; religious topics can be very taboo and therefore are not talked about as often as they should be.'

## 'Islam is and can be a force of social and religious good in the world'

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#### **Justin Mathers** The Battalion

mad Mousavi's long journey to the God Diaern Iran. Born the grandson of a Muslim scholar, logues began in the small city of Rasht in northhe is the latest in a long line of such scholars in his family.

apologetics was. I knew I wanted to help others come to conclusions on tough questions," Ferrer said.

Now a Christian apologist and doctoral student at Southwestern University, Ferrer will participate in the God Dialogues Thursday representing Ratio Christi, a student apologetics organization on campus. Ferrer said philosophy and the idea of God have intrigued him. However, it was his brother's atheistic worldview that pushed him to explore his own faith.

"He looked at the bad examples in Christianity and thought he could see through Christianity. I looked at the bad examples and look around them and found a better example," Ferrer said. "He dug deep enough to find questions about the faith and I'd like to say I dug deeper and found hard answers underneath those tough questions."

Ferrer teaches church history and philosophy at several schools, including Tarrant County College in Fort Worth, Texas.

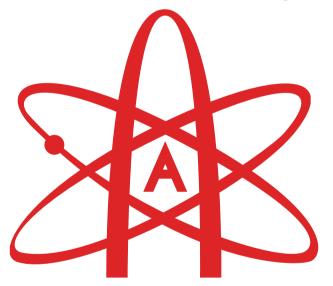
"I hope to invite the entire audience to engage in the questions that will be addressed," Ferrer said. "I want them to hear what thoughtful representatives from different worldviews have to say, that way they can build their own worldviews and interrogate their particular answers on these big questions."

Glenn Smith, a friend of Ferrer and Ratio Christi director, approached Ferrer about participating in the dialogue.

See Christianity on page 5

Much like the God Dialogues, Hanrahan said open and honest discussions are important for everyone.

#### See Atheism on page 5



Mousavi's home city has historically possessed a burgeoning international and open-minded culture, he said, which remained intact despite being overpowered by the Islamic conquest of Persia during the sixth century. It is not a very religious place, despite the majority of the population identifying as Muslims, but Mousavi and his ancestors have always had a strong tie to the Islamic faith.

At the age of 13, Mousavi realized that being labeled a Muslim didn't hold special significance "since so many people are born into the title."

This realization drove his choice of, and dedication to Islam as the religion by which he would define his life. Mousavi soon found that he enjoyed studying the Quran, Islam's religious text.

"It is the best defined and most original scripture," Mousavi said. "There is no large-scale argument about what is in the Quran as it has always been read and written in the original wording.'

Mousavi said when he was learning about his faith, he would quietly make his way to his room every night to read and memorize one verse from the Quran.

Although his lineage is strongly Islamic, Mousavi said his immediate family has not followed suit, making him strongly conscious of alerting his parents to his autodidactic religious studies. After first reading the Quran,

See Islam on page 5

#### the**batt.com** iLas fotos de **Barcelona!**

Do you daydream about foreign lands? Bianca Stewart, blogger for *The Battalion*, shares the sights and stories from her time in Barcelona, Spain, at thebatt.com.

#### inside | 3 **Batman**: **Arkham** City

O'Dell Harmon took the latest Batman video game on a trial run. See inside for his review of the sequel to Arkham Asylum.

## campus Students utilize University tutoring services

#### **Madeline Burns** The Battalion

When struggling in a tough class, Texas A&M students have seemingly endless tutoring possibilities that include free University services offered on campus.

These services range from tutoring at the Student Learning Center, the University Writing Center or various help-desks associated with specific classes.

Kylie Novak, an undergraduate consultant at the Texas A&M University Writing Center and senior education major, said that the purpose of the University Writing Center is to teach students how to become better writers by altering the way they go about constructing a paper.

"Through face-to-face and online consultations, writing center consultants are able to provide students with the personalized writing help they need," Novak said. "As a consultant, my goal is to help my peers become better writers rather than simply 'editing' each paper that a student shows me. I also help students with their public speaking assignments."

Novak emphasized the importance of acknowledging every student as an individual in the one-on-

#### one tutoring process.

"The University Writing Center is student-oriented," Novak said. "The director and consultants work together with Texas A&M faculty toward one comprehensive goal: to help the student become an active, independent learner. The University Writing Center can help students with any kind of communication project — at any stage of the creative process - written or oral."

Phi Eta Sigma, an academic honor society, is another free, on-campus tutoring option offered to students. This program is unique because there are no restrictions to the classes that can be offered.

"Phi Eta Sigma offers tutoring to all Texas A&M students, for any class," said Adele Kurt, Phi Eta Sigma president.

A spreadsheet of the members that currently offer tutoring is on the Phi Eta Sigma website, pes.tamu. edu, under the "Tutoring" tab. The list changes each semester, as do the classes tutored.

Additionally, since the tutoring service is independently run, there is great flexibility in the options.



geography, math, physics and political science in Hotard Hall room 111 as a part of the free services provided by the Student Learning Center. More information about the Student Learning Center can be found at slc.tamu.edu.

See Tutoring on page 5





#### Aggieland 🗶 Commitment to Excellence

#### Aggie Mothers' Clubs Provost & Executive Vice and vendors will sell a President for Academic variety of crafts, from Affairs will hold a seminar on accountability for the impact of teaching. This is the eighth campus dialogue in the Commitment to Excellence series and will be held at 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., Tuesday in Rudder 601.

Friday gradually clearing high: 67 low: 43

thebattalion 10.27.2011

#### world China to the rescue

NEW YORK — Stock indexes finished higher Wednesday following reports that China will come to the aid of Europe by investing in a financial rescue fund. Agence France-Presse reported that China has agreed to invest in Europe's financial rescue fund, which will be used to support struggling countries and banks in the European Union. The Dow Jones industrial average jumped more than 100 points after the report came out in the early afternoon. Five stocks rose for every one that fell on the New York Stock Exchange. **Top European officials** met in Brussels to discuss how to contain the region's debt crisis, which has festered for two years. European officials announced a plan after the U.S. market closed that will require the region's banks to increase their levels of cash to better protect themselves from losses on the Greek bonds they hold.

Associated Press

## how**to**apply

## **Tradition volunteers**



Roger Zhang — THE BATTALION

Newly inducted junior Ross Volunteers practice in the parking lot near The Grove. The Ross Volunteer Company is the honor guard for the Texas governor and fires three rifle volleys in Silver Taps and Muster ceremonies.

#### texas **Texas Sports Hall of Fame inducts Blair**

The Texas Sports Hall of Fame Induction Committee announced its class of 2011, which included Texas A&M women's basketball head coach Gary Blair. A Dallas native, Blair led the Aggie women to their first national championship in program history in 2011. He closed out the season with a school-record 33 wins and a program-best No. 1 national ranking. Blair also produced A&M's first All-American in Danielle Adams. "I grew up a fan of sports and now to be honored among the greats in the state of Texas in every sport is the highest honor any coach or player could possibly have," Blair said. "It's an honor beyond my wildest dreams that something like this could happen to an old, brokendown baseball player like me." Blair, a 1963 graduate of Bryan Adams High School in Dallas, earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Texas Tech and played baseball for the Red Raiders. Aggie Athletics

#### campus **MLB** affiliates to talk baseball at the Bush Library

The George Bush Presidential Library Foundation will present "A Night of Baseball," a discussion about America's Pastime and the Fall Classic, at 6 p.m. Friday at the Annenberg Presidential Conference Center at the George Bush Presidential Library. The event features Robert Rich Jr., chairman of Rich Products Corp. and owner of the Buffalo Bisons minor league team; Leland "Milo" Hamilton, voice of the Houston Astros and Baseball Hall of Fame inductee; Curt Smith, Major League Baseball columnist and sports author; and Wally Moon, a Texas A&M graduate and

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If you are interested in writing or contributing content in The Battalion, apply at thebatt.com, or call 845-3313.

The Battalion welcomes any Texas A&M student interested in writing for the arts, campus, metro or sports staffs to try out. We particularly encourage freshmen and sophomores to apply, but students may try out regardless of semester standing or major. No previous journalism experience is necessary.

#### corrections

Regarding Wednesday's op-ed, The Aggie Green Fund: Con, PepsiCo's Dream Machine, located in Wehner Building, receives no funding from the Aggie Green Fund.

former MLB outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals and the Los Angeles Dodgers. There will be a public reception and book signings following the discussion. Free tickets for this event are available at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

Roland Ruiz, staff writer

The Battalion welcomes readers' comments about published information that may require correction. We will pursue your concern to determine whether a correction needs to be published. Please contact us at editor@ thebatt.com.



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#### Robert Carpenter, Editor in Chief

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## ARKHAMCITY

**Best seller** 

Batman: Arkham City has sold more than 4.5 million copies to date.

## **Bigger, better, battier** Review: Batman sequel lives up to hype

ow do you follow a major blockbuster game? Make another one of course, and that's exactly what Rocksteady Studios did with its second outing, Batman: Arkham City.

I'm sure if you're a Batman and video game lover, you have already made up your mind to buy Arkham City - and rightfully so. Arkham Asylum was the best superhero video game ever until its sequel came onto the scene. Rocksteady understood its audience and the masterpiece the studio created and improved it in almost every way possible.

#### Story

This time around, the higher-ups in Gotham City decided it would be a great idea to section off an isolated part of the city and put every crook in town in a super-jail dubbed "Arkham City." From small pickpockets to big names like The Penguin and Mr. Freeze, this mini-Gotham becomes a turf war between all the classic Batman villains. Bruce Wayne, millionaire playboy excuse me, billionaire playboy — gets thrown into Arkham City as a political prisoner, and thus enters The Batman! You will race across the gritty streets as you try to stop the Joker from unleashing a

deadly disease, find out who really is running Arkham City and the mystery behind "Protocol 10."

There was A LOT of work put into this story, and it will keep you guessing until the end. With Mark Hamill (Star Wars) returning to voice the Joker, he and the rest of the voice actors deliver every line in the game with perfection, making the game's story better than Batman's cinematic counterparts.

#### Gameplay

Though the main story of the game will take you around 10 hours to complete, there is much to do in Arkham City, so don't be fooled. With plenty of side missions, more than 15 baddies, and a seductive feline to play as Catwoman, you will be busy for a very long time.

Traveling around the city and the rooftops is so flawless that it would even make our friendly neighborhood Spider-man jealous. And, if you purchase the Catwoman downloadable content, you will experience a completely new way to creep and crawl across Arkham City as the femme fatale.

Combat became repetitive in Arkham Asy*lum*. While the concept of taking out waves of enemies remains the same, there's one big difference this time — Batman is done playing games and is out to hurt. With too many take down motions to count and ninjas, enemies with sniper rifles

COURTESY PHOTOS



O'Dell Harmon senior agricultural communications and journalism major

and body armor and some surprises I

won't spoil, the combat never stays the same. The action keeps you guessing with different enemies and increasing difficulty.

Arkham City gives you the chance to play and develop Batman as you see fit. With upgrades, gadgets, and skills found through augmented reality training, you are going to want to take the time to help Gotham's Dark Knight.

#### Graphics

So you always have to talk about graphics and the bottom line is they are gorgeous and add to the overall aesthetic of the game. With its modern redesign of your favorite bad guys and heroes, Arkham City is a treat to any fan or newcomer. And when it comes to the ladies of the game, all I can say is that sex sells.

#### Summary

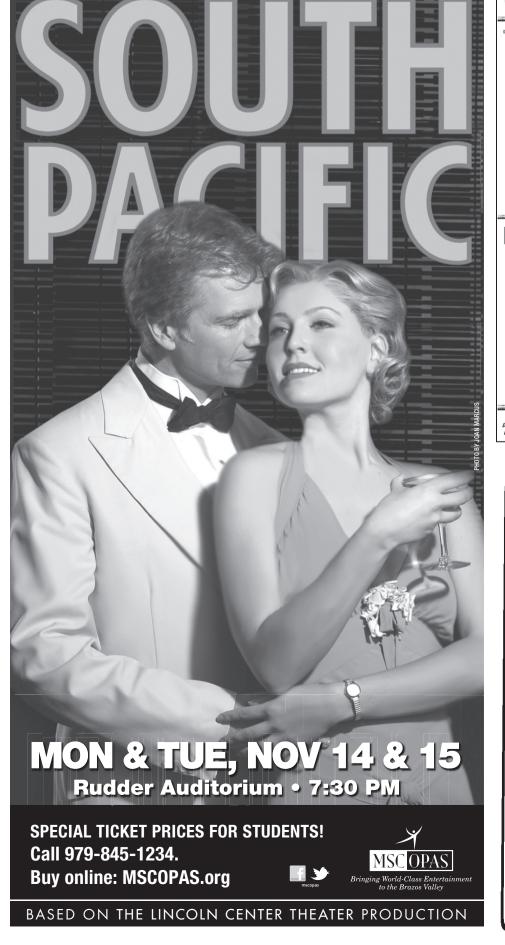
The final verdict is that *Arkham City* is great! I don't mean good — it really is one of the best games of the year, on par with the heavy-hitting blockbusters of this quarter. With a story that will shock you, gameplay and combat that will rock you and an art style that will move you, Arkham City is a nobrainer for anybody.

> 3.5 out 4 Gig 'ems

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#### page 4

thursday 10.27.2011

#### news

#### the battalion

#### world Thousands leave flooded Thai capital

BANGKOK — Tens of thousands of people jammed bus stations and highways to flee Thailand's capital as flood forecasts turned more grim and the first official evacuations were ordered. Floodwaters bearing down on the metropolis of 9 million people have killed 373 people nationwide since July, caused billions of dollars in damage and shut down Bangkok's second largest airport. The capital has mostly escaped unscathed, but residents are preparing for flooding that seems all but inevitable. Bangkok Gov. Sukhumbhand Paribatra said Wednesday residents of two of the city's 50 districts — Don Muang and Bang Phlat, both already partially submerged — should leave for safer city shelters. "This is the first time I am using the term 'evacuation,' the first time I'm really asking you to leave," Sukhumbhand said. Elsewhere in the city, thousands of people packed Bangkok's Mo Chit

bus terminal, trying to leave town on their own. Many appeared to be taking advantage of a governmentdeclared five-day public holiday to avoid a possible watery siege. The holiday runs Thursday through Monday in flood-affected areas, including Bangkok. Some waited for hours on the sidewalk outside Mo Chit because there was no space inside the terminal, the main departure point for buses to Thailand's north. The mass exodus included thousands of migrants from neighboring Myanmar, workers dependent on low-paying jobs so desperate to leave they are willing to brave a return to their intensely repressive nation to do so. Authorities were also forced to move hundreds of inmates from three prisons — many on death row — to facilities in other provinces.

Associated Press



Thai soldiers wade through floodwaters and evacuate dogs in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday. Floodwaters led many who had sought refuge at Bangkok's second largest airport to flee amid warnings that parts of Bangkok could be inundated by up to 5 feet of water.

ASSOCIATED PRESS



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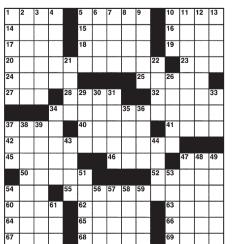


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#### religion

the **battalion** 

Christianity

Continued from page 1

their story," Smith said.

on this Earth," Smith said.

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Books: The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins,

The Moral Landscape by Sam Harris and God is

chapter.

#### **Teacher quits over anti-Catholic tracts**

North Texas junior high school teacher Marsha McDonald has resigned after school district officials received complaints that she was giving her students anti-Catholic tracts. Parents complained that McDonald gave a pamphlet titled "Are Roman Catholics Christians?" to a 12-year-old student and offered other students as many of the pamphlets as they wanted.

Smith said he volunteered to bring Ratio Christi

"We believe that Christianity is for thinking

to A&M three years ago after receiving an over-

whelming response from students hungry for a local

people and a reasonable, logical faith. What we try

to do is give answers to people about Christianity

and join in intellectual debates on campus about

and Christian panels. This is the first year the Islamic

faith will be incorporated. Smith said this addition

will cater to a broader audience, allowing listeners

involved which should be interesting. It will be in-

teresting on how they address key existential ques-

tions since they do not share a Christian worldview

about morality and meaning and why we are here

lor University, is the second Christian panelist.

Marks founded the Evolutionary Informatics Lab,

Robert Marks, an engineering professor at Bay-

"This time we are going to have a Muslim group

to consider a variety of religious beliefs.

The first God Dialogues in 2009 featured atheist

Associated Press

#### Tutoring

#### Continued from page 1

"Usually, tutoring sessions are one- to one-and-a-half hours long and are set up on an individual basis," Kurt said. "The tutor's information is located in the online spreadsheet and it is up to the for," Kurt said. student to contact the tutor

and set up a time that is most convenient for them." Kurt also added that the tutors are qualified to teach the subjects listed, as the ability to

offer a particular class is based on the grade that the tutor made in the course. "All of the tutors have succeeded very well in each class they are offering tutoring

which supports intelligent design research. Collegecrunch.com named Marks in its "20 most brilliant Christian professors" list.

Andrew Robbins, senior biomedical engineering major and Ratio Christi treasurer, said he is excited to hear what Marks and Ferrer have to say about a religion he has been exposed to since the sixth grade.

"It was interesting for me because I went to public school and I always have had a love for science and mathematics," Robbins said. "I built up a separation between religion and science and I had this weird dual idea about the way the world worked."

Smith said everyone has his or her own idea of what faith is, and these diverse ideas make open forums — such as the God Dialogues — a great way to bring world views together in one room.

"Frankly, everyone has to have their own answers to what they think people are, what they think about morality and what is the basis for morality,' Smith said. "These are questions that have occupied some of the best minds throughout history.

panel represent their position intelligently, responsibly and consistently within their worldviews and the audience members are able to take those same questions home and address those questions for themselves."

#### Agnostic & Atheist Student Atheism

Hanrahan

#### Continued from page 1

"By having this discussion hopefully we can break the ice and have people leave the talks wanting to discuss different views they hold," Hanrahan said.

The discussion in Rudder will focus on morality in religion. Each of the three panelists will present their stance about where good comes from.

Hanrahan said he isn't worried about presenting his views, adding that there's little preparation that he can do to present a fundamental lack of belief. Hanrahan has a resolute commitment to what he considers to be truth, providing a staunch platform for his beliefs that has stuck with him since he was just a child.

"As far as I can tell there is nothing that pushes

and is able to focus on one small problem in a field of large issues," Mousavi said. "Because not many Muslims live here, it is inevitable people don't know about the real stories and lives of Islamic people. The Dialogues are an opportunity for others to learn the truths about other religions, and more importantly about the similarities to their own.

#### **Ratio Christi** Ratio Christi seeks to share

the Gospel in a truthful and tactful way with non-believers, as well as equip fellow believers to do the same

• "Ratio Christi" is Latin for the "Reason of Christ"

The term "aplogetics" is Greek for "in defense of"

Meets at 8 p.m. Thursday in Rudder 501

The group is led by Christopher Cliver

Famous Christian apologists: C.S. Lewis, William Lane Craig, Ravi Zacharias, Lee Strobel and Timothy Keller

Books: *Reasonable Faith* by William Lane Craig, The Reason for God by Timothy Keller and Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

Website: http://rc.tamu.edu/

you to a lack of faith more than a belief in the natural world," Hanrahan said. "Curiosity in why things are the way they are and how they work is kind of the antithesis of faith in that way.'

Hanrahan hopes that this upcoming dialogue can be harmonious and that people walk away from the event with a better understanding of multiple worldviews. Because religious discussions can often be contentious, the dialogues are designed to be cordial so as to minimize confrontation between groups that are represented.

"You see that when people debate about religions everyone will fall into their own side. They aren't being enlightened; instead they are only rooting for their own team," Hanrahan said. "We want to stress open dialogue like in political debates where you can have three different people sit down at a table each with their own views and at the end of the day all three can walk away amicably."

#### Islamic Study Group

The Islamic Study Group is a collection of Muslim learners across the B-CS area who are dedicated to understanding the Quran and providing opportunities for Muslims

page 5

thursday 10.27.2011

Penny Harris, senior biol-

ogy major, said that for her,

the on-campus help desks

were particularly useful for

— helpful," Harris said. "I

would have fallen behind or

done horrible on a few tests

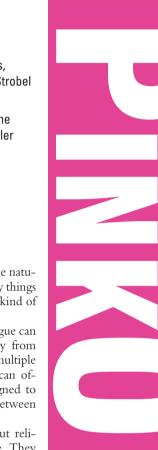
if they hadn't been available."

Ferrer

"Help desks are just that

her science classes.

Presents





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#### Continued from page 1

looked back.

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### Islam

Mousavi became a devout Muslim and has not

"I would consider it a success if all sides on the

There have been times since Mousavi arrived in the U.S. in 2007, however, that he experienced extreme doubts about his faith. But these momentary crises of faith have allowed him, as Mousavi said, "to first see the Quran as a book, then as a valuable resource and finally a constitution for life."

Mousavi is now a civil engineering graduate student, and looks forward to the God Dialogues as an opportunity to dispel misinformation that he believes has plagued his faith in America for too long. Mousavi said he deals with cultural misunderstanding daily, when students shoot unwanted glares at his wife's Islamic garments.

"Unfortunately we live in a society where the media is able to promote inaccurate information

Mousavi has already had experiences with Christian groups during his Islamic study group's community dialogues project where discussions were "occasionally heated." He has prepared for Thursday's forum by extensively researching atheist groups, in addition to taking some fundamental points from his dialogues with Christian groups.

Mousavi said he has also been thinking about his own arguments, though the crux of his argument will come from his expertise in his own field.

"If I can show my side well — that is if I can show that Islam is and can be a force of social and religious good in the world — then I think I will do well," Mousavi said.

and non-Muslims to learn about the faith

Meets at 7 p.m. Friday at the B-CS Mousavi Islamic Educational Center

The group is led by Emad Mousavi

Famous Islamic apologists: Ahmed Deedat, Gary Miller, Shabir Ali and Gai Eaton

• Website: http://islamicstudy.tamu.edu/



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## A&M ballin'

## Guest Column: **A preview of men's hoops**

fter watching the Maroon and White scrimmage last Friday, I love the energy This team plays with. I think the new coaching staff will do wonders with the team we have here. I'm concerned about head coach Billy Kennedy not being around and really hope he's back soon.

The offense is much more fun to watch and the defensive pressure looks to be a turnover machine. Defensively, the team was jumping passes and getting steals instead of whiffs like in previous seasons. The

offense showed some of the excitement we should expect from this team with a few alleyoops (more on this later) and improved three-point shooting.

#### No. 2 Naji Hibbert

Started slightly timid on some shots and still has the tendency to get a bit out of control on drives, however he started hitting shots after he calmed down a bit. He finished third in scoring with 15 on the night and hit two from deep. He's a shut-down defender so expect more of what he did against Lace

Darius Dunn in the second half last season against Baylor. No. 5 Dash Harris

I think the biggest question for Harris is his shooting. He looked smoother last Friday but I don't know if he's a 10 points per game player. I could see him putting up six consistently. His passing was good and defense was as expected.

#### No. 10 David Loubeau

Looks good. Quick, good shot from 16 feet out. Seems to have done some work on finishing as he had a couple really tough shots fall. The senior scored 21 points, and



Junior forward Khris Middleton pulls up for a jump shot in one of A&M's two losses to the Swiss National Team during the summer tour of Europe.

> I expect him to thrive in Coach Kennedy's more uptempo offense.

#### No. 11 Jamal Branch

WOW. Branch might have the best court vision on the team. Offensively, I don't see him being too much of an impact scorer,

JUST GIVE ME THE

**Taylor Andrus** senior supply chain management major

but he's only a freshman. He looked smooth handling the ball, dishing the ball and running the offense. He has a really good cross-over drive that wooed the crowd, but he was the alley on three

alley-oops that got everybody going. If Harris falters, I could see Branch stepping in without too many road bumps. He is great now and will be an absolute stud when it's all said and done.

#### No. 22 Khris Middleton

He looks to have lost some of his "baby fat" and leaned up during the off-season. Still silky smooth and busted out a few good moves last Friday. He didn't stand out to me, but I think it's because others were producing and we weren't having to rely on him.

#### No. 31 Elston Turner

The University of Washington transfer is a beast. He's a good defensive player and excellent three-point shooter. He was taking NBA-range threes and hitting. It's bold, but I could see Turner leading us in scoring. Keep in mind he is the son of the Phoenix Sun's assistant Elston Turner Sr.

Read the full analysis online at thebatt.com.



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