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Hawthorne is a versatile Ag

By DAVID BOGGAN
Battalion Sports Staff

Is Kyle Hawthorne Texas A&M's idea of what would happen if first baseman Boog Powell, catcher Johnny Bench and homerun king Hank Aaron were all one baseball player? Well, not exactly, but Hawthorne does have several duties and distinctions on the Aggie baseball team.

During most Aggie games the 6-foot-2 inch, 210-pound junior from Beaumont can be found playing first base for the defending Southwest Conference champions.

"I used to play third base," Hawthorne said of his pre-A&M days. "But when I came here they put me at first and I like it a lot more. First base is a slow man's position and that's what I am.

"The other infielders' jobs are hard compared to mine. I'd say my position is about medium difficulty. Sure, I have my job to do, but 90 percent of it is catching the ball. And that should be instinct. If you can't catch the baseball, you shouldn't be playing."

Hawthorne is not restricted solely to first base. He is also the Aggies' back-up catcher behind Buster Turner, a job that he said requires more work than playing first base.

"Catching is rough on you," Hawthorne said. "At first base you might be involved in almost every play, but at catcher, you are involved in every pitch. It wears you out, but I like it.

"When I'm playing catcher, I'm in control. I can set the pace of the ball game. Catchers have to know what each hitter can hit and how fast each runner can run."

Coach Tom Chandler appreciates the fact that Hawthorne has the ability to play two positions for the Aggies.

"Kyle is a very valuable man," the Aggie coach said. "We need two good catchers on the lineup because it's a tough position. And Kyle is a versatile athlete. He gives it all he has."

Not only is Hawthorne a defensive leader for the Aggies, he is also a big offensive contributor.

"He's our hottest hitter," Chandler said. "Kyle is carrying our ball club right now. We really need bat in the lineup."

In 34 trips to the plate, Hawthorne has had 13 hits to lead the gies with a .382 average and RBIs. He also has five homer this season, just four off the record of nine set by Byron Bet in 1961.

"You don't ever plan on homeruns," Hawthorne said, ing to predict when he might the 17-year-old record. "You get into a streak where you can the ball good — where you confidence."

Chandler has confidence Hawthorne's ability to put the out of the park.

"We have about nine games spring break," Chandler said. "I'd say he'll have the record those games."

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Arkansas thankfu to be in tournamen

Some basketball coaches whose teams will participate in the NCAA playoffs have been openly critical of the early pairings, claiming that too many of the top teams have to face each other in the opening rounds.

Not so Arkansas' Eddie Sutton. He's just thankful to be there.

The NCAA committee heaped most of the power in the West and Mideast regionals with half of UPI's Top 20 crowded into those regionals, including No. 6 Arkansas.

"First of all, we're just happy to have been extended an at-large bid," Sutton said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

But he admitted, "without doubt, the West and Mideast regionals have more quality teams than the other two regionals, although anyone who makes it to the NCAA playoffs is a good team or it wouldn't be there.

"The NCAA tournament committee has a very difficult job not only in selecting teams but also in placing at-large teams across the country," Sutton said. "I think probably this year more so than in the past is an imbalance of maybe the teams being in those two regi I don't mean to be critical. I happened to work out that guess."

Arkansas was placed in the regional along with such powe No. 2 UCLA, No. 4 New Me No. 8 Kansas, No. 10 N Carolina and No. 13 San Franc One of only two unranked tea the regional is Weber State, is Arkansas' first opponent.

In the Mideast, there are ranked Kentucky, No. 3 Marq No. 5 Michigan State and N Florida State.

What happened, to a certai tent, Sutton said, was that so league champions were up postseason tournaments, incl Arkansas which received one at-large bids.

"Seven out of eight league c pions were upset and that pri threw the committee a curve Sutton said, "and they've got regulation where if they fa teams from the same confer they've got to place them in s way that the only way they meet would be in the champi game."

Sutton said he didn't think brackets were set up to favo particular team.

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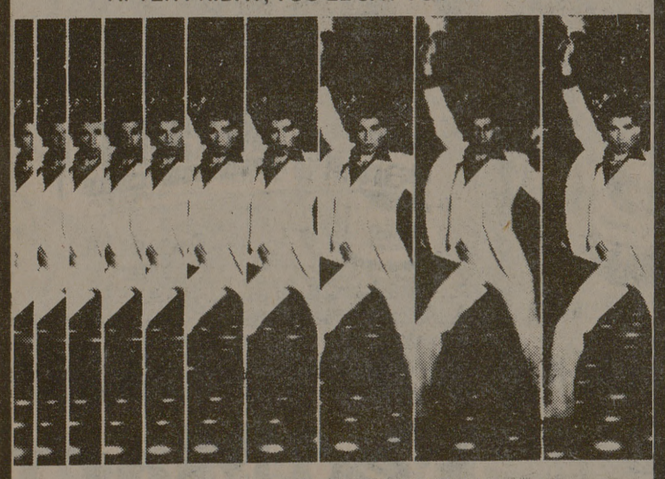

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