

Ags ready for SWC tourney

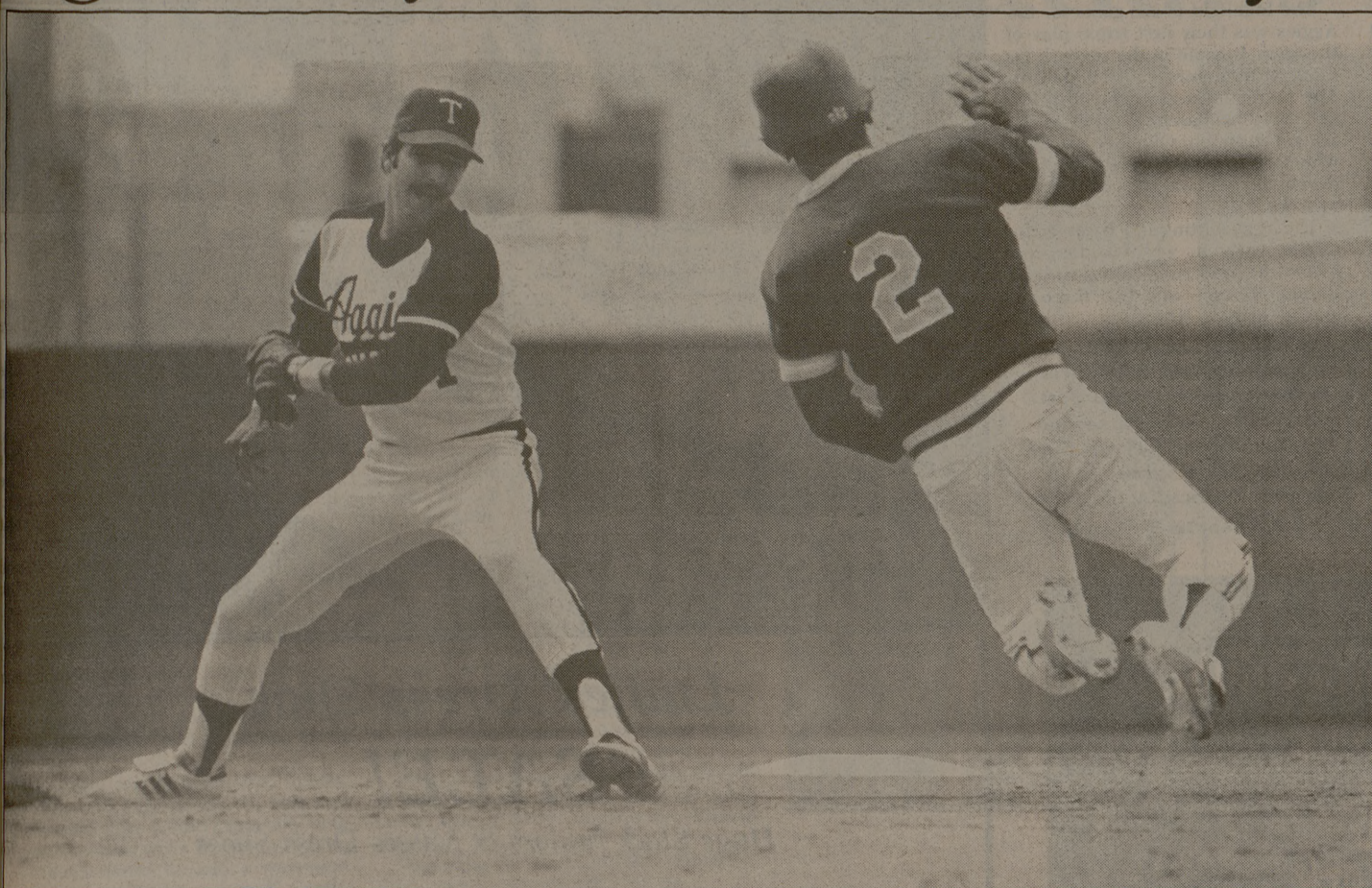


Photo by Dave Einsel

'Little' big man with Ags

Aggie shortstop Bryan "Twig" Little, who set a Southwest Conference record this season with 86 assists, prepares to tag out an opposing baserunner in action earlier this season. Little

and his Texas A&M University teammates, 36-10, will take on Arkansas May 16 at 8 p.m. to begin the SWC Conference post-season tournament at Olsen Field in College Station.

Pitchers, hitters prepare for Hogs, SWC tourney

by RICHARD OLIVER
Sports Editor

The Texas A&M University baseball team is out for blood. At least, they're after something red.

Coach Tom Chandler, watching his Aggie team run through an intrasquad game, had the University of Arkansas on the brain.

"Arkansas is tough," he said. "Tabor (Scott) and Krueger (Steve), two of their pitchers, are good pitchers. Both of them pitched really well in the College World Series last year."

Krueger, who was injured when the Aggies traveled to Fayetteville earlier in the season, is healthy and strong now.

"Oh, yeah, that'll be a factor," said Chandler. "Anytime you have a pitcher like that around, you're in better shape."

Texas A&M isn't having much trouble with pitching right now. The "Freshmen Wonders" Robert Slavens (11-0, 2.37 E.R.A.) and Rick Luecken (9-3, 2.00 E.R.A.) have been consistent enough to carry a team that was not predicted to finish anywhere near the top before the season to a 36-10 record.

The young pitchers, Slavens, Flores and Luecken will be a key for us," he said, "along with our defense."

That defense is led by shortstop Bryan "Twig" Little, who Chandler said has a good chance of being the SWC Most Valuable Player this year. Little set a SWC record with 86 assists.

"Little has a good temperament," he said. "He never gets down on himself if he's not doing well, and he never goes out of his head if he's doing well. He's the most consistent player on the team."

Arkansas, however, is a team to be reckoned with.

Steve Krueger (7-0, 1.29 E.R.A.) and Scott Tabor (5-2, 2.23 E.R.A.) lead up an otherwise lacking Arkansas staff that has a combined 3.83 E.R.A. and only 11 complete games in 23 tries. Texas A&M's staff has 17

complete games and a 2.96 team E.R.A.

But Arkansas has power. They are led by center-fielder Kevin McReynolds, who batted an incredible .430 this season, playing all 23 games. He also hit 10 home runs. Catcher Ronn Reynolds is also steady, hitting .333 with five home runs.

"Reynolds and McReynolds have power, no doubt about it," Chandler said. "They're tough outs."

But McReynolds and Reynolds are leading an Arkansas hitting corps that is batting only .284, compared with the Aggies' .298.

Clearly, the statistics favor Texas A&M, but Chandler is wary.

"You know the old baseball adage, 'anything can happen in a short series, and usually does,'" he said. "The teams in the tournament can win on any day. In a short series like the SWC tournament, a hot pitcher

or a hot hitter can win a ball game. You've got to be hot, and you've got to be aggressive."

The Aggie bench, however, is alive.

Doug Teague, the senior Aggie catcher (along with freshmen Joey Szekely), said he feels the team is mentally ready.

"Everyone's loose," he said. "You can see everyone's having a good time, and everyone likes each other. It's a close team."

Chandler agreed. "Everyone is ready to play. We're going to have a practice today and tomorrow, and then some next week, whenever we can squeeze them between finals," he said.

Chandler praised several of his players.

"Joey Szekely has improved tremendously," he said, "and Teague is a good hustler and a good aggressive catcher. He caught Luecken every time."

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