

Texas A&M outfielder Mike Hurdle stretches toward second base after evading the tag from Oklahoma State University's shortstop in early season action. Hurdle and the rest of the Aggie baseball team meet the University of Arkansas at 8:15

p.m. Friday night at Olsen Field in a Southwest Conference post-season tournament first-round game.

Staff photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

# Aggs to count on defense, pitching to stop Hogs

by DILLARD STONE  
Battalion Editor

The Southwest Conference will showcase its four best teams at Olsen Field in College Station this week, and Texas A&M baseball coach Tom Chandler appears to be just tickled pink about it.

"We're looking forward to this tournament," Chandler said. "People are going to see some great college baseball, believe me."

A look at the teams will verify Chandler's statement. The first round of the double elimination tournament pits the nationally ranked University of Texas against conference Cinderella Texas Tech, and the hometown favorite Texas Aggies against the University of Arkansas, one of the pre-season conference favorites.

While Chandler is enjoying the idea of hosting the tournament in its first-ever appearance away from Austin, he is more concerned with the Arkansas club his team will come up against.

"They are a very fine ball club," he said. Chandler then rattled off a few impressive names which lend a ring of truth to that cliché: Steve Kruger, pitcher, undefeated in SWC action for two years; Mack Reynolds, SWC's most valuable player; and several other starters that make Arkansas what Chandler called a "veteran-type" club.

The Aggies will rely on their own strong points: pitching and defense against Arkansas. Chandler said he had a hard choice to make in deciding whom to start on the mound.

"We're going to start (freshman pitcher) Luecken simply because we feel like he can come back a little better than the other fellows, if we're fortunate enough to get into the game Monday night," he said.

Luecken, 9-3 on the year, lost his first game of the season against Arkansas when the two teams met in Fayetteville earlier this season.

Chandler, pleased with his young staff's pitching this year, also is happy with the Aggie defense this year.

"Our defense has been real fine, particularly up the middle," he said. "We have Twig Little at shortstop, who can go get the ball well, and he's got an accurate arm. We've got Woody Woodruff at second base, who turns the double-play well."

Adding Simon Glenn's name as "a fine defensive centerfielder," Chandler summed it up: "We think our strength is up the middle."

Like almost everyone else, Chandler sees the Texas Longhorns as the team to beat. Texas won the SWC pre-tournament title, finishing one-half game ahead of the Aggies.

"But in a short series like this," Chandler said, "any ball club which can put together some good plays, can play hot and can play well will win the tournament."

Texas A&M is now 38-12, after splitting a four-game series with Texas Wesleyan College on Sunday and Monday.

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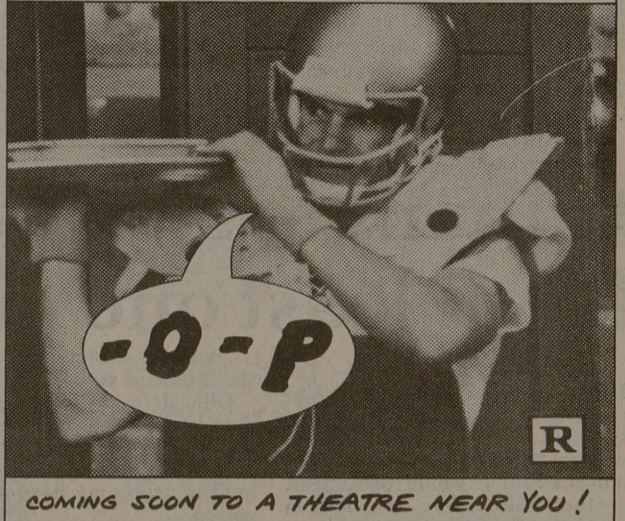
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