

# Sports

## 'Bat boys' brighten baseball games

# Diamond Darlings chosen for 1982

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Members of the Texas A&M University baseball team have enough to think about during their games. And although they don't need any help on the field of play, there's a group of students which makes sure that little matters like picking up bats, supplying umpires with baseballs, selling programs to spectators and chasing out-of-play foul balls don't occupy the Aggies' minds while they're playing.

The Texas A&M Diamond Darlings have been in existence since the mid-1960's, when Aggie coach Tom Chandler and his wife Willowdean created the group to help with stadium activities. Since that time, the Diamond Darlings have voluntarily carried out for the Aggies several of the chores normally given to baseball's bat boys, stadium ushers and concessionaires.

Last week, the 1982 Diamond Darlings squad of 15 members and two alternates was chosen from a group of 44 applicants, with the selection process being held on two separate days. The group's sponsor for the 1982 season is Jan Fambro, former gymnastics coach at Texas A&M and current office manager for promotions in the University Sports Information Office.

The Texas A&M students chosen as new Diamond Darlings for the upcoming season are Carri Baker, Julie Blincow, Janet Burnam, Linda Graves, Elaine Johnson, Margaret Kidd, Kim Madera, Lucy Schrickel, Linda Short, Suzy Smith and Joanne Wolken. Three women from the 1981 14-member squad were once again chosen to the group: Sue Luehr, Karen Migl and Peri Smith. The two alternates, who will fill in if any Diamond Darlings cannot attend games, are Dana Lynn Beard and Jennifer Schwind.

The selection process began several weeks ago, when signups for the group opened. Fambro asked those interested to fill out applications, which required background information and a statement explaining why the applicants wanted to become members of the squad. The signups closed Oct. 9, giving Fambro a group of 44 applicants from which only 15 would be chosen.

Last Tuesday, the Diamond Darlings prospects attended what had been scheduled as a lengthy intrasquad scrimmage of the Aggie baseball team. During this scrimmage, the women were to perform duties which would be required of them as Diamond Darlings. These duties mostly involved dugout chores of stacking bats and picking up foul balls, although under game conditions, the squad must also sell programs and supply soft drinks to media representatives in the Olsen Field press box.

However, rainy weather put the field in lake-like condition, canceling the planned 2 1/2 hour scrimmage. But the day's plans hadn't been disrupted completely.

Instead of holding the scrimmage, the 45 members of the baseball squad sat in the stands watching, listening and writing as the 44 applicants stood below and introduced themselves to the team. Each player wrote down his 10 top preferences, and 21 finalists were chosen from the tabulated picks. The returnees from last season's squad automatically made the finals, but they were on their own from that point on in the selection process.

Thursday, the finalists met in the Letterman's Lounge in G. Rollie White Coliseum, where they nervously awaited their turns in the final stage of the tryouts. A five-member panel held a five- or 10-minute interview with each finalist. The group consisted of catcher Joey Szekely and pitcher Robert Slavens of the Aggie baseball team, as well as Fambro, former Texas A&M first baseman Rodney Hodde and Assistant Athletic Director for Promotions Alan Jones.

After every applicant had left, a short decision session was held by the panel and the squad was chosen.

While waiting for their turns in the interview room, the finalists gave different reasons for trying out for the Diamond Darlings. Most said that joining the squad provided a chance to make new friends, while others said they wanted to support the Aggie baseball team.

Peri Smith, who made the group for the second year in a row, said: "It's like you get really close

to the team ... like you're brothers and sisters."

A liking for the sport of baseball also prompted her desire to join the Diamond Darlings, Smith said.

First-year Diamond Darling Elaine Johnson said that growing up in a sports atmosphere in which most of her family actively participated in athletics caused her to develop an interest in sports. She

said that by joining the Diamond Darlings, she could support a sport that she enjoys.

Sophomore pre-dentistry major Joanne Wolken said she applied because she wanted "to support the team more than just (by) going to games." She added that the Diamond Darlings can perform their duties well without interfering with the players' involvement in the games.

"It's easy for us to back them in the proper way and not get on their nerves," Wolken said.

Animal science/pre-veterinary medicine major Jennifer Schwind agreed that the Diamond Darlings' purpose isn't to hinder, but to help the players by assisting in dugout duties and stadium chores.

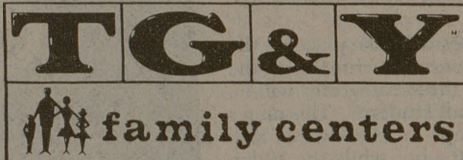
"You know when you're in the dugout and they're losing, that they don't want to be bothered,"

she said.

Interview panel members Hodde and Slavens said the choosing was difficult because this year's applicants made up one of the most select groups in recent seasons' tryouts. Hodde, the Aggies' average, RBI, home run and hit leader in 1981, said the panel considered looks, personality and ability to get along with others while interviewing the finalists.

While the Texas Aggie baseball team continues fall workouts the way to the Feb. 23 opening date of the 1982 season, the Diamond Darlings also prepare for their stadium debut.

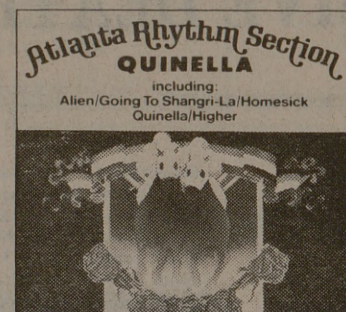
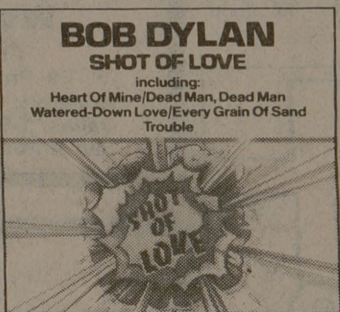
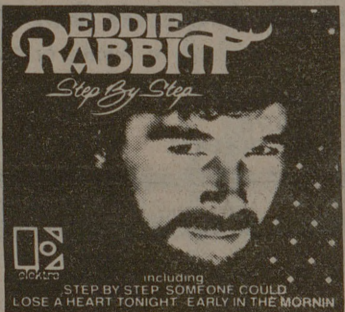
Hopes are high for both teams as the baseball squad tries to prove its 1981 record of 35-10 and the Diamond Darlings continue to carry out its duties at Olsen Field.



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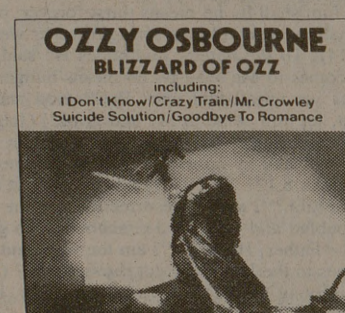
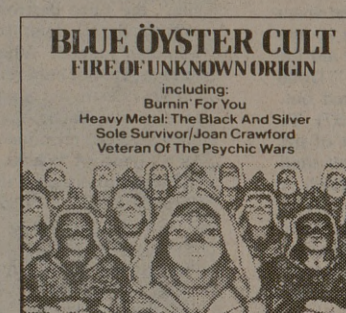
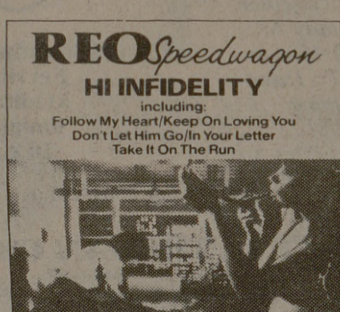
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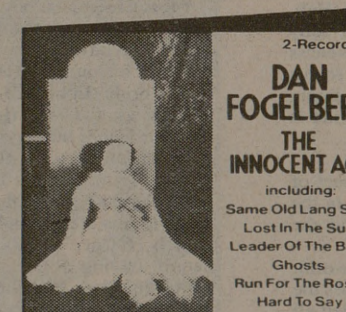
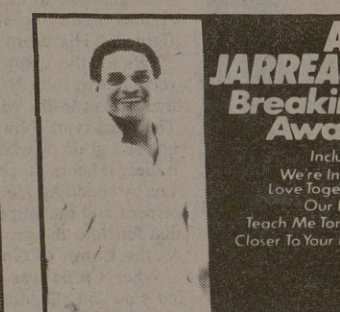
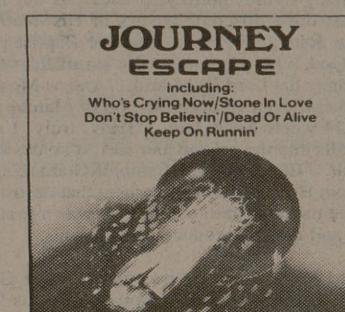
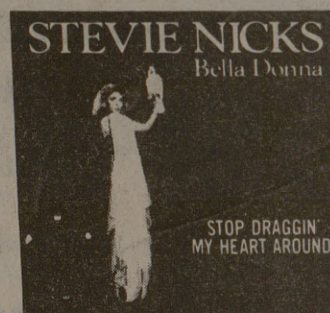
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