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sports

Battalion/Page
October 1, 1983

Chandler placing emphasis on pitchers in fall practice

by John P. Lopez

Battalion Staff
It didn't take long for Aggie baseball coach Tom Chandler to answer when asked about his team's biggest problem going into the 1983 season.

"Pitching," he said. Chandler knows how important pitching is for a team that hopes to be in contention for the Southwest Conference championship. He knows from experience.

Last year the Texas A&M pitching staff was billed as one of the strongest in conference, but faltered early in conference play and never fully recovered. The Aggies finished fourth in conference behind Texas, Arkansas and Houston.

So naturally, after losing

most of his 1982 hurlers, Chandler is doing all he can to improve his pitching staff this fall while the chips aren't down.

"It's just a matter of getting a little depth in the pitching staff," he said. "During the fall, our primary objective is to teach. And that's what we're doing now, just teaching fundamentals."

One returning starter who should make it easier for Chandler to rebuild is Rick Luecken.

"He was a high draft choice of the Cincinnati Reds, but decided to spurn the bonus money and play for us again," Chandler said. "So he's expected to be the ace of the staff. Our other returning pitchers are Robert Slavens, Sherman Corbett and Phillip Taylor."

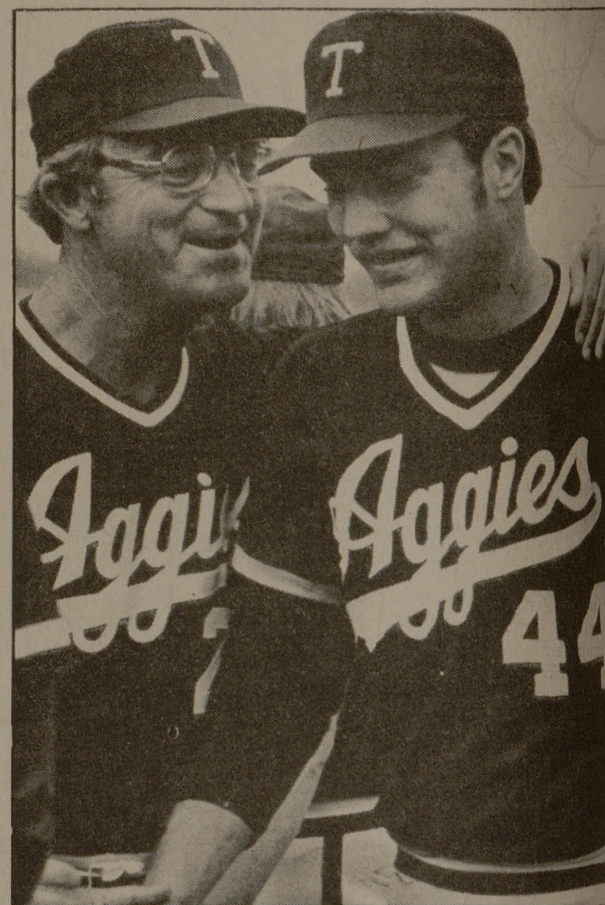
Chandler said that freshmen Barry Smith, Scott Deskins, Mike Perkins and Todd Tschantz might be able to help the Aggie pitching staff, but he said they are still undeveloped.

Other returning players for the Aggies are catchers Mark Magee and Scott Abel, first baseman Buddy Haney, second baseman Clint Heard and outfielders Billy Cannon, Kevin Smith and Tom Dean Chandler.

The most competition during fall workouts has been for starting positions at shortstop and third base, Chandler said.

"We have a lot of newcomers that have looked good so far," he said. "Tim Cartwright, Todd Edwards and squadman Rusty Roberts at shortstop and Tony Metoyer at third base. So far the whole team has been working extremely hard. Overall the pitching is questionable so what we're trying to do is really improve the defense, which helps the pitching."

Offensively, the hard work has already proven successful, Chandler said.



Aggie baseball coach Tom Chandler extends congratulations to pitcher Rick Luecken after a victory over the Houston Cougars. Luecken is Texas A&M's returning pitcher from the 1982 squad, which placed fourth in the Southwest Conference last spring.

"Our strong point is going to be our hitting," he said. "I think we're going to score a lot of runs this year. We have some boys that have been hitting the ball pretty good."

"Cartwright has added a lot of punch to our team and Don

Robison, Buddy Haney, Tom Dean Chandler have been hitting the ball well in practice. Wednesday, Tom Dean had five hits in a scrimmage game that ended in a grand slam home run. Overall, we're looking forward to a fine '83 season."

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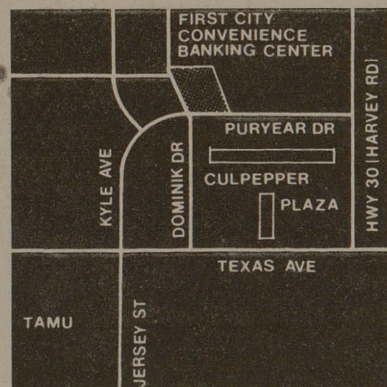
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