

Pitching only question mark for softball team



A&M softball coach Bob Brock is hoping hitters like Iva Jackson can keep the defending NCAA national champion Aggies winning.

by Joe Tindel Jr.

Battalion Staff
Common sense dictates that you can't go any higher when you reach the top. But common sense doesn't take into account people like Texas A&M softball coach Bob Brock.

With an NCAA national championship under his belt at the beginning of this summer, the power of positive thinking radiates from the Aggies' mentor like the heat from the August sun.

It doesn't matter that he's said farewell to perhaps the best pitching duo on the continent. Nor is he concerned with the less than impressive hitting his club often exhibited last spring. He's even looking for better bats this year.

That's just Bob Brock. And while you're thinking, "no way can this guy find another pair like four-time all-America Lori Stoll and pitching partner Shan McDonald," he grins as he talks about the two prizes from California he's about to mold.

Stoll and McDonald are graduates, and their era is history. An AIAW national championship and last year's NCAA championship are also history for the Aggies.

But the near future belongs to Yvette Lopez and Shawn Andaya, and hopefully for the Aggies, the future will bring more championships under the new pitching staff.

Lopez is a transfer student from Buena Park, Calif. Her forte is the sizzling speed of her pitching. From Lodi, Calif., comes freshman Andaya, and she brings in a variety of pitches.

Lopez also will provide the experience, Brock said.

"She comes in with tremendous stats and she's a hard thrower," Brock said. "She's going to be as fast as Lori Stoll. We're really counting a lot on her to bring in maturity. She's already competed in collegiate conferences in junior college, and I think her and Shawn will complement each other."

Andaya pitched impressively in the national fast-pitch softball tournament for ages 18 and under this summer, and Brock said he liked what he saw.

"She basically pitched her team to the third place finish," he said. "I think she didn't have as much help as she needed, but she's an excellent pitcher and I think she did an excellent job. I know in one game she had 17 strikeouts."

While the newcomers face a difficult task in replacing Stoll and McDonald, the mound is the main spot where graduation took its toll. The rest of the lineup for the defending national champions remains virtually intact.

The only other big loss was at shortstop, where last year's leading hitter, Carrie Austgen, must be replaced. But Brock said he thinks he's found a good replacement in senior Linda Lancaster, who's been a reserve at just about every position on the field.

"Linda has worked hard," Brock said. "She's always wanted to be the shortstop on the Aggie team, and she's certainly going to get a chance."

Backing up and perhaps challenging Lancaster will be two freshmen, Ludie Rolland of Fountain Valley, Calif., and Judy Trussell of Lake Jackson. Brock says Rolland and Trussell should add strength to the Aggies' hitting game.

The rest of the Aggie lineup should remain much as it was last spring.

While Brock's trying to keep his team's pitching game on the same level as last spring, he's searching above and beyond with regard to the Aggies' hitting game. Batting was a glaring weakness at times last spring, but Brock sees a chance for his team to excel in that category this season.

"I think the hitting has always been there, and at times we showed it," Brock said. "But it seemed like when somebody was not hitting, nobody was hitting. When one person was hitting, everybody was hitting."

"We didn't ever seem to get that staggered effect that you need in a good hitting team. I think that was last year. I think

this year we have the potential to be the best hitting team in the nation. We've still got all those people back."

Among the power hitters returning for the Aggies are senior Pattie Holthaus, juniors Iva Jackson, Josie Carter and Gay McNutt, and sophomores Mary Schwind, Deb Rollman and Cindy Cooper.

Even more help may come to the plate for the Aggies in the form of incoming pitcher Andaya, who had 14 RBI in the national fast-pitch tournament this summer. Brock said additional help could come from freshmen Rolland and Trussell.

But although the Aggies may be headed for drastic improvement at the plate, the question mark will remain on the mound until Lopez and Andaya have shown what Brock expects they'll show. Despite that and the Aggies' excellent seasons during the past two years, Brock

said he still sees more enthusiasm from his players than ever before.

"I think that this year I've seen more excitement out of this ball team than maybe even in the past," Brock said. "That sounds hard to say, with the record we've had the last couple of years. But there's the excitement of not knowing the new pitchers."

"I'm not going to say now we'll win the national championship, but we have all the makings of a team that can head in that direction. I'm very confident about that."

The Aggie women won't begin their regular season until the spring, but they'll play 19 exhibition games this fall to warm up for spring play. Under the now-defunct AIAW, which governed women's intercollegiate athletics until last year, college softball teams counted both fall and spring season records together. The NCAA, however, counts the fall season as an exhibition season.

Standing up helps medicine go down right

NEW YORK — Take your medicine standing up if you want to prevent heartburn or nausea after swallowing tablets or capsules, says a magazine medical columnist.

In the June 21 issue of Family Circle magazine, Lawrence Galton cites a report in the British Medical Journal.

The journal said research with 121 healthy volunteers at a

Copenhagen hospital indicated the problem could be prevented by downing the pills or capsules with least 3½ ounces of fluid while standing, and remaining standing at least 90 seconds afterwards.

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