

Ag baseball coach turns salesman for '85 season

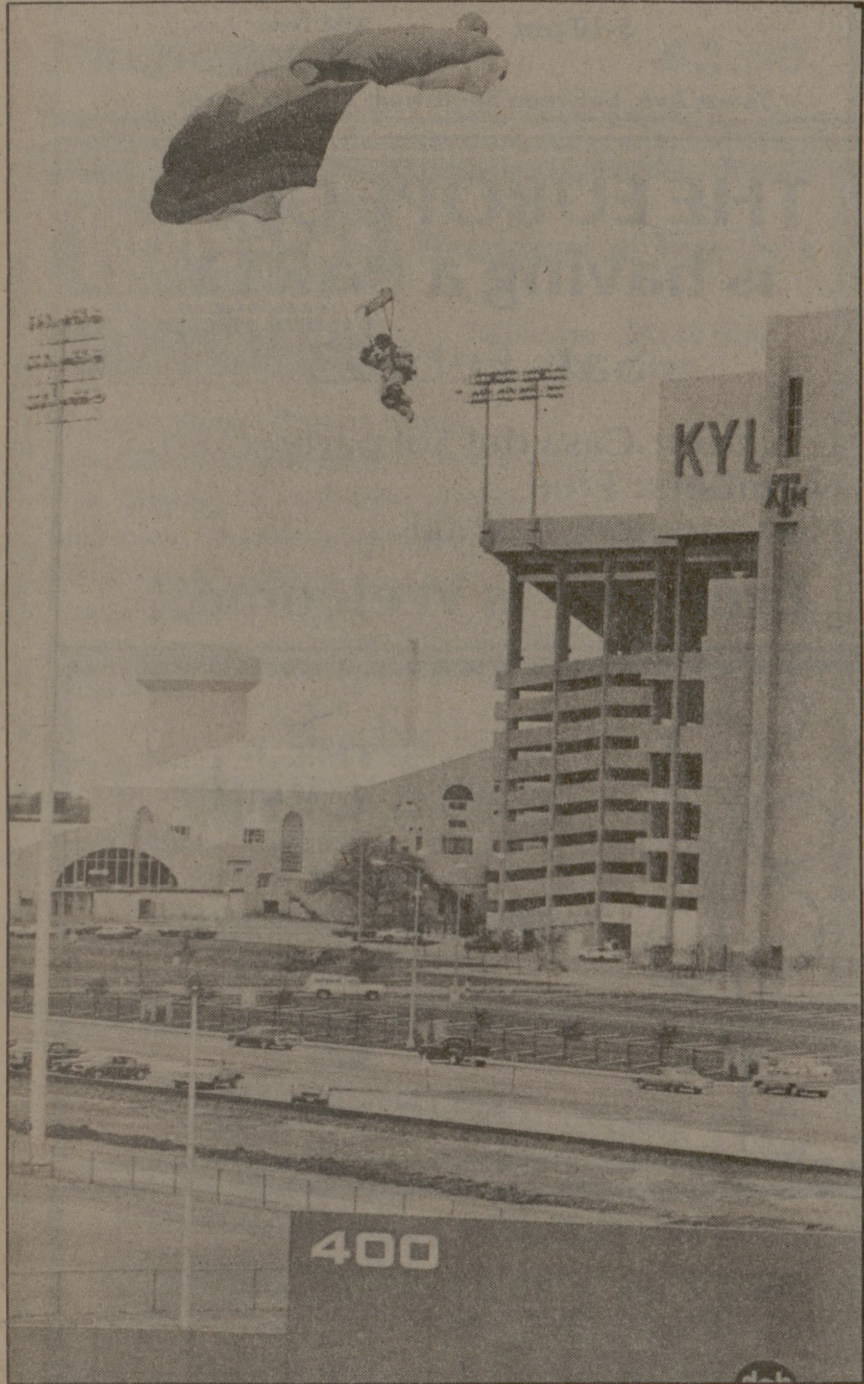


Photo courtesy of A&M Sports Info.

One of the members of the Ordinary People sky diving group practices trying to land his parachute on Olsen Field last week. The group will bring in the game ball at A&M's home opening baseball game Saturday against Northeast Louisiana.

By **MARCY BASILE**
Sports Writer

It's Saturday. There you are "vegging out" in front of the television, stuffing hotdogs in your face while guzzling down some sort of bad-for-you drink. Now how much fun can that be? Not much.

The time has come to alter your weekend schedule. This weekend, the Texas A&M baseball team opens its 1985 season with a three-game series against Northeast Louisiana at Olsen Field.

Great, you say, what will I get out of actually being there for the game that I don't get from watching television.

Plenty, bucko. And not just this weekend.

The first 1,000 fans through the gate for Saturday's double-header will receive A&M seat cushions just for coming out to watch. Not only that, but as a special opening game attraction, Ordinary People, a professional group of skydivers, will "drop-in" to hand deliver the game ball.

These two special events are the first of many planned by the A&M Athletic Department in its attempt to promote baseball on campus.

At every home game this season, fans will be given a card listing the rosters of both teams. Also on this card will be a number. Throughout the game, numbers will be chosen and fans holding the chosen numbers win prizes donated by local merchants.

Double Dave's Pizza Works sponsored the seat cushion give-away and Mutual of Omaha sponsored the skydivers.

Along with the give-aways and skydivers, the Athletic Department found something else that would make Aggie baseball games more fun—an organ.

"We put in an organ to add a little spice to the game," said A&M Baseball Coach Mark Johnson. "We'll have sing alongs. People from the crowd will be invited to come up and lead the singing of 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame.' We are also going to have celebrities come in and sing the national anthem."

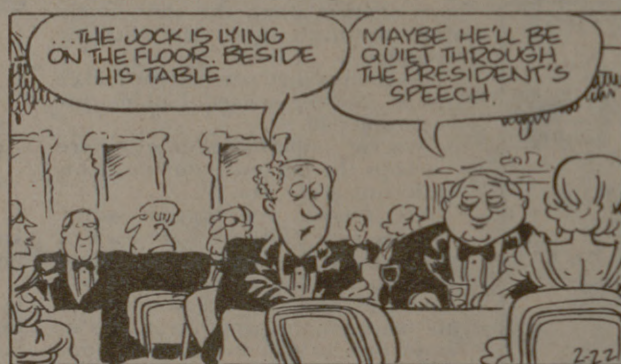
Johnson said part of the fun of attending baseball games is trying to second guess the next play.

"Everyone has played baseball and can relate to the game," Johnson



TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill



said. "It's a great second guessing sport. People can get involved. The game is slow enough that people can keep up."

"The human drama between pitcher and batter is played out every time. Someone's going to win. That's exciting. It revs you up."

While setting up the different promotions, Johnson and his staff kept A&M students in mind.

"We want our program to reflect the student body and Texas A&M," Johnson said. "The number one support that we want to have is the

peers of the athletes out there on the field."

Over the past few weeks, players and coaches have gone out and talked to dorms, sororities and fraternities trying to get people excited about the upcoming season.

"Basically, you want to hook some folks and get them to come out," he said. "We've got a pretty good package, not only in promotions but in the play, too. We've tried to get the word out."

"The bottom line is that baseball is a collegiate sport on our campus. We are representing the student body.

These are supposedly the best guys out of 37,000 students."

College ball is becoming a thing, ESPN has picked up coverage of college games, should help out attendance.

"Attendance figures all over the country are indicating that the booming years for college ball," Johnson said. "They're out here and find that they're not an Aggie or a Longhorn, they're going to see some who are going to be in major baseball."

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