

SPORTS

# Diamond freshmen become Ags' precious gems

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS  
Assistant Sports Editor

These fish swim head and shoulders above the rest. For Texas A&M sports fans, two freshmen stars are shining just as bright as the current spring weather. Softball shortstop Liz Mizera and baseball third baseman Scott Livingstone are providing Aggies excitement for the present and hope for the future. They are quite different, but at the same time quite alike in a lot of ways.

Mizera grew up in Garden Grove, Calif. She has the California look and the California twang. California will always be where her heart is.

"I lived in the same house all my life," Mizera said. "I will always live in California. You miss it a lot more when you're away."

Growing up in a house with three brothers, Mizera was forced to be tough.

"When I was little, they beat up on me," the 5-foot-5 slugger said.

However, she said her family's support played a big part in her success.

"All my brothers followed me wherever I played," Mizera said. "Whenever I had a game it was a family affair. Everyone showed up to support me."

"When we were in California over spring break, my brothers drove down to see me play. They'll do any-

thing for me. We do get along now." Mizera inherited some of her athletic ability.

"My mom said she was very athletic," Mizera said. "She took out these pictures of her playing basketball. I said, 'Mom, that's really you?' It's weird to see your own mom playing. She also has these pictures of herself playing field hockey."

In the "third or fourth grade," Mizera began her softball career. However, her heart was still in soccer.

"I was a soccer player, not a softball player," she said. "Soccer is big for girls in California. Softball is next, but it's not as big."

"I played (softball) all year round. We were the worst in high school (at Pacifica High). We never placed. We just had fun. It was the relaxing season."

Mizera lettered in track, soccer and softball at Pacifica. She was all-league in both soccer and softball and was MVP and Los Angeles Times Player of the Year in soccer. However, when her senior year came to a close, she found her future was in softball, not soccer.

"I didn't want to play soccer in college," Mizera said. "It's not a varsity sport in a lot of places. I have played softball since I was little, so I figured I better get something out of it. It's paying for my education. I paid my price playing for all those years. I

missed out on so much growing up. Practice and games got in the way sometimes."

The offers came pouring in from every college that had a softball program. After much thought, her summer softball coach helped her narrow the choices to five of the top teams.

"Athletically and academically all five were good schools," Mizera said. "The atmosphere was the deciding factor. At UCLA, everyone seemed to be out for herself. Everyone (at A&M) was really nice."

So A&M it was. A&M Coach Bob Brock is probably counting his blessings that Mizera signed on his dotted line.

Mizera is hitting .355 with 12 home runs. Her home run balls have won numerous games for the Ags.

"It's all luck, I swear," Mizera said. "Everybody always tells me I don't hit right and that I have the worst style in the world. That's why people get upset with me because it doesn't even look like I try."

"I've done better than I thought I would. I just hope I keep doing it."

She is hitting so well, Brock even moved her to fourth in the lineup. "That makes me feel good," Mizera said. "I never thought I'd be third or fourth."

Against Sam Houston State earlier this year, fans marveled at one of Mizera's homers that landed in the

intramural fields to end an extra-inning game. Many present said they had never seen a woman hit a ball that far.

"There is one time I'll never forget," Mizera recalled. "We were in Santa Barbara (in high school) and Samantha Ford was pitching. She pitched me the wrong pitch and I clobbered it. That's the furthest I've ever hit a ball. (Ford's) on my summer team now, so she'd probably like to strike me out for saying that."

"(The hit against Sam Houston State) was my best since being here." Being the team player she is, Mizera wanted to talk about the team making it back to Omaha, Neb. for the NCAA Championships.

"I've never really looked ahead," she said. "I just want to get to Omaha one way or another. When we lose, we beat ourselves. That's the only frustrating part."

Mizera's baseball counterpart, Livingstone, has encountered little frustration since becoming the Aggies' third baseman in his freshman year.

After the first week of Southwest Conference play, Livingstone was leading the league in hitting and was named Co-SWC Player of the Week. Last week, he was second in the conference with a .377 batting average.

"I've been pretty satisfied," Livingstone said. "I can't get down on myself. I just have to keep it going."

"It was a little surprising that I was leading the league. When I first came in, I just wanted to see what I could do."

Being named one of the SWC's two best players after the Houston series was also surprising to Livingstone.

"I didn't even know about it until a couple of days after we got back from Houston," said the 6-footer. "I was just satisfied with the performance. Maybe I will get a few more in the future. But, that's OK as long as we keep winning."

Livingstone, unlike Mizera, is 100 percent Texan. "I got a few out-of-state offers after high school," he said. "But, most (schools) knew I wanted to stay in Texas."

He grew up in Dallas where he began playing tee-ball at the age of five.

"In junior high, everybody played everything," Livingstone said. "I played football my first two years of high school (at Lake Highlands). I was hurt my junior year and felt I better renege my senior year of football. I knew baseball was the best route to take."

Livingstone also received a lot of his ability from his parents. His father, Bill, played football for Southern Methodist from 1954-57.

"Whatever speed I have, I got it from my mom," he said, "at least that's what she tells me."

At Lake Highlands, he used his

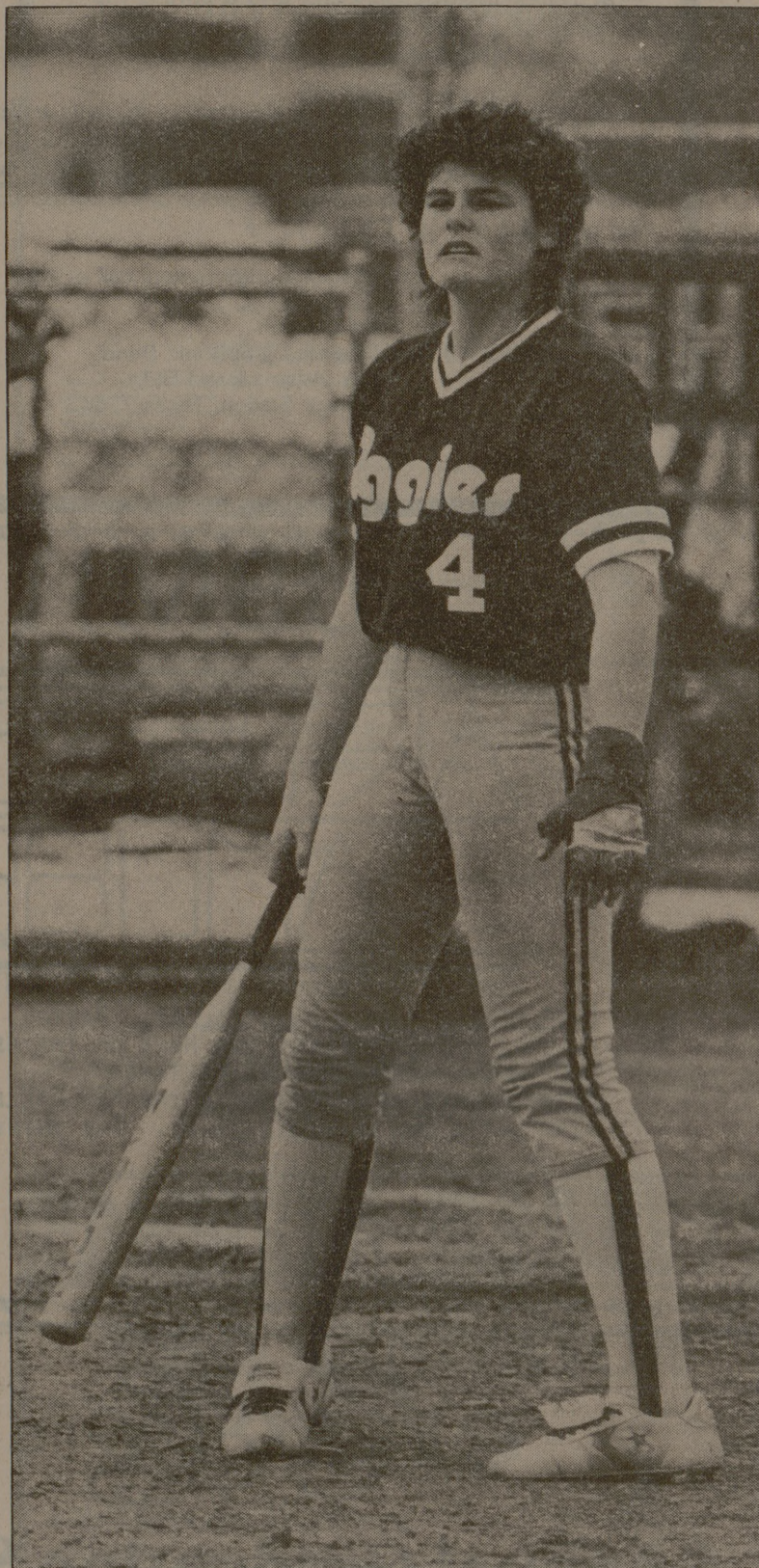


Photo by PETER ROCHA

A&M's Liz Mizera (above) on her .355 batting average — "It's all luck, I swear. Everybody always tells me I don't hit right and that I have the worst style in the world. That's why people get upset with me because it doesn't even look like I try."

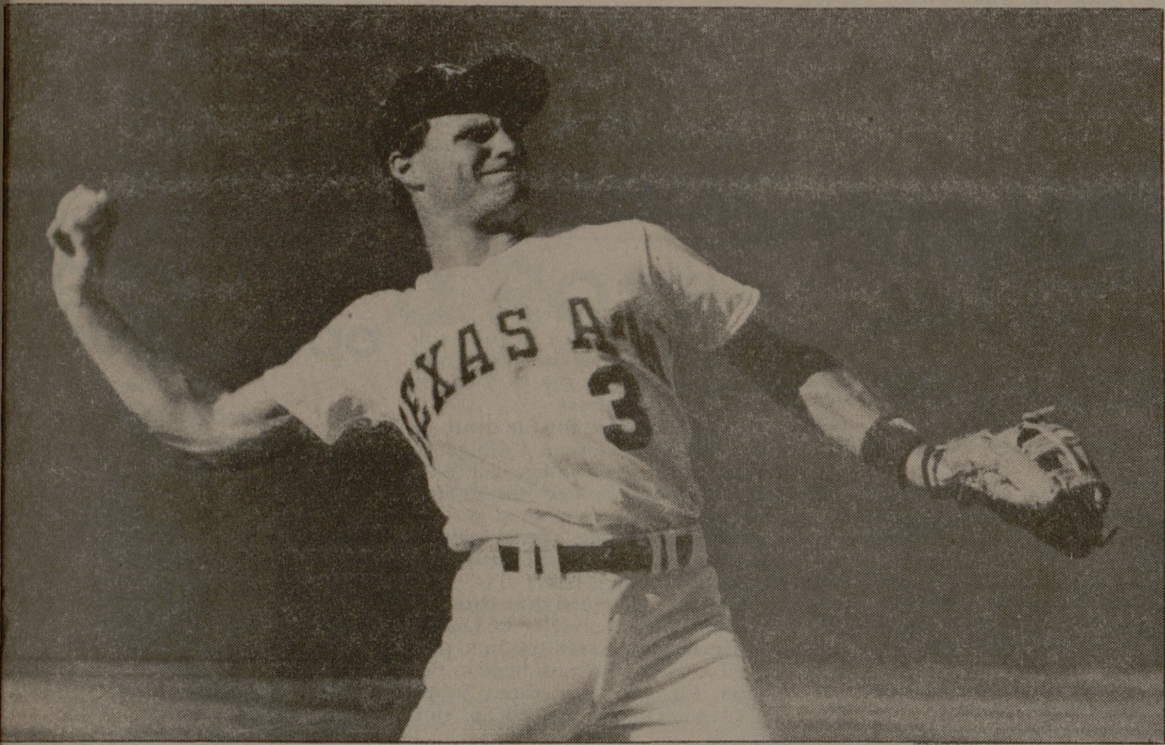


Photo by DEAN SAITO

A&M's Scott Livingstone (above) on what it's like being a freshman starter at third base — "The only pressure that I found, was

what I put on myself. I put pressure on myself trying to play as well as guys who have been in this league for two and three years."

See Diamond, page 10

# COOPED UP?

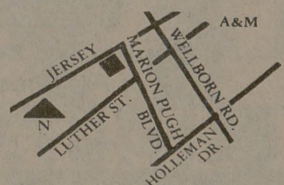
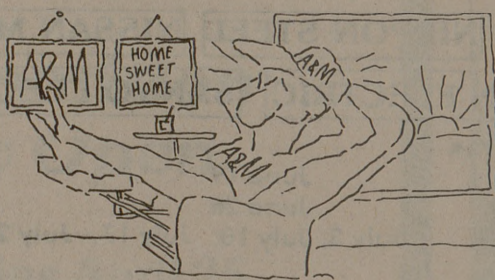


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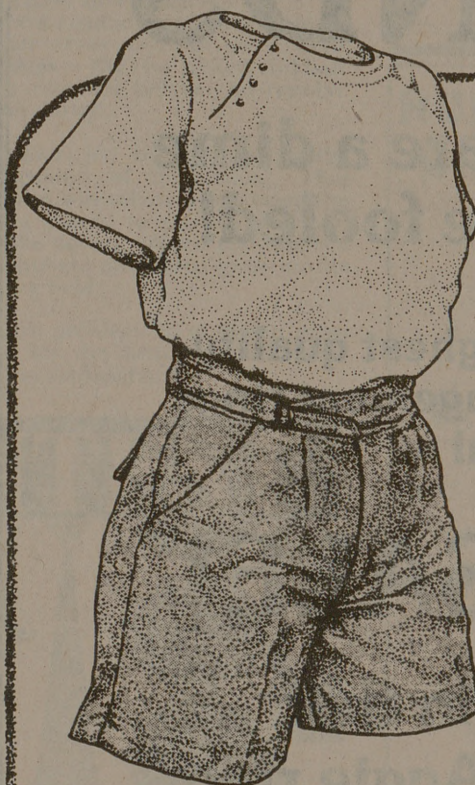


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