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A&M baseball program gearing for '85 season

By TOM TAGLIABUE
Sports Writer

Football season is winding down, basketball season just got started and the Texas A&M baseball team already is working out the kinks from its seven-month layoff.

A&M Coach Mark Johnson will enter his second season as the Aggies' skipper in February after a 39-16 record in his first campaign.

"Well, (my first season) was exciting to me," Johnson said. "I enjoyed it. I was fortunate last year because I had a good group of guys. For a guy stepping into a head coaching position, I don't know if I could ask for a better group of guys. We had very few problems."

But one problem that did hurt the Aggies last season was frequent injuries, especially to the pitching staff.

Pitchers Tom Arrington and Phil Taylor were injured most of the season as were their replacements in the starting rotation, Jimmy Flowers and Russ Swan.

However, the often-aching, three-man rotation of Arrington, Taylor and Kelly Keahey are gone, leaving the Aggies an inexperienced pitching staff.

"Well, the misleading thing about last year is that we had some of the guys that are back from last year that didn't pitch — Jimmy Flowers is one of them, Russ Swan is another one — that we felt going into last year were top pitchers for us," Johnson said.

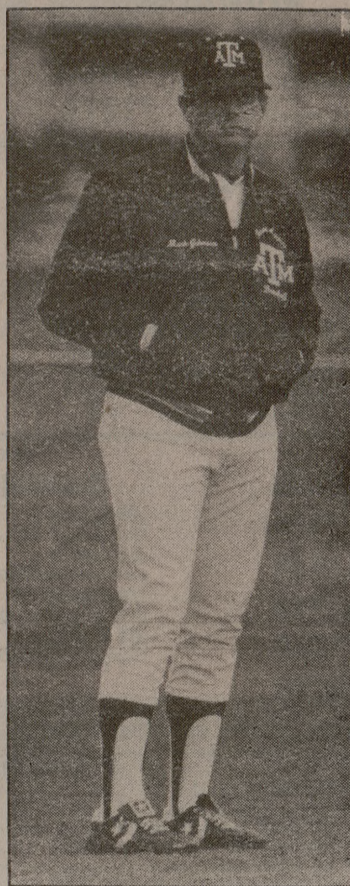
"We were expecting them to really have a great year and they didn't get to pitch. So really, we have them back, but they're an unseen commodity. So, it's not that we were left depleted completely, we had the people, but they just weren't healthy."

Although the Aggies lost six pitchers with a combined record of 24-12 last year, Johnson still sees his pitching staff's depth as a plus.

This year's pitching staff is anchored by senior Barry Smith (5-1, two saves in '85), who will work out of the bullpen and try to break the A&M career pitching appearance record of 66 games set by Mark Ross from 1976-1979. Smith currently is 20 appearances short of the record.

Flowers, a junior from Houston, will probably be in the rotation along with Gary Geiger, a Seminole Community College (Fla.) transfer, who may also see some action at first base.

Four other pitchers return from the '85 squad. They include: junior David Bruning, who appeared in



A&M Coach Mark Johnson

eight games with no win-loss record and a 1.38 ERA; senior Russ Swan, who in five games was 3-0 with a 5.60 ERA; sophomore Russ Greene, 3-1 with a 6.69 ERA; and Kyle Atkinson, a sophomore who finished last season with a 3-1 record and a 7.08 ERA.

Johnson is looking for team leadership from senior All-Southwest Conference first baseman Fred Gegan and last year's freshman sensation Scott Livingstone from Dallas.

Gegan, who led the team in runs scored (56), hits (tied with Mike Scanlin at 67), batting average (.360) and walks (37) last year, is striving for even better credentials this season.

"When I started out this year, I put down as my goal to make All-American," Gegan said. "I want to shoot for something that was way up at the top of the ladder."

Gegan said the SWC title, which slipped away from A&M during a season-ending sweep at the hands of

Texas, is again within the team's reach.

"We've got what it takes this year, because our pitching staff is healthy right now," Gegan said. "We've got a real good shot at it."

Livingstone, an All-SWC third baseman, was one of the Aggies' top hitters last year. He said the Aggies, who graced the nation's Top 20 polls for most of the season, have the potential to win the conference and go on to Omaha for the College World Series.

"I think we have the ability, the hitting and the pitching — everything it takes to win the conference," Livingstone said. "Once we get to that point, I'm sure we'll be looking toward the College World Series. But, I think winning the conference is the main thing. We know we can do it."

A&M's run production should once again be helped by senior center fielder Mike Scanlin. Last season, the Houston Westbury product led the team in at-bats (199), hits (67), triples (5), home runs (11) and fielding percentage (.984) while committing only two errors in the outfield all year long.

Johnson had nothing but praise for the three-year letterman.

"He's done a tremendous job for us," Johnson said. "He was selected as the Most Valuable Player of the Alaskan Summer League, which is an outstanding college league. So it indicates that Mike's improved and he's going to be ready for a great senior year."

A&M has three other returning starters back for '86. Senior Bill Doug Potter returns to play outfield and designated hitter, while senior Jeff Schow will play the outfield after moving from second base late last year. Robi Chandler, who took over for Schow at second and hit eight home runs last year, will be back for his senior campaign as well.

Johnson said Gegan, Smith and Scanlin were selected as team captains by their teammates when the fall workouts ended. He said he hopes the captains and the six other seniors will provide good leadership for the team.

"When they voted for captain at the end of the fall, it was a pretty strong majority for the guys that were selected," Johnson said.

"I do feel like leadership and chemistry are key ingredients to a winning ballclub. If you don't have one of those two things, you probably can't win unless you have exceptional talent."

Lady Ags will 'test' No. 12 LSU

Tigers big challenge for Hickey's 4-2 team

By DOUG HALL
Sports Writer

While most Texas A&M students prepare for final examinations, the women's basketball team will travel to Baton Rouge, La. for a "test" of their own against Louisiana State, the No. 12-ranked team in the nation.

The Lady Ags, who sport a 4-2 record, will tip off against the 5-0 Tigers Saturday night in a game that A&M Coach Lynn Hickey said will present quite a challenge.

"It will be very much of a challenge," Hickey said. "It's another game that will show how well we are able to compete on the national level."

The other game that Hickey referred to was last week's 93-62 loss to No. 17 Oklahoma. Hickey, however, thinks the Lady Ags will have a "legitimate chance" to beat the Tigers.

"I really think they're going to play well," Hickey said. "They have an idea of what it looks like to play against that caliber of team."

"We have a legitimate chance of beating them if we play a very good game. They're good, but they are not so overpowering and awesome that we can't beat them."

Hickey said LSU, like Oklahoma, has a veteran team with good all-around size and height.

"They are a much more veteran squad than last year," she said. "They have good size — a couple of girls that are 6-foot-3. Although their scoring has been balanced, from the scouting reports we have, their inside game has been their strongest part."

In an effort to get some fresh offensive play, Hickey will make two adjustments in the starting lineup against LSU.

Rosalind Brown will start at point guard in place of Beth Young and Lisa Jordan will replace Nette Garrett at center.

However, because LSU possesses an extreme height advantage over A&M, Hickey said she may use both Garrette and Jordan at the same time during the game to confuse the Tigers' defensive schemes.

"This (changing the lineup) will wake some people up and provide some competition," Hickey said. "Rosalind and L.J. (Jordan) have played well and they deserve a chance to start."

Hickey also said the Lady Ags need to have more people score more points to keep up with the Tigers.

"The key is to have four people in double figures, instead of the one or two we have been having," Hickey said. "We also need at least two who are close to double figures in rebounding. We are looking for a really good game."

The Lady Ags have not played since their game against the Sooners last Friday, and Hickey said she thinks the rest and extra practice have helped her team.

Hickey was disappointed with A&M's performance against OU because she felt the Ags gave up after falling behind 20 points in the first ten minutes.

"It will be interesting to see the team's spirit if we get down," Hickey said. "I don't know if they will give up like they did against OU, or if they will fight back."

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