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National title in reach of No. 4 A&M

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

For the first time in seven years, the Texas A&M softball team enters a new season trying to prove itself.

Despite finishing '85 with a 45-12 record and No. 2 national ranking, A&M lost to Louisiana Tech in the NCAA regionals and failed to earn its seventh straight trip to the College World Series.

"We have a lot to prove to ourselves (this season)," A&M second baseman Judy Trussell said. "Maybe we set our goals too high last year."

A&M, which has won two national championships in the last five years, will begin its '86 campaign today when it hosts Mississippi State in the first game of the Bayou Classic in Houma, La.

"We're back at zero," A&M Coach Bob Brock. "I don't feel like we accomplished anything last season. No one cares that we were 45-12. We didn't go to the World Series when we had the team to win it."

"It left us with a sour taste in our mouths and humbled us a little. We'll take them one game at a time this year."

The Aggies, who are ranked fourth in the preseason poll, return



Judy Trussell



Shawn Andaya

seven starters including three All-Americans.

Last year, Trussell led the nation in fielding percentage at .991 and hit .313 to earn All-America honors.

"Judy looks real good as usual," Brock said. "She has one of the best fielding touches in the nation."

Third baseman Cindy Cooper hit .318 last season and was named to the All-America team for the second straight time. Pitcher Shawn Andaya, also a two-time All-America selection, had a .258 ERA with 267 strikeouts.

"Shawn's more of our power pitcher," Brock said. "She can just overpower people."

The Aggies lost two All-Ameri-

cans—catcher Gay McNutt and outfielder Josie Carter—as well as pitcher Yvette Lopez and outfielder Iva Jackson.

That's where the Aggies' "new look" comes in.

Freshmen Julie Carpenter, Carrie Heightly and Erin Newkirk, and sophomores Zina Ochoa and Karen Athanacio will play a big part for the Ags in '86.

"We have a younger team than in the past," Brock said. "They've looked real good. They just need some experience, which will come over time."

Carpenter, from Huntington Beach, Calif., will be the other half of the Aggies' pitching rotation.

"(Carpenter) has one of the best changeups around," Brock said. "We took away her curve ball and reestablished an old pitch—her ball."

Heightly, from Bethany, Ok., will replace McNutt behind the plate.

"(Heightly) has some big shoes to fill," Brock said. "With some experience, she should be one of the best catchers in the nation."

The Aggies will get some needed speed from Newkirk, who will backup senior Cindy Cooper (.270), senior Deb Rollman (.270) and Ochoa (.237) in the outfield.

The power hitting will be supplied mainly by sophomore shortstop Mizeria (.371), who led the nation home runs with 18.

"What more can you say about Liz?" Brock said. "I don't think there's any way she can improve cause she's so good right now."

Cooper and first baseman Schwind (.350, 24 RBIs) will knock their share of long balls.

Athanacio (.410), a left-hander, has been removed from the team to concentrate on first base.

"Everything is pretty solid now," Andaya said. "And our best are in the right place. We want to win (the national championship) back."



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Twelfth Man team hopefuls engaged in tryout stages

By HOMER JACOBS
Reporter

Jerry Gribble, a sophomore from Richardson, never played football in high school, and realizes he lacks speed and size.

Gribble also knows that, come next football season, he'll probably be watching from a seat at Kyle Field rather than playing on Kyle Field as a member of Texas A&M's Twelfth Man kickoff team.

But he, along with 195 other Aggies, is still determined to try out for the Twelfth Man team anyway.

"Even if you don't make it, you're part of the process," Gribble said.

The "process" of forming the 1986 Twelfth Man team began last Thursday and has continued throughout this week. Twelfth Man Coach Roy Kokemoor said the team's first cut will be today.

The field will be narrowed to 40, based on the individual's size and speed. This week's tryouts have included a series of 40-yard dashes

and various agility drills.

Full contact drills and actual kick-off coverage practice only occurs when spring training begins in April.

Sam Williams, a freshman from Georgetown, said he wishes there were tackling drills in the preliminary tryouts.

"I love contact," Williams said. "I want to show (the coaches) I can hit."

Gribble said a dinner with former students gave him the inspiration to tryout for the team. His dinner hosts were members of the 1922 Aggies, who inaugurated the tradition of the Twelfth Man by calling upon E. King Gill to leave the stands and suit up as a reserve for the injury-plagued team.

Kokemoor said the Cotton Bowl victory and the national exposure the Twelfth Man team received last season also had a lot to do with the large turnout of students.

Unfortunately, the large number of Twelfth Man hopefuls will be vying for a limited number of spaces. Eighteen members of the '85 team return, including 7 starters.

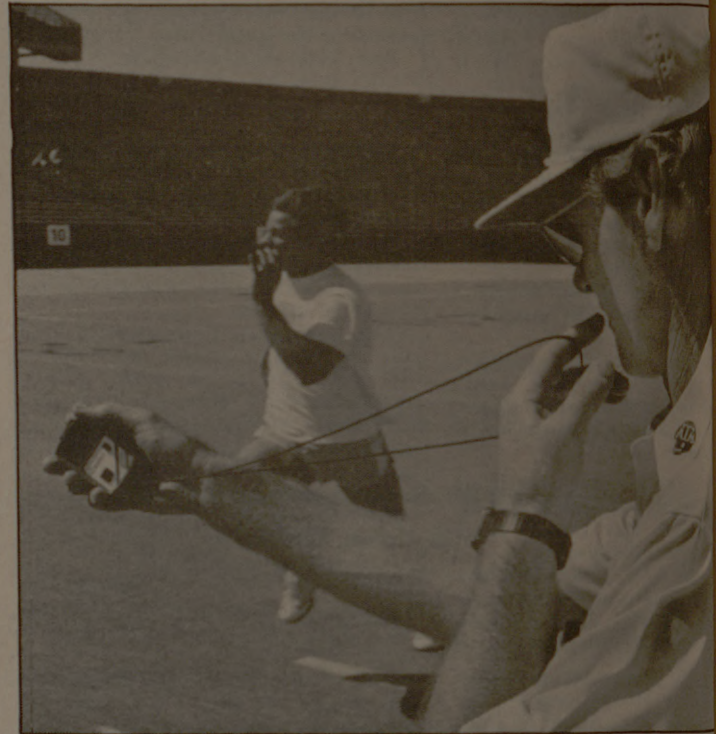


Photo by DEAN...

A&M Coach Roy Kokemoor (right) times candidates for the Twelfth Man kickoff team in the 40-yard dash during this week's tryouts.

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