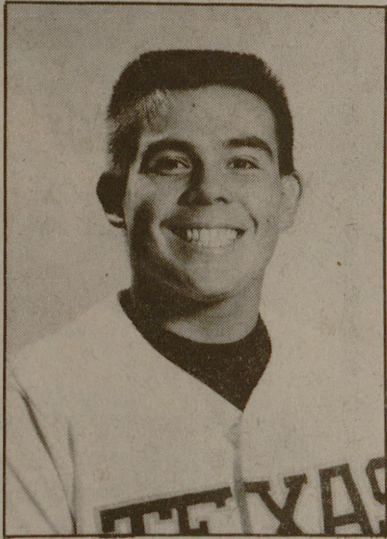


Staying out of the jaws of the piranha ... Sweet brings pitching arsenal to mound Saturday against LSU

By ALAN LEHMANN
Of The Battalion Staff

Pat Sweet knows better than to look a gift piranha in the mouth. Although the senior lefthanded pitcher can't blow a 99 mile-per-hour fastball past hitters, he can get them out with his "piranha" pitch. The piranha is a submarine slider-curve that Sweet has developed to retire lefthanded hitters. He'll get his chance Saturday. Sweet is expected to start one of the doubleheader games against Louisiana State. The Aggies will host the Tigers for a three-game series at Pat Olsen Field. Friday's game starts at 3 p.m., and either sophomore Ronnie Allen or junior Rich Robertson are scheduled to start.



Pat Sweet

Whoever doesn't will start along with Sweet in the doubleheader Saturday. It starts at 1 p.m. It figures to be an emotion-filled series between No. 22 A&M and No. 11 LSU. The Tigers eliminated the Aggies last year in the regional tournament at College Station. That loss prevented the 58-7 Aggies from advancing to the eight-team College World Series in Omaha, Neb. Sweet was a junior in last season's loss to LSU, but he's come back for his senior campaign loaded with a full pitching arsenal. His piranha isn't the only pitch opposing batters have to worry about. Sweet's fastball, which he's jokingly named "Nolie" in honor of the Texas Rangers' Nolan Ryan, seldom exceeds 81 mph. That's below average for a collegiate pitcher, so Sweet has had to rely on his control and the deceptive movement of his pitches to get by. "I've never been overpowering," Sweet said. "It's just a matter of hitting my spots. I have a lot of movement on all of my pitches. That's made me successful." Success is an understatement. As a freshman, Sweet was 11-0 with a 1.69 ERA to lead his Cerritos Junior College team to the California Junior College Championship. Although he fell to 8-4 his sopho-

more season, Cerritos still made it to the state tournament and took third place. Then he transferred to A&M. Last season, Sweet was a top starter for Coach Mark Johnson. He started more games and pitched more innings than any other Aggie. Sweet compiled a 10-3 record in 1989, and struck out 65 batters while walking 34. The sinking motion of his pitches results in a lot of ground ball outs. But Sweet doesn't mind letting his fielders get the outs for him. "I'm not scared to let them work for me," he said. "If someone gets on, I concentrate on keeping the ball down to get the ground ball and a double play." His style worked well enough last year to enable him to pitch a team-leading six complete games, and record a 3.57 earned run average. Although Sweet can't resist fantasizing about having a super fastball, he's happy with his "Nolie." "It would be a blast to throw gas," Sweet said. "I've always dreamed of throwing hard, but if I threw harder, it would probably make my fastball straighten out."

When he's not throwing the Nolie or the piranha, Sweet might throw the "Paralyzer," a slow-breaking curve that freezes lefties. Or he could throw the "Fish," as his changeup is called because, as he said, it's just like reeling in fish. His "Chainsaw" is a slider that moves into the hands of right-handed batters. However, Sweet may have a sense of humor about his pitches, but he's serious about his work ethic. In the first week of spring training this year, Sweet failed to run the mandatory six-minute mile needed to qualify for the team. He finished with a mark of 6:40. However, he worked hard enough in one week to shave almost 50 seconds off his time, and later qualified with a 5:52 mark. After finishing a promising career at Cerritos, near his home town of South Gate, Calif., Sweet turned down scholarship offers to play Division I baseball at Miami, Fresno State, Nevada-Reno, Sacramento State and Long Beach State. He was undecided where to go until he talked to the brother of former A&M infielder Ever Magallanes (1986-87). When Sweet heard of the traditions, he said A&M seemed to be the right school for him. "I thought it would be a neat change to get away from home and try something different," Sweet said. Although college life was difficult at first, Sweet said he adjusted — with a little help from his friends. "I got used to being here because the guys on the team showed me around and made me feel welcome," he said. Sweet still likes to go home every summer to see his family and enjoy life at the beach. It also gives him a chance to focus on this season's goals, he said. When Sweet takes to the mound Saturday, he'll be concentrating on those same goals: being more consistent and giving up less walks. In the meantime, the hitters will be trying to stay out of the jaws of the piranha.

Cowboys pick up former Ag receiver Harris

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

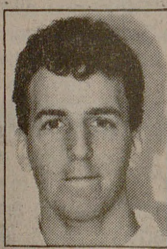
Billy Cannon Jr. became the first Texas A&M football player to become a Dallas Cowboy in the mid-1980s, but the linebacker had to leave the NFL early because of an injury. The Cowboys on Wednesday picked up their second Aggie in wide receiver Rod Harris, who played at A&M from 1985-88. He was one of four Aggies selected in the 1988 draft, along with John Roper, Jerry Fontenot and Dana Batiste. Harris was an All-Southwest Conference selection his senior year. Harris, who played 11 games for the New Orleans Saints last year, is the Dallas Cowboys' first 1990 Plan B free agent, the club announced. Harris, a fourth-round draft pick by the Houston Oilers in 1989, signed a two-year contract worth about \$400,000. The Saints got Harris in the fourth week of the season but used him as a kick returner. He returned 27 punts for a 7.3 average and had 19 kickoff returns for a 19.9 average. Harris played high school football at Dallas Carter.



Battalion file photo

Former A&M wide receiver Rod Harris (1985-88) was picked up by the Dallas Cowboys Wednesday as a Plan B Free Agent.

SPORTS



Only The Battalion has assistant sports editor Clay Rasmussen. And with the end of the Texas A&M men's basketball season just around the corner, only you can read his insightful snippets of pure basketball opinion ... in his column in Friday's Battalion.

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