



Clay Rasmussen
Sports Editor

Johnson recruits to fill void

Pitching vacancies top priority for Ags

From Staff and Wire Reports

Texas A&M baseball coach Mark Johnson used the 1990 recruiting period not only to bolster the virtually non-existent Aggie offense, but also to fill in vacancies on the mound and behind the plate.

Among Johnson's 12 signees, six are pitchers, one is a catcher and four are infielders. Six recruits hit above .400 and join an A&M team that is notorious for its lack of offensive firepower.

However, even with the addition of six sluggers, Johnson still voiced concern about the Aggies' hitting situation.

"I'm projecting that our hitters will get better, but I'm still worried about it," Johnson said. "I still think we're going to be able to sign maybe one or two more hitters."

"Our obvious need was hitting."

Another of Johnson's obvious needs comes in the form of a pitching staff.

A&M loses senior pitchers Pat Sweet, Brent Gilbert and Kerry Freudenberg and could possibly lose junior pitchers Rich Robertson, Bo Siberz and Jason Bullard to the pros.

"Hitting is important, but it would be a little bit more of a disaster if we lost six top pitchers," Johnson said.

"We wanted to be sure we could get some guys in here who could throw."

Johnson and his staff signed three left- and three right-handers. Southpaws include Travis Baptist, a freshman from Aloha, Ore., Alan Fiveash, a junior transfer from Richland Community College and Kelly Wunsch, a freshman from Houston.

The right-handers are freshmen Brian Bittiker of Fort Worth, Brian Parker from Arlington and Rob Trimble from Carthage.

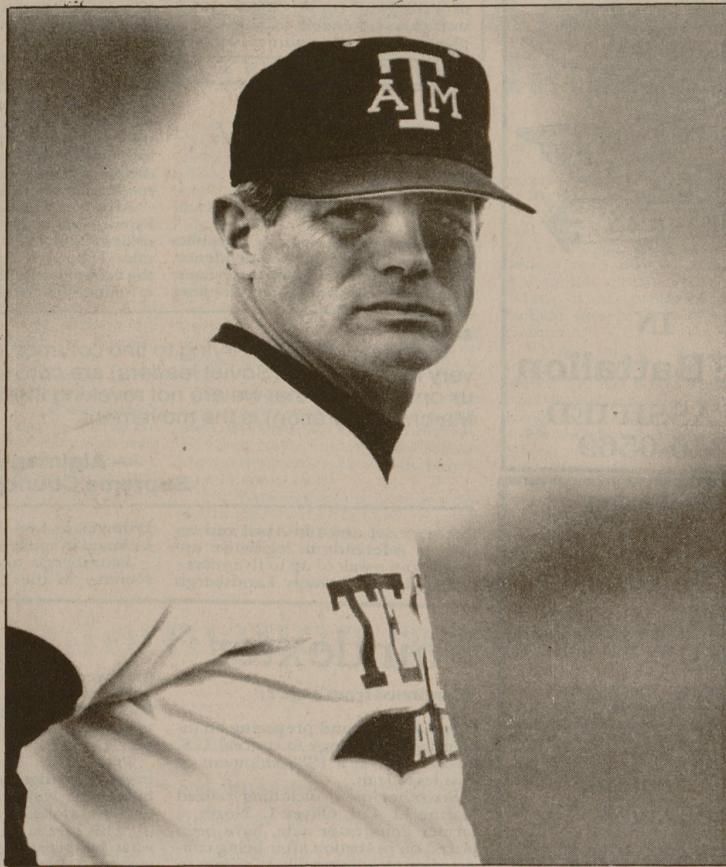
To fill in behind the plate, Johnson signed freshman Creighton Gubanich from Phoenixville, Pa.

"I don't think there's any question Gubanich is one of the best catchers in the country," Johnson said. "He's got talent, a good arm and can hit."

Other A&M recruits signed this year are shortstop Lee Fedora of A&M Consolidated, third baseman Craig Bullock of Houston Aldine, first baseman Conrad Colby of Rancho Santiago Community College, California, second baseman Troy Muckerheide of Kettering, Ohio, and outfielder Brett Weinberger of Glendale Community College, California.

"We feel good about this recruiting class," Johnson said. "We still have a lot of offers out, and a lot of it revolves around the draft."

The Aggies still don't know how many of



Battalion file photo by Mike C. Mulvey

Texas A&M baseball coach Mark Johnson hopes to fill gaps in the team with 12 signees. The Aggies earned a 43-17 record to finish fifth in the conference.

their recruits they will be able to hold. The major league baseball draft could take away some of A&M's new, as well as existing, talent.

Craig Bullock, a third baseman from Houston, was selected by San Diego in the draft and may sign with the Padres.

"I think we're losing ground on Bullock," Johnson said. "The pros are really aggressive — more this year than any year I've

been in it. "I really felt like Bullock was going to make it to our campus, but now I have some question marks."

Johnson also could have some help in the pitching department from freshman pitcher Jeff Granger. Granger, who signed a letter of intent to play football with the Aggies earlier this spring, expressed a desire to play baseball as well.

UA Trustees consider merger with SEC

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (AP) — The University of Arkansas Board of Trustees will have little to do with the decision on whether the Razorbacks should move to the Southeastern Conference, the board chairman says.

"Unless an individual campus is making a big, big mistake, we try not to interfere," Chairman Jim Blair of Springdale said. "However, the board will want to review any decisions the university makes in this matter."

The board trusts Chancellor Dan Ferritor and Athletic Director Frank Broyles, Blair said in an interview Sunday.

"I approach it from a business standpoint," he said. "You have 200 bad deals for every one good deal. You have to look at each opportunity."

Arkansas is a member of the Southwest Conference. The 10-team SEC, considering an expansion, recently asked Arkansas if it was interested in discussing a move.

The next UA Board meeting is set for Friday in Pine Bluff, but board member Sykes Harris of Warren said there are no indications that the board will discuss the move.

"I think it's something we have to seriously consider," said Harris, who chairs

the athletic committee. "I'm in favor of them considering the offer, but as for now, we don't have enough information to have a concrete opinion."

Bart Lindsey of Helena said there may be no official discussion, but board members will be talking about it during meeting breaks.

"It is certainly going to be on everyone's mind," Lindsey said. "I'm sure this will be discussed and we'll be made privy to some of those numbers."

He was referring to the potential increase in television revenues that would result from a change in conference affiliation.

Riley leaves City of Angels with halo intact

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Pat Riley bade a tearful farewell to the Los Angeles Lakers on Monday, saying that after nine years and four NBA championships "there are other things I want to do with my life."

Mike Dunleavy, an assistant coach for the Milwaukee Bucks, was named as his successor, and at age 36 becomes the second youngest head coach in the NBA.

Riley, who was 36 when the Lakers hired him as head coach on Nov. 19, 1981, said goodbye at a packed news conference inside the Forum.

"It's just time for me at age 45 to move on," he said. "There are other things to do. There isn't anything specific I can say right now. I had a choice to make, a decision to make, as a person."

Accompanied by his wife Chris, who also teared up, Riley said he was neither "fed up" nor "burned out" — just ready for a change.

"The last 10 years have been the greatest experience of my life," he said.

"It was a wonderful decade of memorable experiences I've had. Basketball has been my life. I've been 20 years in this game."

"There are other things I want to do in my life. I don't want to be an old timer before I do them," he said.

Riley, who still has two years left on his contract, is reportedly in line for a broadcasting job with NBC, which becomes the NBA's prime network next season.

Riley guided the Lakers to an NBA-best 63-19 record this season and was named NBA Coach of the Year for the first time in his career. But Los Angeles was eliminated by Phoenix in five games in the Western Conference semifinals — the first time the Lakers didn't reach the conference finals since 1981, their final season under Paul Westhead.

Under Riley, the Lakers went 533-194, a .733 winning percentage. They also went 102-47 in playoff games, the most playoff wins by one coach in NBA history.

But following the Lakers' early playoff exit, reports surfaced of rifts between Riley and General Manager Jerry West and between Riley and some of his players.

"I never felt any separation" from the players, Riley said at the news conference.

"The reason why this team won five championships during the '80s and 63 games this season is that the team was together."

He said he made his final decision to leave about 10 days ago, but kept it quiet so the Lakers could look for a replacement without a lot of fanfare and then make just one announcement.

Riley declined to comment on reports he was returning to the broadcast booth. NBC said it would have no comment on its NBA lineup until the finals conclude.

Riley worked as a color commentator with broadcaster Chick Hearn for two seasons before being hired as an assistant to Westhead in November 1979. When Westhead was fired 11 games into the 1981-82 season, Riley took over and guided the team to the NBA championship that season.

Three more championships followed — 1985, 1987 and 1988. Riley promised after the 1987 season that the Lakers would repeat. When they did, they became the first team to do so since Boston in 1969.

Arena football is the NFL's answer to a minor league

Hope springs eternal.

The Dallas Texans have won their first game. I'm not referring to Lamar Hunt's Dallas Texans — they long ago became the Kansas City Chiefs. These Texans are a different breed, an arena football breed.

Since the inception of the National Football League, various individuals have tried to form leagues to rival the popularity of the NFL. In 1926, a band of former NFL players formed the American Football League. It lasted a year.

In the mid-thirties, another group tried to revive the AFL. They encountered only a limited success, double the number of years its predecessor lived.

After World War II, the All-American Football Conference tried its hand in the arena of professional football and seemed well on the way to a healthy existence. That is until the NFL annexed the AAFC in 1950 to form the basis of the NFL we know today.

And with 40 years under its belt, the NFL still is challenged. The formation of the World Football League in the 70s, and the United States Football League in the 80s have been the latest challengers and their is talks about a world-wide football league in the mid-nineties.

Which brings us to the point. Instead of trying to steal the NFL's thunder, why don't these short-lived leagues contribute to the NFL.

The Dallas Texans are the newest Texas team and a fledgling member of the sport of arena football. It is also what many players only hope to be a stop on the way to the NFL.

Alex Morris, a defensive back from Texas A&M, dreams of joining the NFL and playing with or against his comrades from A&M that have hit it big in the NFL. After numerous tryouts and rejections from NFL teams, Morris decided to take a different route.

"I'll make it in the NFL," Morris said. "I know I will. All I need is a chance."

Morris is the essence of an arena football player. In their minds, arena football is just a way station, a spot to bide their time and hone their skills.

Texas coach Ernie Stautner, who used to be the Dallas Cowboys' defensive coordinator, sees the possibility of using the new league as a stepping stone and said his players realize it also.

"There isn't a kid out here who doesn't hope this will be his ticket to the

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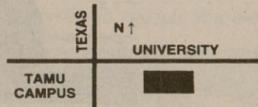


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