

Weight program pays off Marshall beefs up

By Alan Lehmann
Of The Battalion Staff

Jason Marshall still looks skinny in his white uniform, but the Texas A&M junior shortstop added 10 pounds of muscle with an intensive off-season workout program.

Marshall, a sports management major from Abilene Cooper, cited his intense desire to improve as the reason his program was successful.

"I never seriously lifted weights before I came to A&M," Marshall said. "But I just couldn't get anything out of it those first couple of off-seasons."

"This fall I totally dedicated myself, and that made the difference."

Marshall, who is listed at 6-1 and 173 pounds in the A&M media guide, drew praise from A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson.

"He's a better player than he was last year," Johnson said. "He is getting stronger and that helps his overall game."

Marshall, whose hobbies include collecting baseball cards and playing putt-putt golf, said he enjoys the confidence that comes with the strength increase.

"It makes you feel better about yourself," Marshall said. "I was tired of people looking at me and asking, 'Is there somebody in that uniform?'"

Although he doesn't think that he will become a big home run producer, Marshall said he would like to get more extra-base hits.

In 199 at-bats in an Aggie uniform, Marshall doesn't know the thrill of hitting a home run. Only two of his 56 career hits have gone for extra bases — both doubles.

"I'm not going to swing for the fences

now," he said. "I'll still use the same swing I always have, but it's certainly more exciting to see the ball jump off the bat now."

There has never been anything wrong with Marshall's swing. He hit .414 his freshman season in limited action, and managed a .259 clip in 1990 when he played in all 60 of A&M's games.

The work-out program's biggest benefit has come in the form of improved conditioning, he said.

"I hope the weight training will pay off late in the season," Marshall said. "I just got too tired last year. My arm felt dead sometimes during summer ball."

He spent the summer playing baseball for Hyannis in the Cape Cod League, regarded as one of the top amateur leagues.

"The Cape was full of great players from all over, so there were rivalries between people from different conferences," Marshall said.

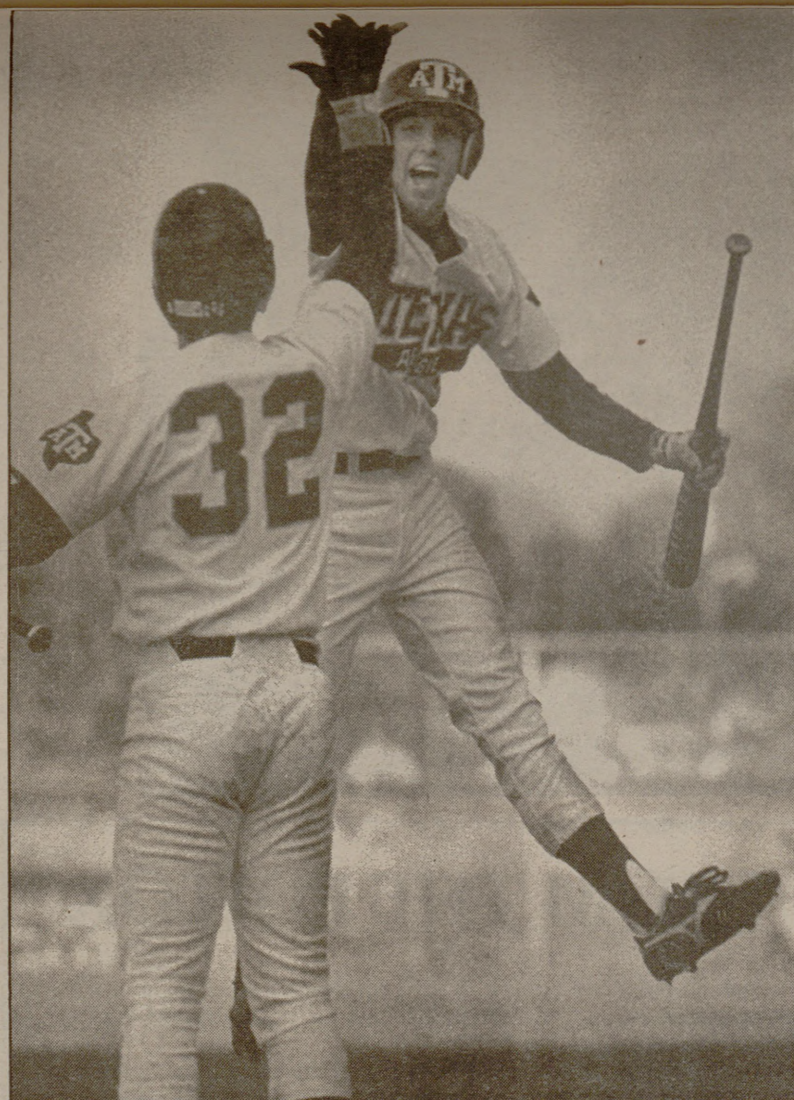
The nearly year-round schedule of school and baseball gives Marshall little time to relax, but he said he is looking forward to this season. He pointed to the team's balance as its strength.

"I think we'll have a real good year," he said. "We've got a lot of talent on this team and most of us have experience."

"This season, we should be a mix of 1989 and 1990's styles. We've got strength in the pitching and hitting departments."

The Aggies won't be hurting for defense either. They return the nucleus of a solid fielding club. Last season, the double play combination of Marshall and second baseman Trey Witte jelled toward the end of the season, as A&M turned 50

See Marshall/Page 9



P. EBENHACK/The Battalion

Jason Marshall will get more chances to celebrate this season, as he did here with third baseman Travis Williams (32).

Thomas tries to avoid sophomore slump

Paving the Oregon Trail

By Craig Wilson
Of The Battalion Staff

The Oregon Trail will run through College Station this year.

Portland, Ore. native Brian Thomas, the Texas A&M baseball team's second leading hitter from a season ago, will attempt to shun the infamous "Sophomore jinx" syndrome.

Freshmen players usually need time to adjust to college baseball's atmosphere and different pitching styles. But Thomas was a step ahead of Father Time in 1990.

All he managed to do as a true freshman was bat .290 last year after stepping in for injured outfielder Dan Robinson.



Brian Thomas KEVIN IVY/The Battalion

Thomas' average was second-best on the team and 11 of his 38 hits went for extra bases.

But as the consummate team player, Thomas knows that the Aggie nine did not hit as effectively as they could and should have last season.

"I always work hard," Thomas said, "and I think last year, for a freshman, I had a good year."

"Teamwise, I don't think our team hit as well as we would've liked. I'm not at all putting our team down but no one was comfortable up there hitting. It kind of went up and down."

After a record setting 58-7 season in 1989, Aggie Head Coach Mark Johnson had to replace his ace pitcher and all eight position players for 1990.

With Thomas playing a key role in the Aggie attack, the team posted a 43-17 record with a group of youngsters and transfer players.

Johnson, though, agreed with Thomas that the team did not compete as well as they should have.

"I was pleased with our record," Johnson said, "but I was disappointed we didn't hit the ball better. We had the effort. In fact, we may have had too much effort and started pressing."

The Aggies have the talent, youth and experience to be College World Series contenders this season, and much of that potential success will rely on

Thomas' bat.

So preparation for each game will be a key to Thomas' concentration, and thus his performance. Relaxation is the key element in preparing Thomas for his "game face," he said.

"A lot of times I just relax," Thomas said. "I listen to music before a game and just kick back and think about what I have to do."

In 1990, Thomas played first base before replacing Robinson in the outfield. This year, however, his role is more definite, and he'll play in a position he enjoys.

"Last year I played first base for about the first two weeks I was playing," he said. "This year it will probably be strictly outfield and it looks like I'll be playing in left field. Batting order-wise, it's really up in the air."

Thomas is quick to insist that team goals are a top priority.

"Team goals always come first," he said. "I want to contribute as much as I can for the team and just work my hardest."

"Also, I would like to win a Southwest Conference championship, get that ring and go on to a regional, and hopefully to the (College) World Series."

Thomas undoubtedly would like to improve upon his statistics in each sea-

See Thomas/Page 9

Aggie Ace

Two-time Division II All-American

Huckuntod slides in, steals second base job

By Anthony Andro
Of The Battalion Staff

Sittichoke Huckuntod is in for a shock when he plays his first game at Olsen Field Feb. 12 against Southwest Texas St.

The new Texas A&M second baseman is used to playing in front of crowds that average between 200-300 people a game.

"We almost always played in cold weather up there (at Central Missouri State)" Huckuntod said. "Toward the end of the season, it usually picked up."

Choke, as he is called by his Aggie teammates, transferred last fall from CMS, a Division II school. He said he transferred because CMS dropped its engineering program.

Now that he is at A&M, Huckuntod is eager to play his first home game in front of the fans.

"I've heard they can really get after it," he said. "I've never played in front of that many people before."

Huckuntod, a senior industrial engineering major, has been impressed by the school.

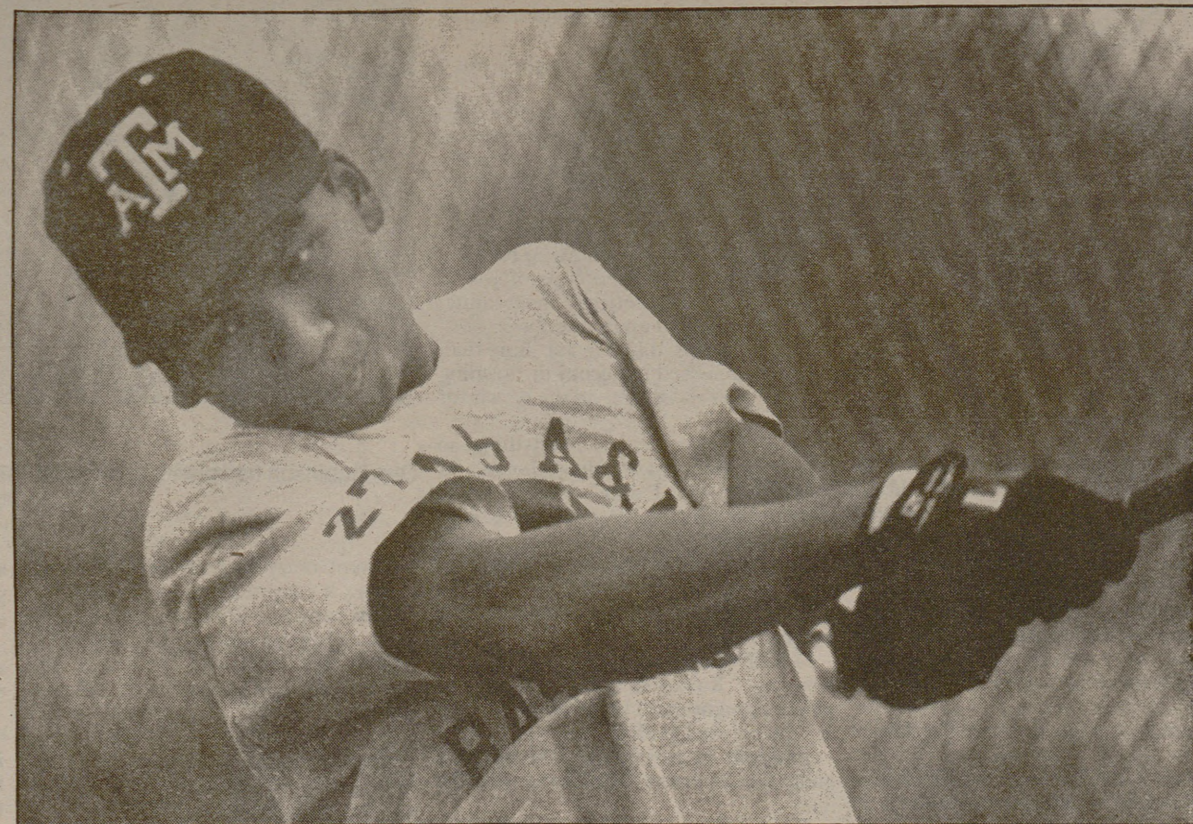
"Things are a lot better down here," he said. "The school's better and the baseball is a lot better, too."

He said he has noticed other differences in the baseball and the education.

"Here, there are guys on the bench who could play at a lot of other schools," he said. "The classes are also a lot different because I have to study a lot more."

Adjustments have been made by Huckuntod to balance the books and baseball.

"It was tough the first semester because I had to learn the whole pro-



KEVIN IVY/The Battalion

Senior second baseman Sittichoke Huckuntod, a transfer, will take a swipe at another All-American year.

gram," Huckuntod said. "This semester I think I'll get in a groove and school will go a lot faster."

Huckuntod has noticed another difference between the two schools: tradition.

"It's kind of neat," he said. "I've never seen it before. Schools up in the

Midwest don't have much spirit when stuff goes on."

Although he was nervous the first week of school, Huckuntod said he had a few friends already because he had played summer baseball with some of his teammates in Kenai, Alaska.

He said he does not feel nervous anymore now that he has had a chance to make more friends.

Even though he misses his parents and friends back in Kansas City, Huckuntod is happy because he knows he

See Huck/Page 11

Thomas

Continued from page 4

son he plays, and he's optimistic concerning his individual hopes for the 1991 campaign.

"As far as individual goals go," Thomas said, "I would like to just keep on my successful trip that I'm on at A&M."

"I have a goal set to hit above .315 and another goal to reduce my strikeouts. I had a lot of strikeouts last year. That was just from being timid as a freshman and being nervous."

The general feeling of Thomas and the coaching staff is that there was much left undone from a year ago, and certain games killed the team's hopes in their quest for the ultimate honor — being crowned SWC champions.

"I think last year we hurt ourselves," Thomas said. "The last series we got swept by Houston. It was all sort of stupid. It was our own fault."

Thomas said that turning in a 43-17 record last season when the Aggies were supposed to be rebuilding is a good sign for the 1991 squad.

"This year we've got a lot of the same players back and a few new key players," he said.

The 1989 team, the nation's top-ranked team for 11 weeks, was shocked by LSU in the regional playoffs.

Hughes

Continued from page 5

And the pitcher is ready to exceed the accomplishments of 1989.

"Hopefully, this year will be better than my sophomore year," Hughes said. "Hopefully, I can carry the team to the World Series."

But Hughes is quick to point out that learning goes beyond the baseball field.

"First of all, I've gotten better as a person," he said. "You learn a lot from being around Coach Johnson, Coach (Bill)

Hickey and Coach (Jim) Lawler.

"All those guys teach you a lot," he said. "They teach you more about life than they do about baseball. They make you a better person."

Hughes has been paying attention to his mentors. He was elected a team captain for the second consecutive year and is responsible for keeping the team's morale high.

Marshall

Continued from page 4

double plays.

Only first baseman Conrad Colby and second baseman Sittichoke Huckuntod are new to the A&M lineup, and both transfers sport impressive credentials. Huckuntod was twice named first-team Division II All-American, and coach Johnson said he should fit in well at A&M.

"Sittichoke is a fun player to watch," Johnson said. "He makes the big plays when he has to."

Huckuntod has excellent acceleration, and should make a good partner for Marshall when the two get used to each other.

Agility, vital to any shortstop, was not

ignored by Marshall in his quest for strength. He said that he put almost as much time into agility drills as he did into heavy lifting.

Marshall's newfound muscles won't be the only new aspect of his game, he said.

"I'm going to have a new attitude," he said. "I want to have fun and play hard. I'm going to play every game all out."

"There's no reason for me to be uptight. I have more punch now, so I can just cut loose and relax."

With a new and improved Jason Marshall anchoring the infield, Johnson should be able to rest easy too.