

# Aggie Ace remembers big pitch

By Steve O'Brien  
Of The Battalion Staff

**A** pop fly to first base helped bring junior pitcher Ronnie Allen home his freshman year.

Only one year out of Lake Washington High School in Kirkland, Wash., Allen was called on by A&M head coach Mark Johnson to throw against Arkansas for the 1989 Southwest Conference championship.

Allen was asked to pitch the game of his life, and he did.

He hurled a three-hit, complete game shutout to give A&M a share of the conference crown.

Allen fondly remembers his final pitch of the game.

"It was a slider, low and away," Allen said. "(The batter) popped up to the first baseman."

Throughout his freshman year at A&M, however, Allen thought of his home back in Washington.

"I felt a little homesick," he said. But Allen's victory against Arkansas as a freshman and his continued success at A&M have made him feel right at home.

"This is my third year here and I've grown pretty accustomed to it," Allen said. "To be chosen to do that (pitch against Arkansas), I guess it motivated me."

Allen will be the No. 1 starter this season. He led the Aggies in pitching last year as a sophomore with eight complete games in 13 starts and in innings pitched with 99.2.

He finished the 1990 season with a 6-4 record and a 2.35 ERA.

Allen said that he's not afraid of being the ace of the staff.

"It feels great to know that you're the No. 1 pitcher and you'll be out there every Friday night, squaring off against the other guys' No. 1 pitcher," Allen said.

Allen boasts great numbers and said he'll offer direction to a young A&M pitching staff starving for leadership.

"I'm not really outspoken," he said. "I just go out and do what I have to do, and if some of it carries over to the other players then that's great. I just try to go out there and do the best I can."

Allen's leadership will be needed with a pitching staff that carries a number of freshmen and only two seniors.

A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said he does not want to rely on the younger players in crunch time.

"I kind of hate to put one of those three left-handed freshmen out there and call them up in the ninth inning with the bases loaded and a one run lead," Johnson said. "I'm not really excited to check their courage out at that point."

Before coming to A&M, Allen was impressing college recruiters with his pitching ability.

His senior year at Lake Washington High School, Allen posted a 1.50 ERA with 65 strikeouts in 45 innings and was named to the All-State squad.

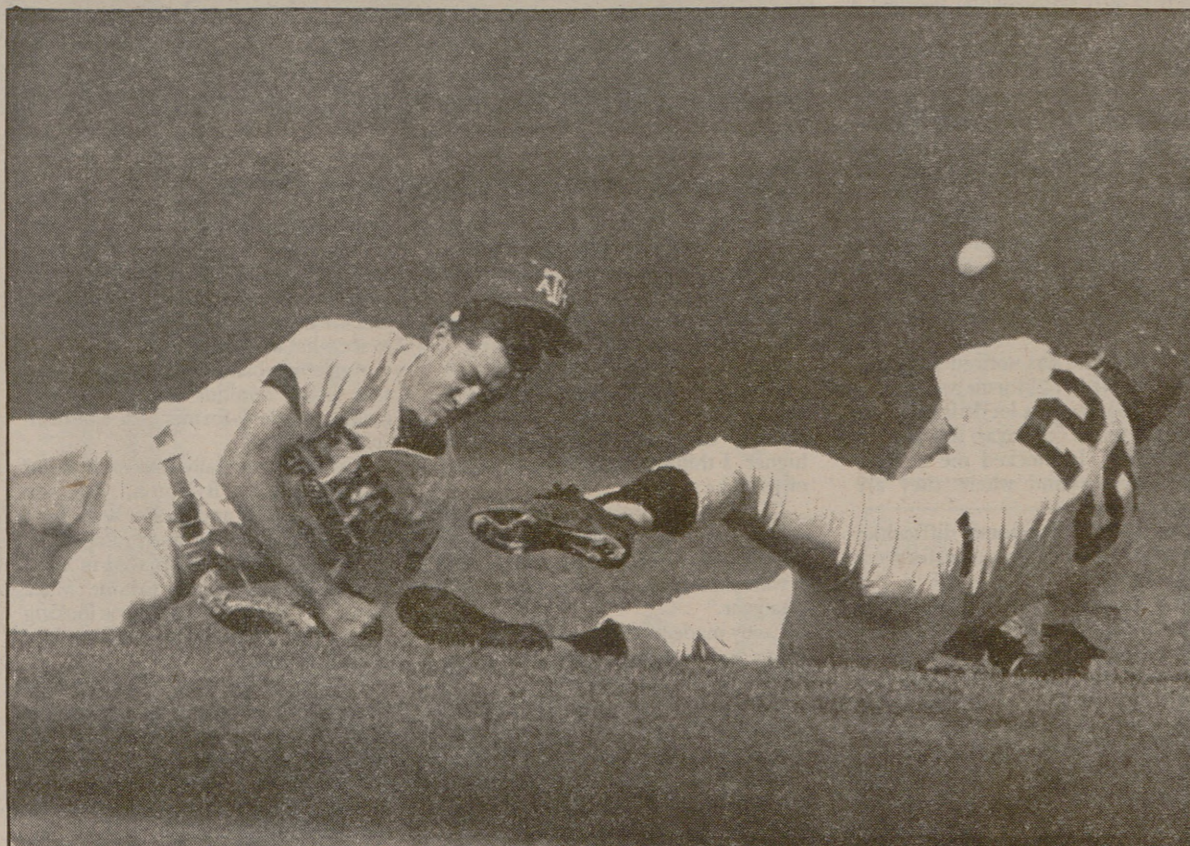
Allen's talent with the bat was also notable his senior season.

He led his league with a .340 batting average and a .755 slugging percentage.

Besides turning the heads of college baseball programs, Allen made an im-

**"It feels great to know that you're the No. 1 pitcher and you'll be out there every Friday night, squaring off against the other guys' No. 1 pitcher."**

— Ronnie Allen, Aggie pitcher



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# Rollen accepts role, keeps life in perspective

By Douglas Pils  
Of The Battalion Staff

**A**fter leading his team in batting average and tying for the home run lead in his first year on the Texas A&M baseball team, it would seem that David Rollen's path to professional baseball already was paved.

Put Rollen's All-League play in the Alaskan League last year together with a good senior year and surely he would follow the 15 Aggies who signed pro contracts in the last two years.

But the senior from Friendswood, who figures to be one of the team leaders in 1991, has set his sights on more important things — graduating and finding a job.

"Right now I'm not even thinking about playing pro ball," Rollen said. "I'm kind of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel now, with graduation coming up, so I'm focusing in on that. Used to be, baseball would always come first, but now school comes first."

"I'm still going to give it 100 percent, but even if I get drafted I'm going to stick with school. It's really weird. I never thought it would be like that."

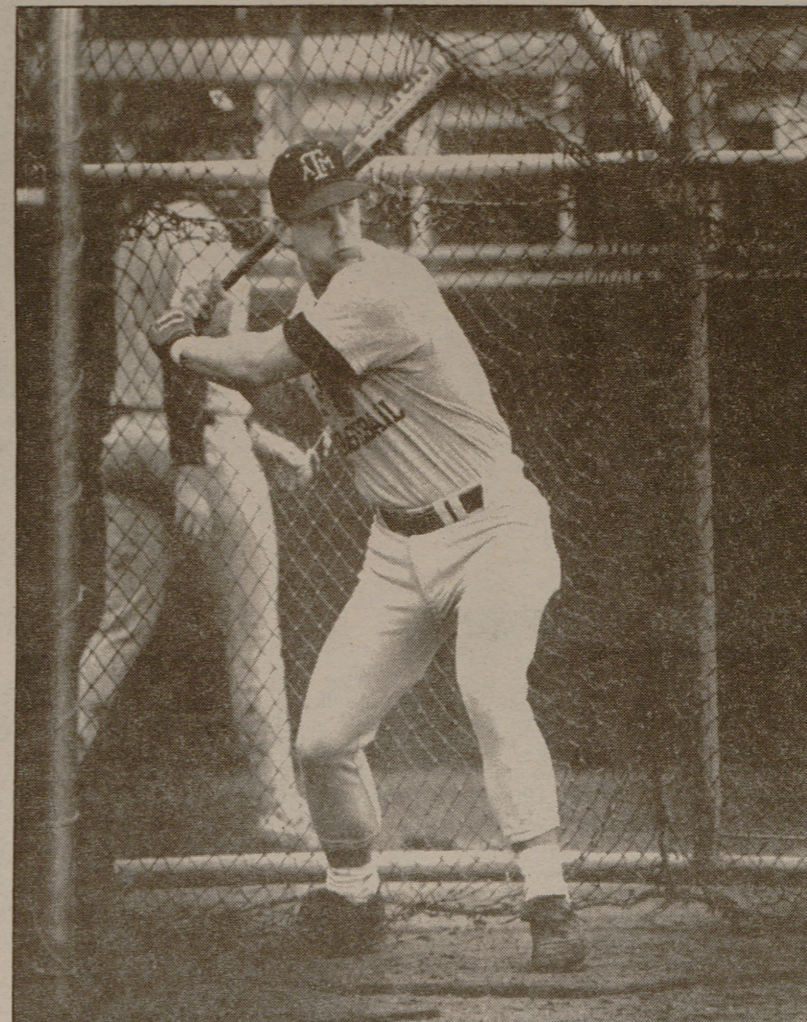
Rollen will be 24 hours short of graduation after this semester, and he said he plans on graduating in December 1991. That means he would have to go to summer school.

Attending A&M during the summer would mean turning down an offer to play pro ball if he is drafted. But it wouldn't be the first time he put the pros on hold.

In 1989, the Atlanta Braves drafted Rollen in the 47th round after he finished his two years at Panola Junior College in Marshall. At Panola, he was a two-time All-Conference selection, hit 14 home runs and knocked in 69 runs.

His sophomore year Rollen was the team MVP and also earned the Buddy Lowery Award for outstanding student-athlete.

"(The Braves) told me they were going to draft me a lot earlier," he said. "Then they found out what my grades were and they said it would take too much money to get me away. So they



David Rollen aims for a big season at the plate in 1991.

KEVIN IVY/The Battalion

just drafted me to get my rights."

As Rollen enters his senior year, he finds himself in much the same situation he was in last year — sitting around waiting in the designated hitter slot.

He also catches, where he was All-League last summer in the Alaskan League, but senior co-captain Blake Pyle and junior college transfer Ben Blake will make it hard for Rollen to

find playing time behind the plate.

Last year, he hit .297, hit eight homers and knocked in 37 runs, mostly from the DH spot. Rollen said he doesn't mind his role and he enjoys clowning around in the dugout waiting for his turn.

"I'm not upset with my role," Rollen said. "I'd like to catch, but I chose to come here and that's the decision I'll

have to live with. I'm just going to do whatever's best for the team.

"It was kind of hard on me last year but I've kind of gotten to where I like to be. I try to keep everybody up on the bench."

Rollen said keeping everyone on the bench hyped not only helps the team, it helps break the monotony of waiting to get to the plate.

"I could sit over there and contemplate about everytime I get to bat but I'd go crazy," he said. "Coach (Jim) Lawler tells me I'm a different player whenever I'm up than when I'm down. Whenever I'm up, into the game, talking and yelling and getting everybody up, I just play at a different level."

"Coach Lawler made me realize that last year, so I accepted the role. I thought it was kind of neat that the coaches let me run free on that and let me do what I want in the dugout."

For his antics in the dugout and enthusiasm on the field, his teammates voted him the Marion Pugh Spirit Award. Rollen said the award means a lot because of who did the voting.

"I had never even thought of winning any awards," Rollen said. "It's just not like winning any other award. It means a lot because your teammates voted on it. It's a special honor."

Rollen holds high hopes for this year's team, crediting the team's hitting strength, new pitching talent and the team's overall willingness to work as things that will carry the Aggies this year.

Even if Rollen never makes it to baseball's next level, he said he'll do just fine and he'll always carry with him the memories of Texas A&M.

"I'd like to get into the front office of a sports team or restaurant management," he said. "Coming to A&M was the best decision I ever made. There's not a better place in the nation to play because of the fan support."

"What I'll miss the most is being around the team and the fans. I'm not going to take it for granted while I'm here. That's what all the guys who come back say, so I'm going to enjoy my senior year."

# Hughes' dedication sets good example

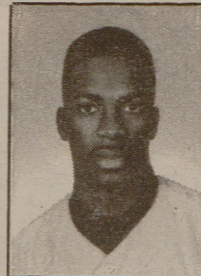
By Scott Wudel  
Of The Battalion Staff

**P**ractice makes perfect. When Steve Hughes first walked onto a baseball field at the age of six, he was just

like any other youngster. Hughes had all the dreams of making it to the big leagues one day and had the untapped potential that could get him there.

All he needed was direction.

Hughes is almost 22 now, and is living proof that hard work and discipline are essential to success.



Steve Hughes

The senior relief pitcher from San Augustine enters his final season with an unblemished 7-0 career record.

Hughes has played long enough to know how to prepare himself every time he walks out to the mound.

"Nobody's perfect — you're going to lose some," Hughes said. "I really don't want to think about that, but it's in the back of my mind that I haven't lost a game here."

He said he tries to keep a clear head.

"You prepare yourself the day before or right before the game," Hughes said. "When you go out there you're really not thinking about anything but the guy you're going to face and the job you're supposed to do."

"You're really just in a blank space out there. You don't hear anybody. All you're doing is throwing the ball to the catcher."

Statistics prove Hughes has improved with every pitch.

Seven victories in three seasons might sound misleading, but in 43 appearances — all in relief, Hughes had the chance to learn the intangibles that will help him lead a young pitching staff this year.

Hughes grabbed the majority of his victories, four in just 11 games, his freshman year. Since then he has remained a mold of consistency in every statistical category, while improving his earned run average each season.

A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson has seen that consistency develop in Hughes, one of his three returning pitchers.

"Steve Hughes has gathered some great poise," Johnson said. "He has been consistent and I expect him to get in the hunt."

The pitcher can attribute his improvement on the field to one thing.

"Experience," Hughes said decisively. "My freshman year (in college) and at my high school, you just tried to throw

strikes. But once you get older you try to spot the ball better and make it a little harder on your hitters."

His sophomore season was one he and most Aggie baseball players and fans never will forget.

That season the Aggies posted the best record in the nation and came within one step of the College World Series in Omaha, Neb.

"That year we had a lot of team unity, a lot of team chemistry," he said. "Last year we had a lot of new guys that people didn't know."

Hughes said this year's pitching staff is going to have to work hard to equal the achievements of 1990.

"This year we have new guys but they are fitting in well," he said. "I think it's just the chemistry that will make the team."

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