

'BT' carrying a big stick for A&M

Thomas's bat propels Aggies into Maine series

By MICHAEL PLUMER

The Battalion

This season, Brian Thomas has been playing with both feet off the ground.

Sporting a .388 average with four home runs, 12 runs batted in and five stolen bases, Texas A&M's senior centerfielder said he has been in his own little world at the plate.

"As the old saying goes, I am in a tree right now," Thomas said. "Hopefully, I won't come back down to earth for awhile."

Thomas did not have such a dreamy ride last season. As a junior, he only hit .212 after posting a .290 batting average his freshman campaign and .354 his sophomore year.

Mentally, Thomas said, last year's slump was a very trying experience.

"It was very tough, because I was not very comfortable," Thomas said. "I would hit the ball hard three times but it would be right at somebody, like the first baseman or centerfielder."

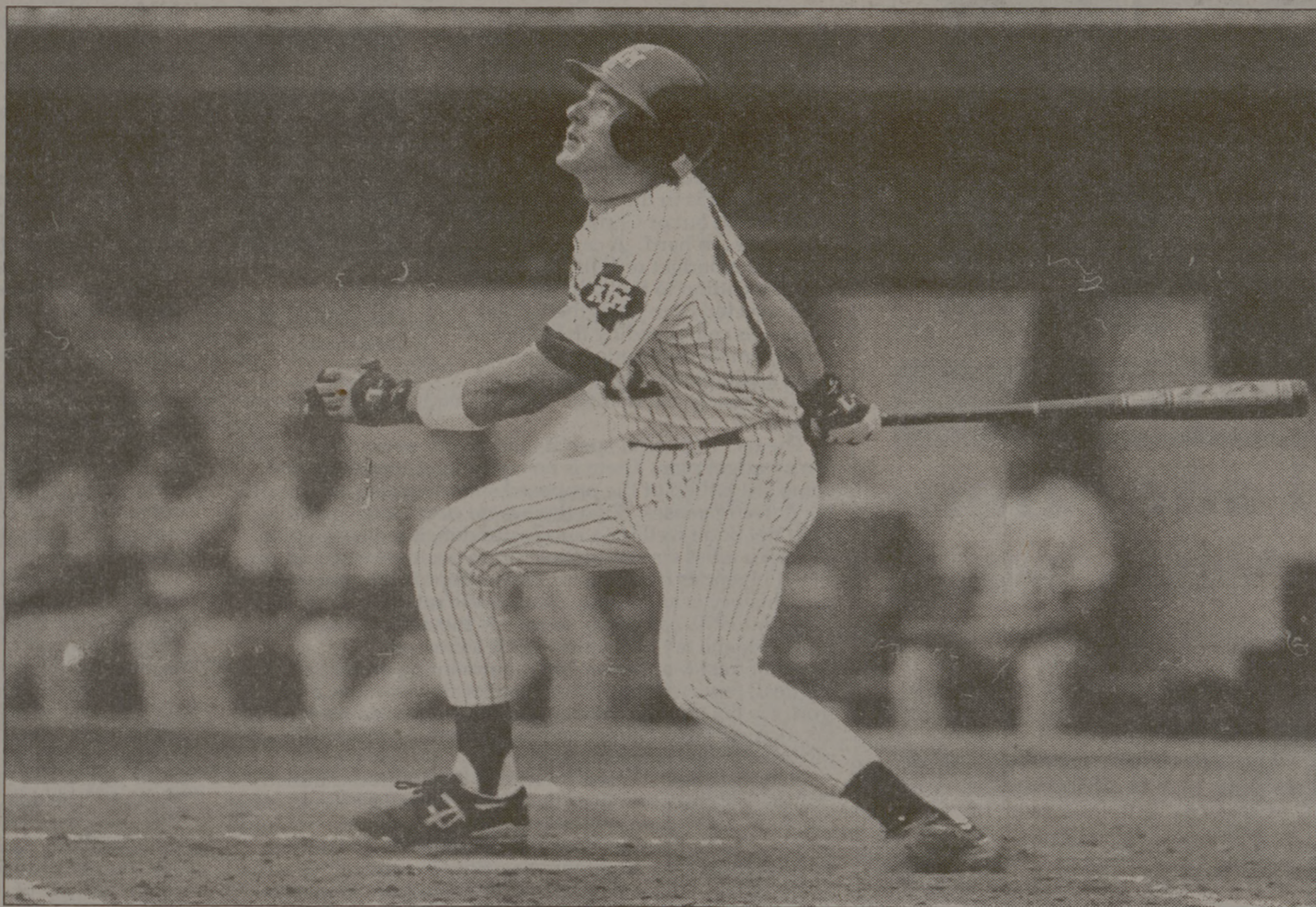
"But I would have nothing to show for it, and end up the game 0-for-3. That is baseball, where you have to take the good with the bad."

Thomas added that he thought there was a very easy explanation for last season's hard times at the plate, and out of the bad times did come some good lessons.

"I learned a lot from last year," he said. "There were a couple of problems with my swing that I got ironed out over the past summer. My slump, though, may have come from my success during my sophomore year."

"I had a great year and I was really going to go out and try to impress the scouts and hopefully get drafted. But somebody set me straight on that attitude."

That someone was his summer league coach, who helped his fortunes turn



KEVIN IVY/The Battalion

A&M centerfielder Brian Thomas admires the flight of a home run during the Aggies' game with Concordia Lutheran last week.

Thomas has been the spark plug for A&M's power surge this season, hitting over .400 throughout the past two weeks.

around in the most unlikely place - Anchorage, Alaska. Thomas hit .359 with five home runs and 50 RBIs in the Alaska League. In the process, he was named a Baseball America Summer All-American.

"Ed Cheef, who coaches at Lewis & Clark, an NAIA school, turned me around totally by telling me something that really stuck with me," Thomas said.

"He said that baseball is a lot of fun but, I should go out there and not try to im-

press anybody but myself.

"That has made it easier this season."

A&M coach Mark Johnson said that Thomas's being named to the summer All-American team had to be a great confidence lifter after his struggles.

"That kind of recognition has to make you feel good," Johnson said. "It probably boosted him into this year."

Thomas said the Alaskan experience gave him the opportunity to clear his

head and regain his thoughts in a relaxed atmosphere.

"I went up there and stayed with the same family I had stayed with the previous summer, so it was kind of like going home again," the left handed hitter said with a laugh. "Coach Johnson and myself talked about a couple of things I needed to improve batting-wise, which I tried to do."

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Corbelli named to replace Givens at volleyball post

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Texas A&M ended its search for a new volleyball coach Thursday, naming Santa Clara University head coach Laurie Corbelli to replace former coach Al Givens.

Corbelli racked up a 61-35 record in her three years at Santa Clara, including a 26-11 record for the 1991 season, which was the best in school history.

After a 21-11 record last season, Corbelli earned West Coast Conference and West Region Coach of the Year honors. She also led Santa Clara to its first NCAA Tournament appearance.

Corbelli said that the attraction to A&M was too strong to turn down.

"My visit to A&M proved to me that the volleyball program is a sleeping giant," Corbelli said. "This will be a great place to coach, recruit and be a part of. I felt the buzz of pride and tradition across the entire campus which was a big part of my decision, and I am very excited to accept the offer."

Corbelli carries impressive playing credentials into her new position. A two-time U.S. Olympic Team member, she was also a member of the U.S. Women's National Volleyball team from 1978-84. Corbelli spent the 1987 season playing for Major League Volleyball franchise San Jose Goldiggers, where she earned Most Valuable Player honors.

"We are very excited to announce that Laurie will be joining our staff as head volleyball coach," A&M associate athletic director Lynn Hickey said. "This is a tremendous step forward for our program, and is a statement of commitment to develop the best volleyball program we can."

"She brings tremendous experience as both a player and coach. As a coach, she has proved herself in the toughest and most competitive volleyball area in the country. Laurie presents a high profile on the court, and will be able to step up our recruiting immediately."

A native of Garland, Corbelli also spent four years as the head coach of the University of San Francisco, where she was named WCC Coach of the Year in 1987 after leading the Lady Dons to a third-place finish.

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