

Baseball was designed to break hearts

Peter Gammons once said baseball was designed to break our hearts.

KEVIN LINDSTROM
Sports writer and Omaha correspondent

Tuesday, it broke mine. I felt it ripping as Daniel Choi found a way to stymie A&M's bats at every turn and I saw the Aggie infield look on helplessly as their incredible defense shattered into tiny pieces.

While listening to Robert Harris and Lee Fedora after the game, you could tell there was a crack somewhere deep within. Probably the most fiery player on the team, Harris was stunned.

"I don't think that anybody on the team is happy about the way we played or about just being here," he said. "We wanted to win this thing."

In a gritty performance, Fedora had returned from taking a ground ball in the mouth Friday to play in A&M's two losses Sunday and Tuesday.

After the game, Fedora gave another standard cliché about being riding and how he had to just get back on.

But Lee didn't just use the cliché, he acted it out as he hit six for seven in the last two games with only an empty feeling to show for it.

Later that night, I saw it break Brooks Kieschnick like a matchstick as Steve Heinrich took a called strike three to end Kieschnick's final appearance in the College World Series.

Kieschnick, the most competitive man in the Southwest Conference and created from the same mold that gave A&M Bucky Richardson, was obviously crushed by his second big

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A&M's All-American

Lady Aggie shortstop McFalls wins national award after record-breaking softball season

By MARK SMITH

The Battalion

Texas A&M can add another name to the long list of athletes who have been honored with a nomination to the NCAA All-America first team, Jennifer McFalls.

The Lady Aggie shortstop was named to the NCAA Division I All-America first team by the National Softball Coaches Association for the first time in her three-year career at A&M.

"I am very honored and proud to accept this award, especially on behalf of Texas A&M and the softball team," McFalls said in a press release.

"It is a shame that it has taken three years for people to recognize her," Lady Aggie head coach Bob Brock said.

McFalls' selection was due to her outstanding performance both at the plate and in the field.

"I'm real excited for her," Brock said. "If you were to review my comments about Jennifer the last three years, you would find that I have said all along that Jennifer is the best shortstop in NCAA Division I softball."

McFalls' .427 batting average was good enough not only to lead the team, but also to break the school's single-season record of .383, previously held by two-time All-American Josie Carter for the 1983 season. Carter was not the only record holder to fall victim to McFalls' potent bat. With 51 runs scored this season, McFalls topped Iva Jackson's record of 47 runs scored in 1982.

Roommate and fellow teammate K.K. Kalhoefer knows how McFalls' hitting gets its added punch. "It's my cooking," she said.

The junior from Grand Prairie also led the team in a number of other offensive categories. They include: hits (64), total bases (108), slugging percentage (.720), RBIs (40), game-winning hits (10), home runs (5), stolen bases (11-of-12), on base percentage (.571), and walks (25).

McFalls also proved to be sure-handed in the field, garnering a career-high .952 fielding percentage in 270 attempts.

Despite her career-high season in the field, McFalls wants to improve.

"I'd like to become more solid defensively," she said. "I want to make the big plays that help the team win."

McFalls' ability around the diamond is nothing new to Lady Aggie fans. She made an immediate impact on the team in her

first year. As a freshman, McFalls led the team with a batting average of .368. She also posted 67 hits, 44 runs and 87 triples with a slugging percentage of .478.

During her sophomore year she continued to be a terror to opponent's pitching leading the team in eight categories, most notably the game-winning hits column where she chalked up 11.

A versatile athlete, McFalls was a three-sport standout at South Grand Prairie High School. A three-time all-district performer in volleyball, she was selected in 1989 by the Dallas Morning News as Volleyball Player of the Year. McFalls received all-district honors in basketball and was chosen as midfielder of the year in soccer. She was also honored with selections to the academic all-state teams in volleyball and basketball.

McFalls said she chose to stay with softball because it allowed her to stay in the state. "My other main sport was soccer, but all of the schools that recruited me for that were out of state," she said.

With one more year of eligibility left, McFalls said she is looking forward to playing some tough opponents, and getting the Lady Aggies back into postseason play.

"Hopefully by beating some ranked teams we'll get the recognition that we deserve," she said.

The Lady Aggies were declined an invitation to the NCAA Division I Tournament despite being ranked number 20 in the national poll at the time the invitations were extended. The NCAA invites 20 teams to the tournament.

"It's frustrating not to be invited after the year we had," she said.

McFalls said the NCAA thought that A&M did not play enough ranked teams.

"If that's what it takes (playing ranked teams), then I say, 'take 'em on,'" she said.

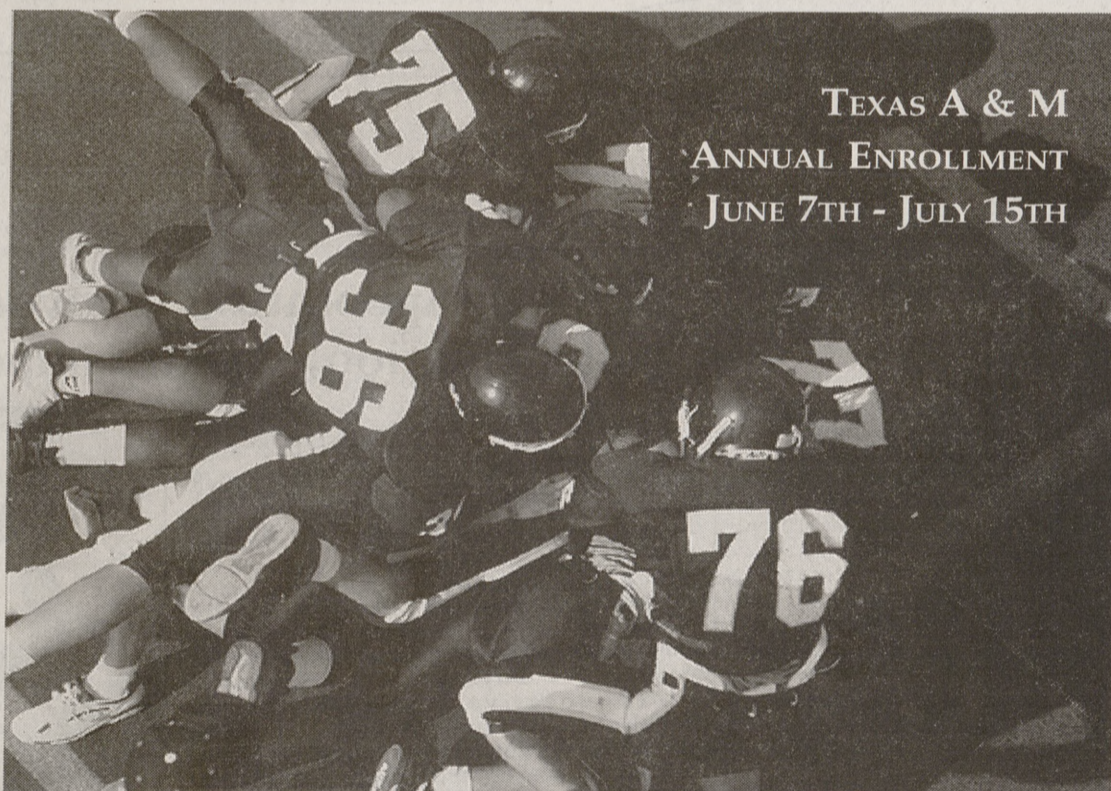
McFalls said that after college she plans to coach softball in the Dallas area. "I'd really like to coach on the collegiate level somewhere around Texas," she said.

McFalls said that during the summer she would be taking classes here at A&M, helping Brock with his softball camp and working with a softball team back in her hometown.

Jennifer McFalls, shortstop for the Texas A&M Lady Aggies softball team, displays her All American trophy.



STACY RYAN/The Battalion



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