

AN AGGIE'S FIELD

Veteran infielders strengthen team

By Drew Diener
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M returns an infield this season that includes veteran players at key positions as well as a host of young hopefuls.

"We're much better than we were last year," head coach Mark Johnson said. "Last season we were on just a real thin string."

Johnson said that junior shortstop Robert Harris will be the leader of the infield this season. Harris started 60 games last season, hitting .325 with 12 home runs and 55 runs batted in on the way to earning All-SWC honors.

Johnson said A&M's increased depth has solidified the rest of the infield while creating several platoon situations, most notably at second base and catcher.

True freshman Rich Petru and junior college transfer Tom Collard are currently battling for the majority of time at second while senior Brian Johnson, junior college transfer Billy Carroll, and freshman Tom Buchman are competing for the job behind the plate.

"We're very pleased that Buchman is on our team," Johnson said. "I think he's got the chance to be the guy."

At first base, junior John Curl returns to the lineup after hitting .297 with seven home runs and 30 RBI last season. Curl said he hopes to help lead the Aggies to another SWC championship this season while improving his own game as well.

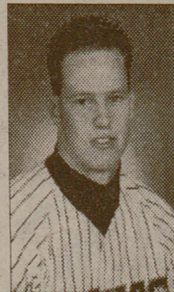
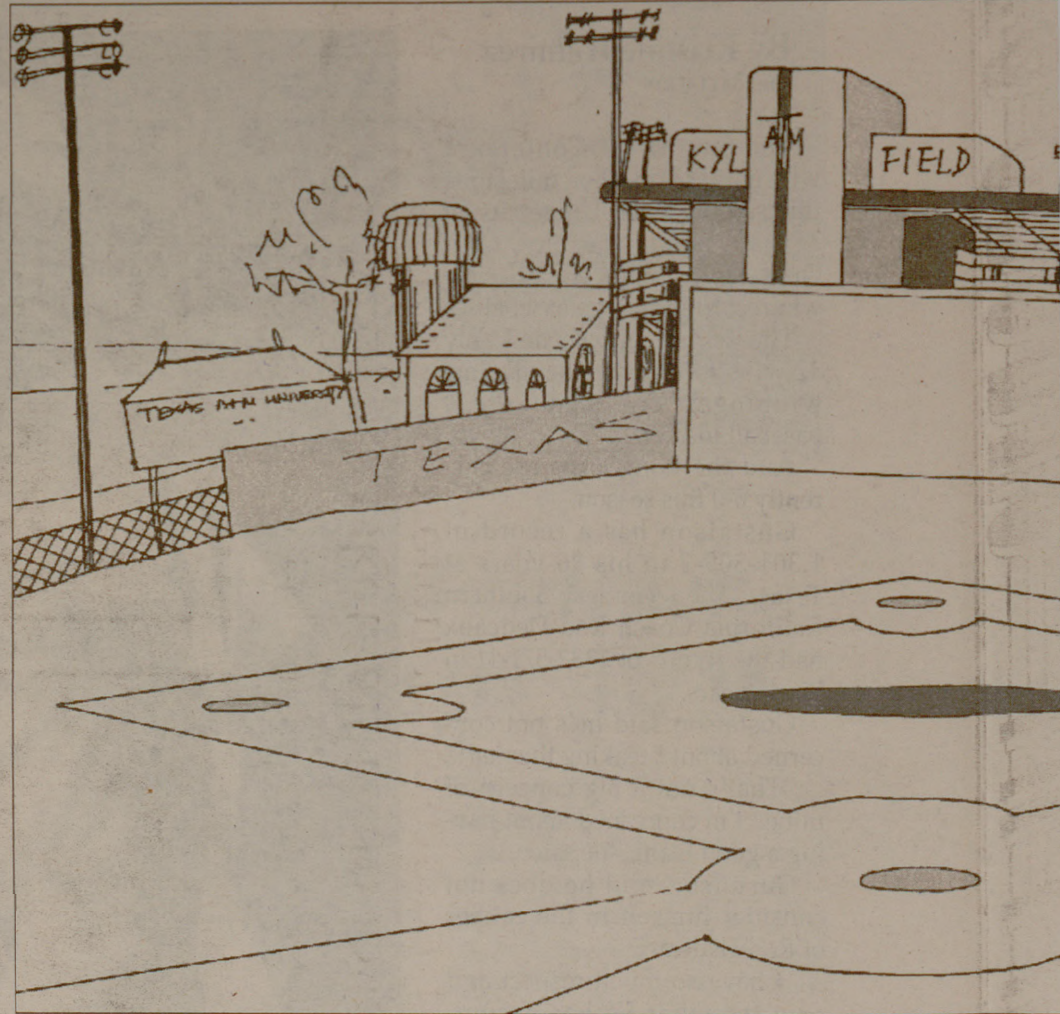
"I hit the weight room pretty good this fall," Curl said. "I worked on my stroke, trying to stay with one swing and I feel pretty good right now."

Sharing playing time with Curl at first will be junior Brian Bittiker and redshirt freshman Jason Stevenson. Bittiker was used primarily as a pinch hitter last season, batting .250 while collecting seven RBI in just 60 at-bats. Johnson said that Stevenson, who is moving to first from third base, is capable of putting up big numbers on offense.

On the other side of the diamond, junior Lee Fedora is back at third base after hitting .342 with eight homers and 48 RBI a year ago. He will be challenged by sophomore Paul Barber, who missed last season after injuring his ankle in a car accident. If Barber returns to form, Fedora could see sometime in leftfield.

"Paul or I will be there (third base) each game so I don't think we'll lose a step either way," Fedora said. "He's a good player, it's fortunate that he's able to come back after that accident."

With a full slate of veterans returning and the addition of highly-touted newcomers, the Aggie infield hopes to lead the team back to the College World Series this year.



Lee Fedora
Jr. - 1L
6-0 / 188
Pos: 3rd base
College Station
(A&M Consolidated)
• Bats Left
• Throws Left



Robert Harris
Jr. - 2L
5-8 / 175
Pos: SS
Houston
(Westbury)
• Bats Right
• Throws Right



Trey Moore
Jr. - 2L
6-1/198
Pos: Pitcher
Keller
(High)
• Bats Left
• Throws Left



Billy Harlan
Sr. - 3L
5-10 / 180
Pos: LF
Corsicana
(High)
• Bats Right
• Throws Right



C. Alexander
So. - 1L
6-1 / 196
Pos: CF
Lufkin
(High)
• Bats Right
• Throws Right

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