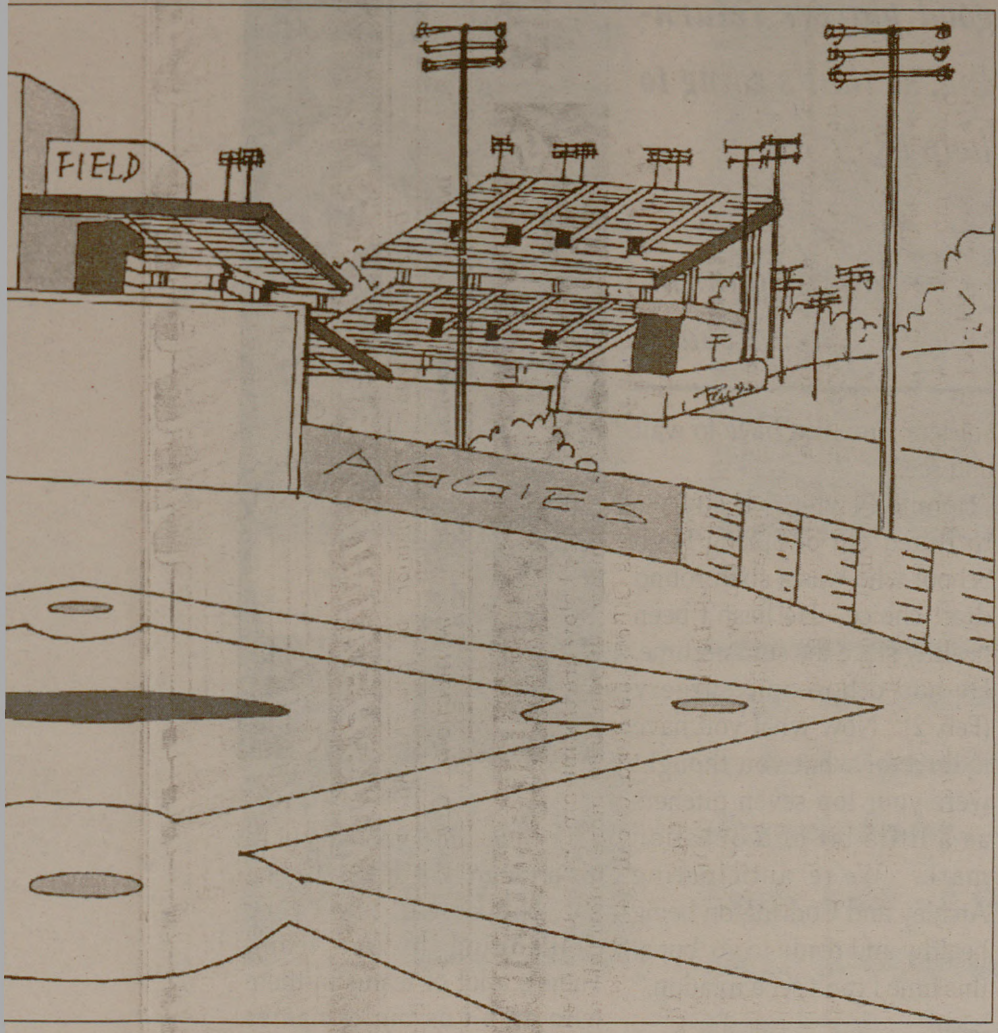


FIELD OF DREAMS



Outfielders look to replace Thomas

By Jose de Jesus Ortiz
THE BATTALION

Head coach Mark Johnson has struggled to replace former outfielder Brian Thomas, but outfielders Chad Alexander, Billy Harlan and Stephen Claybrook say they are ready to take over.

"That was a big loss for us in not only the numbers that he (Thomas) brought to us, but also the intangibles," said Johnson of the former All-American who signed with the Texas Rangers. "He was always ready to play.

"He was a 100 percent type player with big time hustle who was never intimidated by anybody."

Harlan agrees with Johnson and, as the outfielder with the most experience, said he wants to live up to Thomas' examples.

"We have a lot of young guys competing in the outfield," Harlan said. "They are working hard on learning our system. I want them to be able to see me as a Brian Thomas-type player.

"I want to be an emotional and on-field leader by making things happen and being aggressive on the bases."

Harlan will compete for an outfield spot, but can play first baseman or be the designated hitter for A&M. Lee Fedora, who played third base last year, might also see time in the outfield.

"There are some pluses of having maneuverability in the outfield," Johnson said. "You can move some guys around depending on the type of pitching you are seeing and other things like that."

Alexander and freshman Sean Alvarez will compete for the center field position, but don't look for any controversy between the two.

"Sean and I work together," Alexander said. "The outfield works together to make each other better. We are like a separate team."

Claybrook started at right field for A&M, but might not start after having total reconstruction surgery on his right shoulder last year after the College World Series.

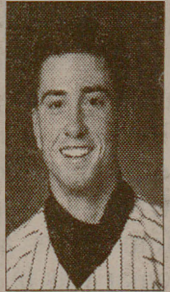
"I just want to get into the groove after the surgery," he said. "It has been real frustrating. I couldn't throw the ball for three months.

"Being a starter and now trying to work myself up has been the biggest frustration this year. Billy Harlan has kept me up. And I just try to remember the good times and I will try to help and contribute to the team."

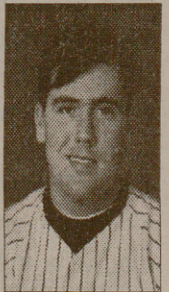
Claybrook and freshman Chad Allen are competing for the starting position in right field and Claybrook said he wishes Allen the best.

"We have to be like a family because it is tough out there," Claybrook said, "We all get along pretty well. We have three or four veterans and good newcomers so we'll have a strong outfield."

Rich Petru
Fr. - HS
5-10/ 180
Pos: 2nd base
Houston
(Westbury)
• Bats Right
• Throws Right



John Curl
Jr. - 2L
6-3/ 212
Pos: 1st base
Logansport, Ind.
(High)
• Bats Left
• Throws Right

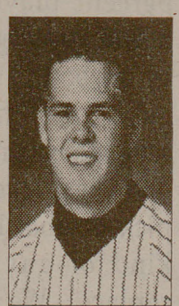


Trey Moore
Jr. - 2L
6-1/ 198
Pos: Pitcher
Keller
(High)
• Bats Left
• Throws Left

S. Claybrook
Jr. - 2L
6-0/ 165
Pos: RF
Corpus Christi
(Calallen)
• Bats Left
• Throws Right



Tom Buchman
Fr. - HS
5-11/ 195
Pos: Catcher
Shawnee Mission,
Kansas (South)
• Bats Switch
• Throws Right



ar. Last season we were on just a real thin string."
— Head coach Mark Johnson