

Memories as childhood wrestling star

DREW DIENER

Sportswriter



The memories all started to come back the minute I climbed into the 1983 Buick Century that the service station fixing my car loaned to me.

As I fastened my seat belt and turned on the ignition, the distinct stench of stale cigarette smoke and other miscellaneous odors almost knocked me out.

Where had I smelled this smell before? If my olfactory lobes could talk, they would tell me. I was perplexed.

Driving down Texas Avenue, not at all paying attention to my driving, I drifted deeply into thought. This aroma, I had smelled it before. But where? Then it hit me...

1985: An eleven-year old Drew Diener takes his first trip to the world famous Dallas Sportatorium to cheer his wrestling heroes and boo their opponents. As he walks into the second home of such famed grapplers as the Von Erichs, Gentleman Chris Adams, and Kamala the Ugandan Giant, the distinct stench of stale cigarette smoke and other miscellaneous odors almost knocks him out.

That was it. That was where I first smelled such a smell. The Dallas Sportatorium, 1985. My first trip to the wrestling matches, and definitely not my last.

As I cut off the policeman in the left-hand lane so that I could turn onto Harvey Road, my wrestling memories began to come full circle.

Back in the good ole days, before puberty decimated my body and my mind, I was a wrestling freak. Starting sometime in the fifth grade and lasting through the first semester of seventh grade, professional wrestling maintained a chokehold on my life.

While many of my friends were learning the art of French kissing, I was learning the art of the figure-four leg lock.

While I was trying to sneak the latest issue of "Pro Wrestling Illustrated" into class, my buddies were trying to sneak the latest issue of "Playboy" out of their dads' closets.

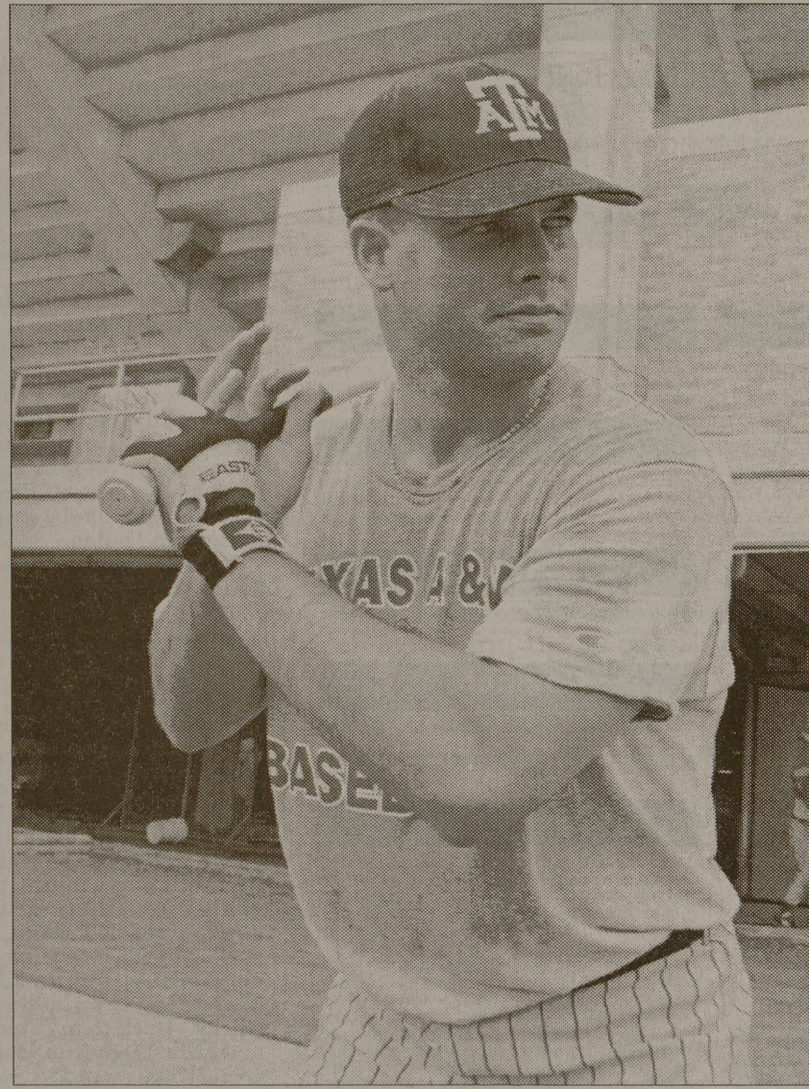
Going to the local skating rink on Saturday night was the thing to do in the sixth grade, however, I could not

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Ex-LSU star brings his talent to A&M

Huffman's skills, leadership to benefit Aggies

By Michele Brinkmann
THE BATTALION



Tim Moog/The Battalion

When Ryan Huffman transferred to Texas A&M this semester to play baseball, he knew he would have to adjust to a new school and impress the coach if he wanted to play.

Huffman thought he had done just that when he hit a home run during the first week of practice this fall.

"I did a normal run around the bases," Huffman said.

After practice however, Huffman found out that it wouldn't be that easy. "OK, Ryan, you showed us what you can do," head baseball coach Mark Johnson said, "but you need to speed it up when running around the bases."

Huffman then realized his new coach's attitude: you always have to hustle - even in the first week of practice.

"I thought I ran OK, but he apparently didn't think so," Huffman said. "He wants you to run everywhere."

Johnson agrees he likes the hustle approach to baseball.

"We like to move at full speed," Johnson said. "Good things happen with the hustle approach."

Huffman said the A&M coaching staff was a major reason he decided to transfer from Louisiana State University, where he played football and baseball. Last April, he decided to give up football and join the Aggie baseball team.

Huffman decided to leave LSU because it was too hard trying to play quarterback in Louisiana, where fans want to see someone from their home state play; not somebody from Texas.

"I do not think I was given the chance I deserved at LSU," Huffman said. "There was just too much politics and too much emphasis on money."

He was also tired of the LSU football

coaching staff switching him back and forth between offense and defense.

"I didn't think I was going anywhere," he said. "I was not happy and I knew needed to get out."

Along with playing quarterback and free safety on the football team, Huffman also played centerfield for the baseball team.

He was a member of LSU's national championship baseball team as a reserve outfielder in 1993, and went with LSU to the College World Series in 1994.

Johnson said A&M recruited Huffman out of high school, but did not hear from him again until Huffman called Johnson asking about transferring to A&M.

"He is adjusting well, and he is a hard worker," Johnson said. "He's a quality kid, but a quiet kid."

Huffman thinks his experience playing on the '93 College World Series championship team will benefit the Aggies.

"I've been in big games and I think I know how to win them," Huffman said. "I can offer advice from what I have learned."

A&M first baseman Jason Stephens, a sophomore and Huffman's roommate, said Huffman fits in with the team.

"Ryan will bring good leadership and knowledge to the team," Stephens said. "When you bring someone in with experience on a national championship team it will help."

Huffman, who still has two years of eligibility for play baseball, said although he prefers centerfield, he would be happy playing any position.

Huffman played football and baseball at Clear Lake High School in Houston. Bob Cobb, Clear Lake's head baseball coach, said Huffman was a leader his teammates turned to when they needed a big play.

"He was an athlete with great speed and
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Volleyball team to match spike for spike with Lady Cougars

Lady Aggies look to extend winning streak to four

Jason Holstead
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's volleyball team hopes to extend its three match winning streak tonight against the 25th-ranked University of Houston Lady Cougars. After an inconsistent beginning to the season, the Lady Aggies feel they are beginning to truly mesh into a team.

"I think the younger players are becoming more comfortable with the system and their teammates," head coach Laurie Corbelli said. "The other players have welcomed the younger players into a difficult situation because they knew there was potential (in the new players) to take (their) spots."

Senior outside hitter Jennifer Bronner said the team is starting to come together. "We are building a bond with each other out there on the court," Bronner said. "We know where everyone is (on the court) and who is going to get the ball. We communicate well with each other."

The Lady Cougars (9-3 overall and 4-0 in SWC) are currently riding a six match winning streak, which includes an unbeaten 4-0 record on their home

floor this season.

Houston is led by their outside hitter, Lilly Denoon-Chester, who leads the Southwest Conference in kill average (4.67) and blocking (1.29) and is second in hitting efficiency (.333).

Corbelli said the Lady Cougars are a very efficient team that runs a basic offense.

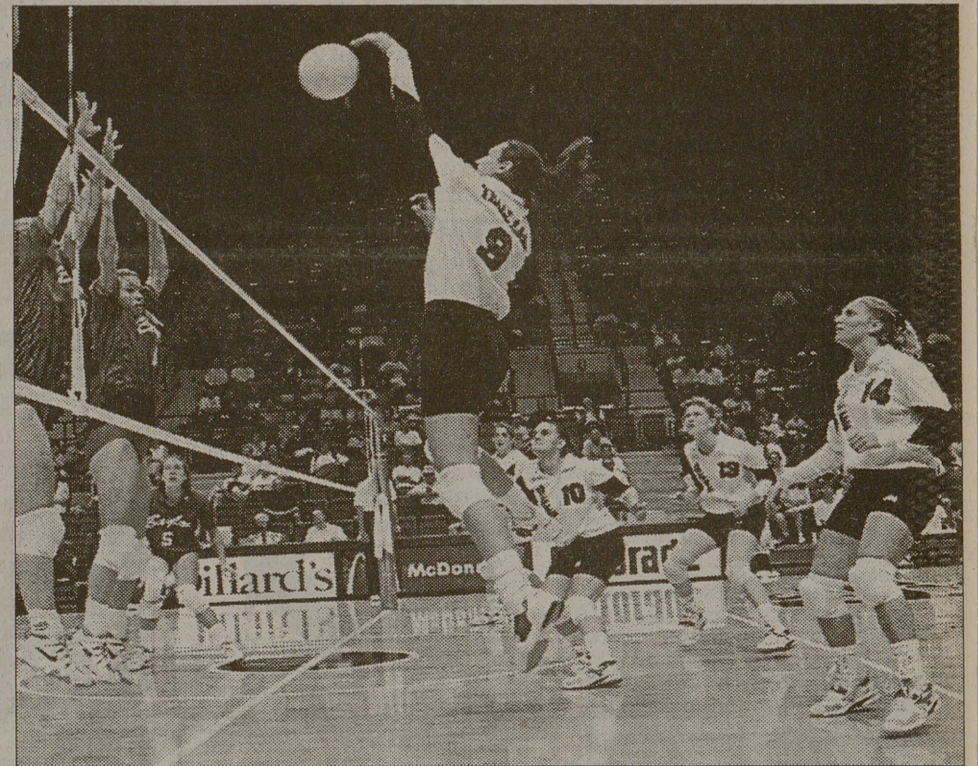
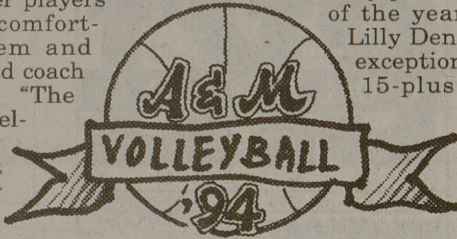
"They probably have the player of the year on their team in Lilly Denoon-Chester. She is exceptional and will get her 15-plus kills per match," Corbelli said.

"They also have a surrounding cast of very strong players for their positions."

The Lady Aggies are currently in fourth place with a 2-2 conference record.

Texas A&M has not defeated Houston at Hofheinz Pavilion since 1987, losing the last six matches.

The Lady Aggies will return home Saturday night to host the rematch against 12th-ranked Notre Dame at G. Rollie White Coliseum. The Irish handily defeated A&M (4-15, 4-15, 3-15) last month at the University of Colorado Coors Tournament.



Carrie Thompson/The Battalion

Jennifer Bronner, # 9, spikes the ball against Baylor as # 14 Dana Santleben, #13 Kristie Smedsrud, and # 10 Suzy Wentle look on.

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