

Aggies have depth for Fiesta in '96

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

SPORTSWRITER



Aggie football has done it again. And it looks like it is going to get better for the maroon and white.

Congratulations goes out to both Rodney Thomas and Antonio Armstrong for being selected in the National Football League draft last weekend. Thomas was selected by the Houston Oilers in the third round and Armstrong was selected in the sixth round by the San Francisco 49ers.

Thomas' third round selection was the latest an Aggie has been taken in the draft since 1972 and the first time since 1991 that A&M was shut out of the first round. However, both Thomas and Armstrong should be steals for both the Oilers and 49ers since they got them lower than where many expected them to be.

Which leads up to the upcoming football season. A&M has many prospects that should be highly sought after in the 1996 draft. Among those who should get some pro football consideration include senior Detron Smith and juniors Leeland McElroy and Brandon Mitchell. McElroy and Mitchell may even be first rounders.

Let me just make this statement about the 1995 Aggie football team, and many will like what I have to say. Your 1995 Texas

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A&M ready to battle for SWC title

□ A&M and Rice currently share the first place conference spot with records of 12-6.

By Nick Georgandis
THE BATTALION

And down the stretch they come!

No, this is not the call from the upcoming Kentucky Derby, but rather the theme for the remaining fourth of the Southwest Conference baseball season. After Rice's sweep of Texas Christian and Texas A&M's split with Texas Tech this weekend, the conference race is in a near dead heat with the Aggies vying with the Red Raiders and Owls for the league crown.

"We've got five games on the road and one at home. We've just got to do our thing."

— Mark Johnson,
A&M head baseball coach

Rice and A&M are currently tied for the conference lead with identical records of 12-6. Texas Tech is a game back at 11-7 following the Aggies' stunning come-from-behind, 9-8 win on Sunday afternoon at Olsen Field.

A&M head coach Mark Johnson said the race is one of the most entertaining he has been in and that it is anyone's race to win.

"Right now, you just hope you have a chance," Johnson said. "The way it's rolling now, nobody knows until the next team plays. It's incredible trying to keep up with it."

The three teams in or near the lead are strikingly similar to one another at the plate. Through April 20, Tech led the SWC in team batting average at .324. Rice had the second-best average

at .322 and the Aggies were a close third with a .317 mark.

Since conference play began, it has also been one big hitter for each team doing the damage. For the Aggies, that hitter is left fielder Chad Allen, who is hitting .440 in SWC action.

Allen's gaudy batting average is not enough to lead the conference however, as Tech's Clint Bryant is batting a red-hot .444. Rice relies heavily on the bat of Jose Cruz Jr., who has a .429 mark in the SWC.

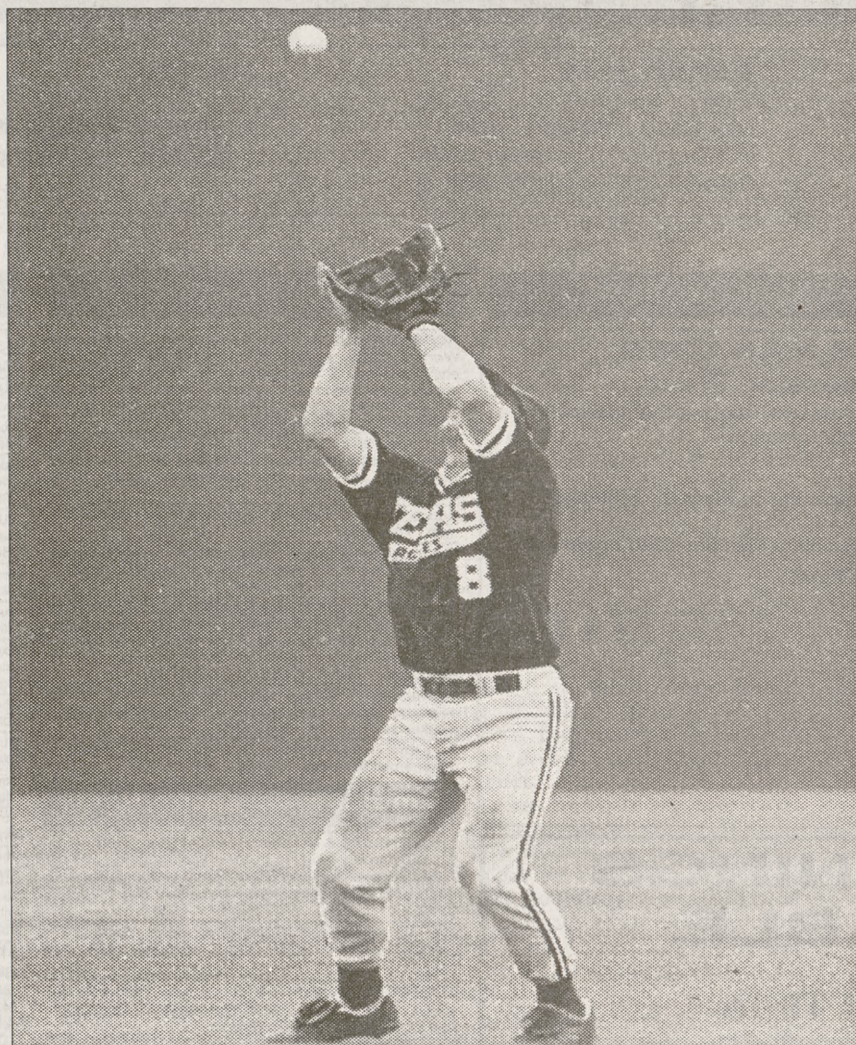
Pitching may very likely be the downfall of the Owls down the stretch. The Aggies and Red Raiders are running one and two in team earned run average in the SWC with marks of 5.11 and 5.68 respectively. Rice however, is sixth in ERA at 6.12, ahead of only the lowly University of Houston.

Rice also places seventh in the SWC in fielding percentage at .951. The Aggies are not much better at .955, but the Red Raiders lead the conference with a .971 percentage including just 14 errors in their 13 conference games.

The Aggies have only one conference game left at home, against the University of Texas on Friday night. The team must then travel to Austin to play two games at Disch-Falk field. A&M closes out the season with a three-game set at TCU, including one game at The Ballpark in Arlington.

Although the Aggies are at a road disadvantage for the remainder of the season, things will change on May 18-21. The Aggies are due to host the SWC Baseball Tournament at Olsen Field after failing to last season by not being one of the top four teams in the conference.

Johnson said the Aggies must keep up their winning ways and look for outside influences to take the SWC crown.



Roger Hsieh/THE BATTALION

Senior infielder/pitcher Paul Barber waits for the ball in a game against Texas Tech this weekend at Olsen Field.

"We're going to need some help," Johnson said. "We've got five games on the road and one at home, so as you can see, we've just got to do our thing."

Despite playing five of their last six conference games on the road, the Aggies would appear to have an advantage since Rice and Tech must play each other this coming week-

end. After being a part of a hard-fought four game series against the Red Raiders, Johnson said he does not expect the race to be decided soon.

"(The series split) still puts us in the hunt," Johnson said. "Obviously, you'd like to win more. Tech has got a good ballclub. I am impressed with their ballclub."

A&M athletes awarded for academic excellence

By Kristina Buffin and Tom Day
THE BATTALION

Two hundred and seventy athletes were recognized for their academic achievements at the sixth annual GTE Athletic Academic Awards Banquet Monday night at the College Station Hilton. Keith Waguespack and Jennifer Saul were honored as the GTE/Texas A&M Student Athletes of the Year.

Waguespack, a senior place kicker for the Aggie football team, was recognized for his 3.94 GPR in biomedical sciences. Waguespack said that maintaining a balance between school and athletics was tough.

"It involves long hours in the weight room, on the practice field and learning to study on airplanes, buses and in hotels," Waguespack said. Saul, a member of the Lady Aggie swimming and diving team, was recognized for her athletic, academic and community contributions. Saul, who has a 3.77 cumulative GPR in psychology, spoke about the importance of non-revenue sports. These sports, such as swimming, golf and tennis, do not earn revenue for the University or gain as much recognition as the bigger sports such as football and basketball, she said.

"The primary payoffs (of non-revenue sports) are the intrinsic awards," Saul said. "There is a feeling of satisfaction when you test your limits throughout workouts and see how good you can be. You can reap the rewards even if you are not nationally known. I will remember my teammates long after I graduate."

Among the others honored were Kristina Dillinger, Damon Johnson and Brian Randall. All three received the Distin-

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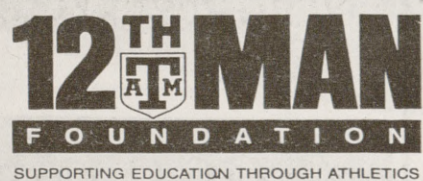
to receive a complimentary membership in the 12th Man Foundation.

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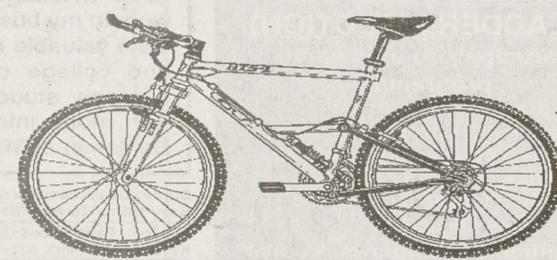
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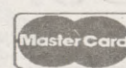
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