

# Aggies pick up win in grand fashion, 9-5

By CHRIS FERRELL  
THE BATTALION

If there is no crying in baseball, then Texas A&M Baseball Coach Mark Johnson was fighting back the tears during an afternoon doubleheader at Olsen Field.

The Aggies (8-4) lost the first game to the University of Nevada-Reno Wolf Pack (7-5) 10-4, and picked up a 5-4 win in the second game going into the bottom of the ninth.



Rony Angkriwan, THE BATTALION

Freshman Steven Truitt bunts to advance the runners to second and third with one out in the second inning of the first game at Olsen Field.

That was when the tears changed from tears of frustration to tears of joy as senior Johnny Hunter came out of a slump and hit the game-winning grand slam to lead A&M to a 9-5 win in Game two.

"I had a good feeling for some reason all day long," Hunter said. "I knew I was going to do something good, but I didn't know what it was. I didn't get down on myself. I just stayed positive and believed."

Hunter sat out the first game of

the twin bill and was 0 for 4 in Game two, before his grand slam.

"I told the guys, and Johnny Hunter is a prime example of this," Johnson said. "You can go from a bum to a hero in just one day, and that's what he did."

Sophomore outfielder Steve Leonard led off the ninth inning with a base hit. The Nevada pitchers had retired seven straight Aggie batters prior to his hit.

"Steve Leonard did a great job with a 2-2 curve ball — that's what really got us going," Hunter said. "Then (sophomore outfielder Jason) Tyner got his little hit."

Senior second baseman Brian Benefield moved the runners to second and third with a sacrifice bunt and only one out.

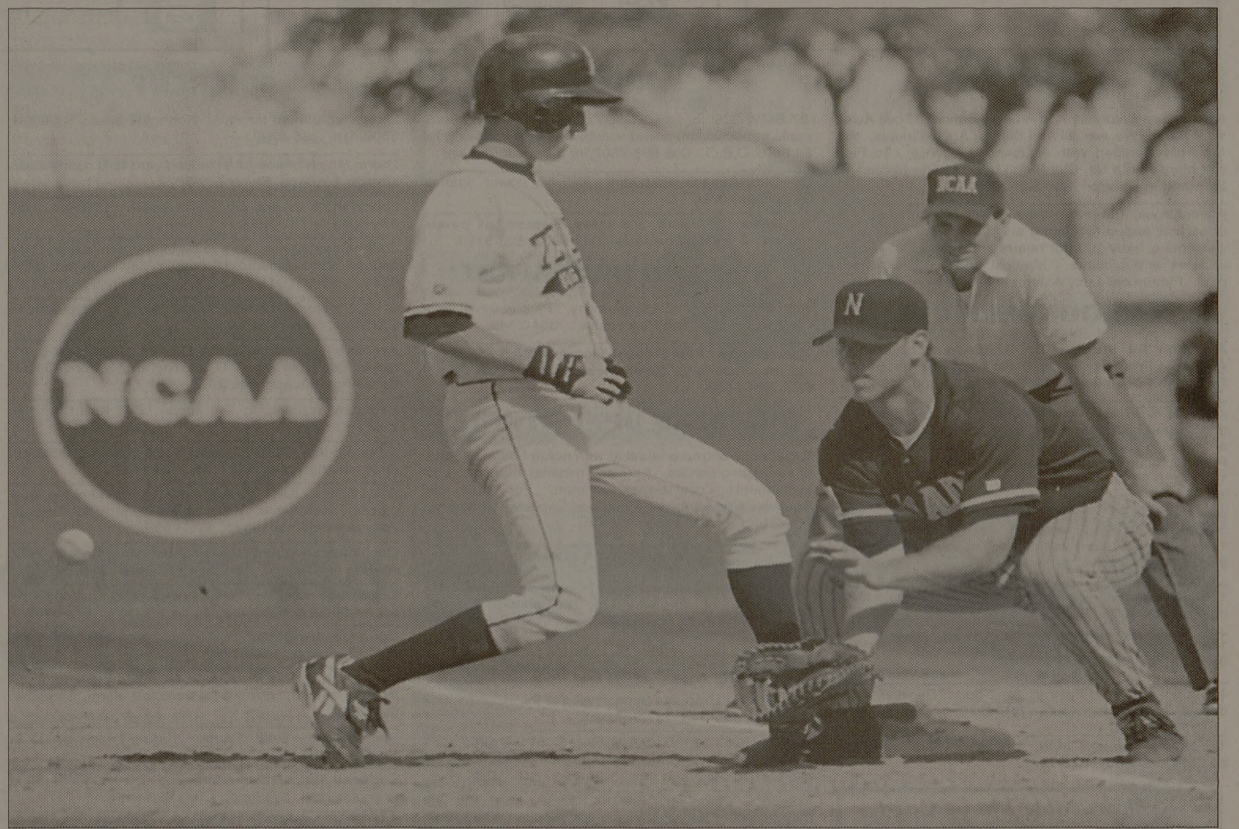
Then Nevada intentionally walked junior designated hitter Scott Sandusky to load the bases for senior shortstop Rich Petru. Petru, the team leader in RBIs with 12, delivered with a bloop single over the outstretched arm of Nevada shortstop Joe Inglett to score Leonard.

That set up Hunter's grand slam. "It was high energy," Johnson said. "I think the thing that really happened was that we got some back-to-back hits."

Nevada looked primed for another big win, jumping out to a 5-1 lead going into the bottom of the sixth inning. But the Aggies put together a two-out rally which was sparked by junior catcher Matt Garrick's solo home run.

After Garrick's home run, freshman Steve Scarborough singled and then Nevada gave up walks to sophomore first baseman John Scheschuk, playing for the injured Jason Stephens, and Leonard.

Tyner then hit a two-run double



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Sophomore outfielder Jason Tyner retreats to first base after Nevada pitcher Ryan Church tries to pick him off in the first inning of the first game yesterday at Olsen Field.

that cut the lead to one.

A&M junior pitcher Robert Keens (2-0) came in to relieve an unstable pitching staff that struggled all afternoon. He gave up one hit in three innings of work to get the win.

"He's the one that gave us a breath of fresh air," Johnson said. "Our starting pitching didn't give us any innings. So we got in our bullpen deep."

The Aggies used nine different pitchers during the doubleheader. Neither starter, freshman Chris Fulbright in Game one or junior John Sneed in Game two, made it out of the second inning. Fulbright did not give up any runs or hits, but walked four of the nine batters he faced. Sneed struck out three, but gave up four earned runs on four hits in 1.2 innings.

A&M jumped out to a 2-0 lead in

Game one, then watched as the Wolf Pack rallied to score 10 runs. A seven-run fifth inning, keyed by a grand slam by Nevada third baseman Andy Dominique, was all the offense they would need.

"We just didn't really come out ready to play," Hunter said. "Sometimes we get out into that big trap of playing a weekday series. We just have to pick it up."

## After four years, all he wants is the 'ring'

Team-oriented co-captain Rich Petru has eyes set on conference title

By CHRIS FERRELL  
THE BATTALION

Every team needs a Rich Petru. A guy who does the little things.

A player who gives his all practice and in games and drives his teammates to do the same.

The Texas A&M Baseball Team is glad to have Rich Petru.

The Aggie senior shortstop has been a major contributor to the team's success over the past three seasons. He comes into 1997 with a career batting average of .304 and has continued to perform at the plate this season. He is batting .316, and has knocked in a team high-12 runs.

His work in the field has been important to the seventh ranked Aggies as well.

"Rich has done an excellent job," senior second baseman Brian Benefield said. "He's been solid offensively and defensively."

But "solid" players do not grab headlines.

"He's a very consistent player," A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson

said. "And I think that goes unnoticed sometimes."

That's the beauty of a guy like Rich Petru. The senior co-captain has become one of the Aggies most valuable assets by doing the things that do not show up in the box score.

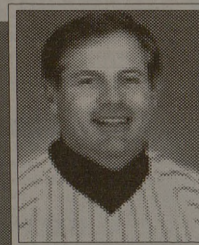
"I try to lead by example," Petru said. "I guess that's the kind of leader I want to be, one that everyone sees play hard and makes them want to play hard too."

Johnson agreed, saying, "He's a 100 percent effort guy."

Another important aspect of Petru's game is the experience he brings to the team. Since starting the season opener his freshman year, Petru has been a key component of the Aggie lineup. "He brings a lot of experience," Johnson said. "He's been in our lineup off and on for four years now. He's been in the hunt and experi-

ence — you can't teach that."

Despite being an integral part of one of college baseball's elite programs, there is one thing Petru has not been a part of — a championship team.



**"Everything you want representing your team, your university, is in Rich Petru."**

Mark Johnson  
A&M head coach

"We haven't won a ring since I've been here," he said. "That's the only thing I'm looking for. I would really like to go out with a ring."

Petru's team-first mentality is due in part to his maturity, an aspect the coaches have noticed.

"He's not a problem to me at all," Johnson said. "I could take

those kinds of guys every year. He's going to get his degree. Everything you want representing your team, your university, is in Rich Petru."

For Petru, who won a GTE Academic Achievement Award last season, getting his diploma will be one of his proudest moments.

While most baseball players spent the off-season in summer leagues, Petru stayed in College Station.

"Over the summer, I didn't go anywhere," he said. "I stayed here and went to summer school so that I will be able to graduate in May."

Petru was still able to improve his game. With the help of A&M coaches, he was able to fine tune his swing. He also spent time working on his speed and strength.

Petru's commitment to hard work and improvement has set him apart in the eyes of his coaches.

"The thing that I would hitch to his game," Johnson said, "is that Rich Petru came to practice hard; he came to play hard. I've never seen a day where he hasn't done either of those."

Every team can use a Rich Petru.

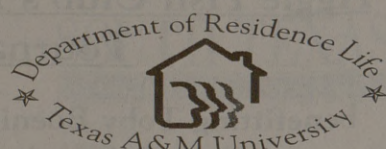


Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Senior shortstop Rich Petru waits for the pitch in Tuesday's doubleheader against the University of Nevada-Reno.

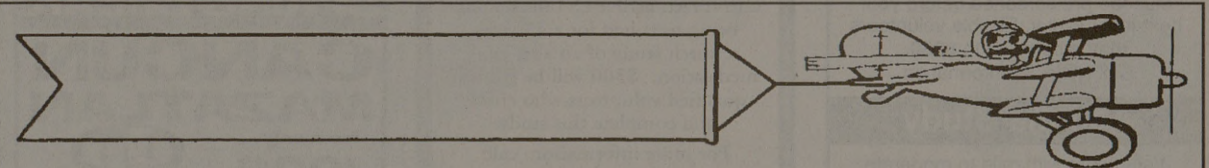
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