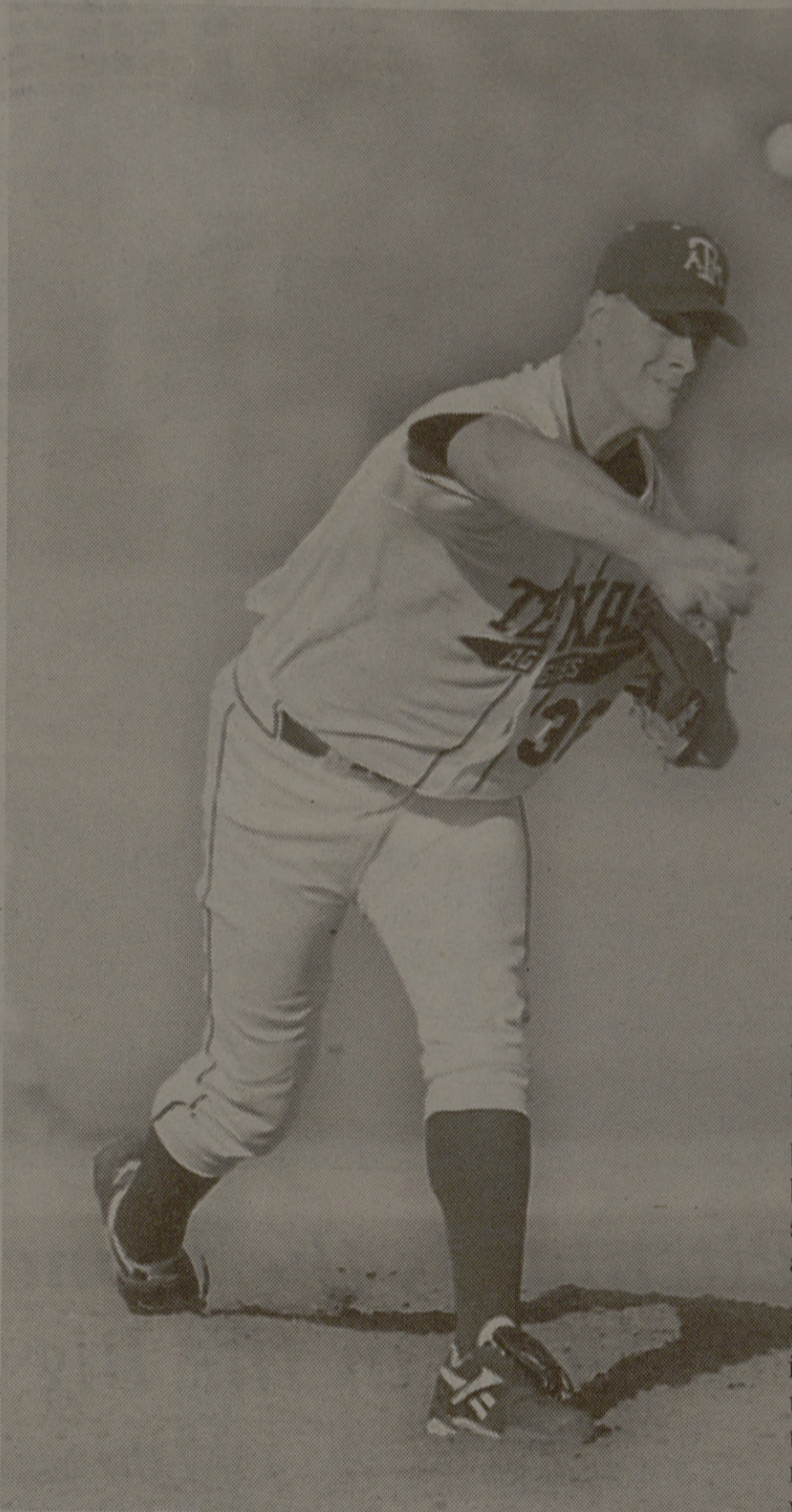


# Rupe's making up for lost time



► Junior pitcher Ryan Rupe missed all of last season after surgery to remove bone spurs.

BY CHRIS FERRELL  
THE BATTALION

Ryan Rupe is ready to be The Man and at 6-foot-6, he has the size.

With one of the most intimidating fastballs in the country, he has the pitch.

But because of bone spurs in his elbow, which caused him to miss the 1996 season, he just has not had the opportunity.

This season, Rupe, a starting right-handed pitcher for the Texas A&M Baseball Team, hopes his time has come.

"I want to be the ace," Rupe said. "That's something I've been trying to do for a while now, and this year I have the chance."

Rupe's chance was supposed to be last year, but his season ended before it started. Rupe had bone spurs in his right elbow, resulting in a premature end to his season.

"I was kind of skeptical, after the surgery, about how I was going to feel," Rupe said. "I always talk to people and they say 'it's tight' or 'it's this' or 'it's that,' and mine came out [feeling] pretty well after surgery. It felt better

than it did going in."

After the surgery Rupe was forced to sit back and watch his teammates play out the rest of the season.

"It was a major setback to find out, in the middle of January last year, he wasn't going to be able to pitch," Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "So you have that injury and you sit there and watch your teammates play and you can't pitch, you can't help, and it's frustrating. I thought during that period of time he handled himself well."

Rupe returned to the mound Feb. 8 against the University of Texas-Pan American for the first time since his injury.

"It's been almost a year and a half since I've been out there," Rupe said. "It felt good. I enjoy

pitching for the Aggies and I enjoy playing at Texas A&M. Going out there again felt good. I was happy, I was nervous, I was all that. After the first pitch, I was into the game and I was ready to play."

Rupe's fast ball was back in form as he pitched four innings, struck out six batters, gave up six hits and earned three runs.

The only flaw Johnson noted in Rupe's performance was his inability to throw strikes with his slider and change up, two pitches Johnson said will be important if Rupe is

going to keep batters from on the fastball.

"It (his fastball) can be intimidating for the hitter," Johnson said. "It's going to be an advantage, the fastballs going to be his pitch, then there has to be something else in the strike zone to worry about. If hitters only have to worry about the fast ball and let everything else they're eventually going to catch."

A&M Pitching Coach Jim Lawler pointed out the 40 degree temperatures that hit College Station have played a major role in his success not finding the mark.

Rupe's ability to be coached also been important to his success at A&M.

"He communicates really well," Lawler said. "I feel good and doesn't feel like mechanics are he'll just walk in and tell you."

**"I was kind of skeptical after the surgery about how I was going to feel."**

Ryan Rupe  
Junior pitcher

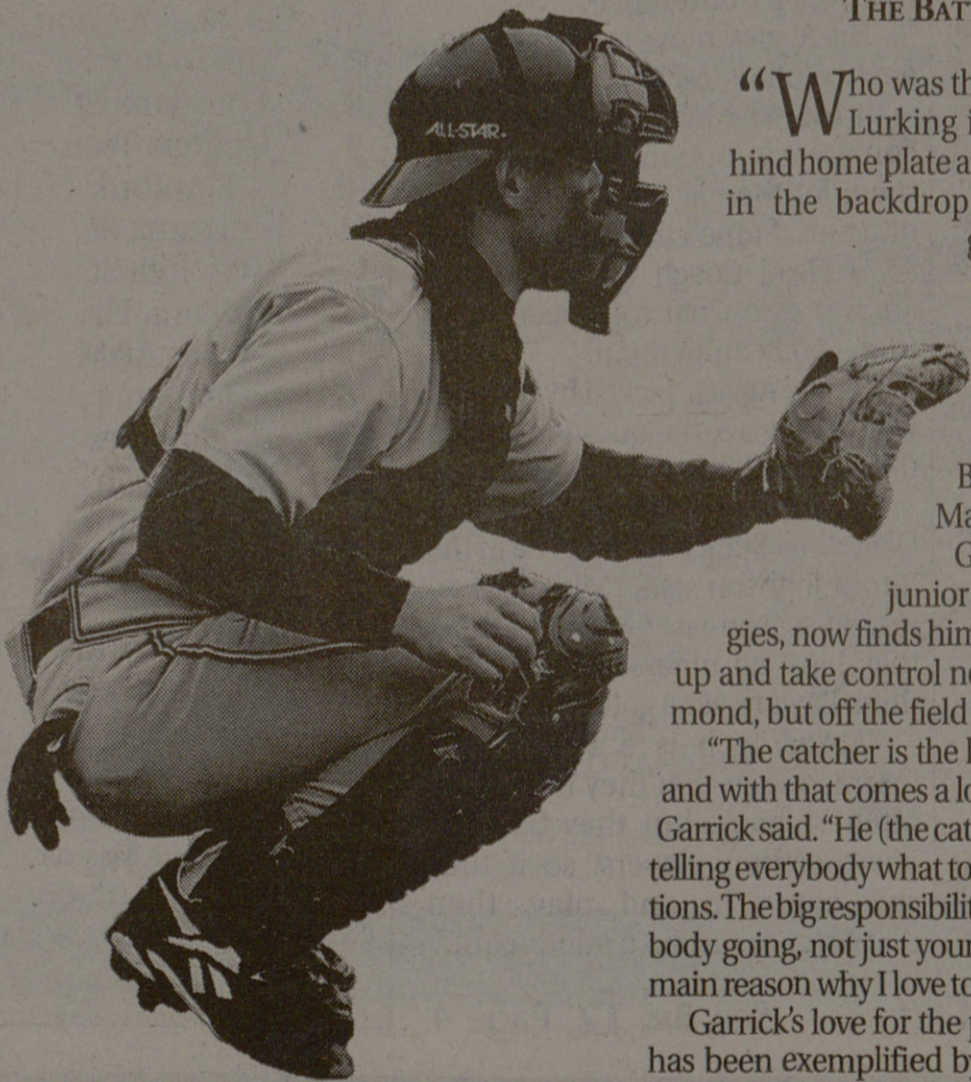
"Some other people will hold it just wait and not press themselves. He's always been really open with me as far as anything going on."

Rupe's work on his tall frame and about the eye more than just his coaches. He is considered one of the top professional pitching prospects in the country.

See RUPE, Page 1

# Garrick has special view from behind the plate

BY DENNIS RAMIREZ  
THE BATTALION



"Who was that masked man?" Lurking in the depths behind home plate and often times lost in the backdrop of pitchers, big games, and big hits, stands and squats a pillar of experience and dedication for the Texas A&M Baseball Team, Matt Garrick.

Garrick, who is the junior catcher for the Aggies, now finds himself having to step up and take control not only on the diamond, but off the field this season.

"The catcher is the leader on the team and with that comes a lot of responsibility," Garrick said. "He (the catcher) is in charge of telling everybody what to do in certain situations. The big responsibility is in getting everybody going, not just yourself, and that is the main reason why I love to play catcher."

Garrick's love for the position and game has been exemplified by his years of hard

work and dedication. Since the tender age of eight, Garrick has found himself participating in a variety of sports. But Garrick finally realized his talent and love for baseball.

"Watching my older brother play ball really got me into the sport, but it was when I was about 12-years-old that I decided that is what I wanted to play," Garrick said. "I was invited to play in an elite league in Dallas and from that point on I decided to get serious about the game and dream about professional baseball."

Garrick went on to earn a variety of honors while playing at Duncanville High School. One honor was being an All-Area selection as well as playing in the Connie Mack World Series.

Head Coach Mark Johnson said Garrick was able to come to A&M and deliver superb play since his first season to this very day and Johnson expects bigger and better things from him this season.

"Matt is a quality player and has been since he walked onto the campus his freshman year and I expect him to get better," Johnson said. "I expect him to hit a lot better this year, but as far as his defensive play, it is at a very high level already. It has always been a challenge to improve, but he likes

challenges and he has elevated his game."

His teammates, freshman pitcher Cassin Fossom credits Garrick with having knowledge behind the plate and taking charge on the diamond from behind the plate.

"I remember the first time I pitched to him I shook off his calls most of the time," Fossom said. "He talked to me and let me know he knew the hitters and to listen to him, now it has gotten to where I can shake him off. He knows the hitters and calls a great game. He controls me out there and basically runs the game from there behind the plate."

For now Garrick is enjoying his college baseball days but at the same time stillpires to play in the big leagues one day. Garrick said he just wants to take full advantage of this season and show his dedication.

"So far I have had a great time playing with a lot of good players that have moved on and are pro now," Garrick said. "After this year I hope to get drafted and pursue a professional baseball career. Right now I have big expectations for this season, especially because we have No. 1 recruiting class in the nation. I'm dedicated to working hard and doing the team, whatever it takes to win."