

A&M pitchers look to continue domination

BY CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

The eighth-ranked Texas A&M Baseball Team looks to avenge last year's 9-8 loss to the Sam Houston State Bearkats as they travel to Huntsville today.

The Aggies took two out of three from Sam Houston last year, winning both games at Olsen Field, 17-6 and 9-2.

A&M will send senior right-hander John Codrington to the mound. "Right now, I want to see Cod over at Sam Houston," Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "He's had a couple of rough outings. He really gave us some encouragement against

Southwest Texas, because when he threw, he threw good stuff."

After a successful freshman year in 1993, which saw Codrington go 4-0, the righthander missed most of the next two seasons with arm trouble.

After redshirting last season, the 6-foot-5 senior has no record in three appearances this year, giving up five runs in six innings of work.

Codrington is mounting a comeback after undergoing successful "Tommy John" surgery. The surgery, which repairs the medial epicondyle, is one of the most difficult operations to come back from for a pitcher.

He will try to extend the streak of domination A&M starting pitchers have put together in their past few starts.

Aggie starters have combined to go 22 innings while giving up only four runs on 14 hits in the past three games.

A&M's bats also have been red-hot after a slow start.

Although they have batted over .340 all season, Aggie batters had been having trouble coming up with clutch hits to drive in runners.

The Aggies scored 27 runs over the past weekend, giving the team hope that the batters are coming around.

"Right now our confidence is high, and (our) hitters are going good now," junior second baseman Brian Benefield said.

The Aggies have 10 players hitting over .300.

A&M will use the game with the Bearkats to prepare for Big 12 play, which gets under way this Friday.

"[We are] going into Baylor next week," Benefield said. "We've got Sam Houston on Tuesday as kind of a warm up to go in and get our intensity high."

Stephens wants one more shot

Senior first baseman Jason Stephens wants to show the Aggies the road back to Omaha.

BY JAMIE BURCH
THE BATTALION

Omaha or bust. Senior co-captain and first baseman Jason Stephens has witnessed plenty of success in the past. Now all the 23-year-old wants is another shot at the College World Series.

Stephens got a taste of Omaha as a redshirt freshman, when the Aggies made their first appearance in the College World Series since 1964. Although they won the Southwest Conference title, A&M lost in the third round of the series to Long Beach State, 6-2.

Stephens and the Aggies returned to post-season play two years later in 1995, advancing to the NCAA Regionals.

Stephens said his sophomore year was one of his most memorable seasons as an athlete.

"The highlight of my career (with the team) was going to the regional tournament in '95," Stephens said. "My personal highlight was hitting a grand slam at Disch-Falk Field against the University of Texas."

Last season, Stephens carried the offensive load for the Aggies. Named the team's Marion Pugh Most Valuable Player while hitting .380, Stephens led the team with 11 home runs and 79 RBIs. The power hitter's 79 RBIs are second all-time to former A&M standout John Byington's school record of 89.

Stephens said he has mixed emotions about the baseball team his junior season.

"It felt good to be able to con-

tribute to the team," Stephens said. "I had a good year stat-wise. But it is a team game, and the team came up short and didn't make the regional tournament. So it kind of leaves a sour taste in your mouth."

Aside from his collegiate success, Stephens was part of two championships in high school. As a sophomore, the 6-foot-2 senior led his team to a Class 4A State Championship in both baseball and football. Stephens was named to the All-State team as a first baseman his freshman year and an All-State punter his junior season.

Stephens said he was recruited for football by some schools, but he never thought twice about not playing baseball.

"I was recruited by some schools to play football," Stephens said. "But I knew in my heart that I wanted to play baseball. That was always my first love. And I was too small to play the positions I was recruited for in football — punter and tight end."

In addition to his past accomplishments, Stephens has set his sights on a Collegiate World Series title.

Senior shortstop Rich Petru said Stephens only asks of his teammates what he can give in return.

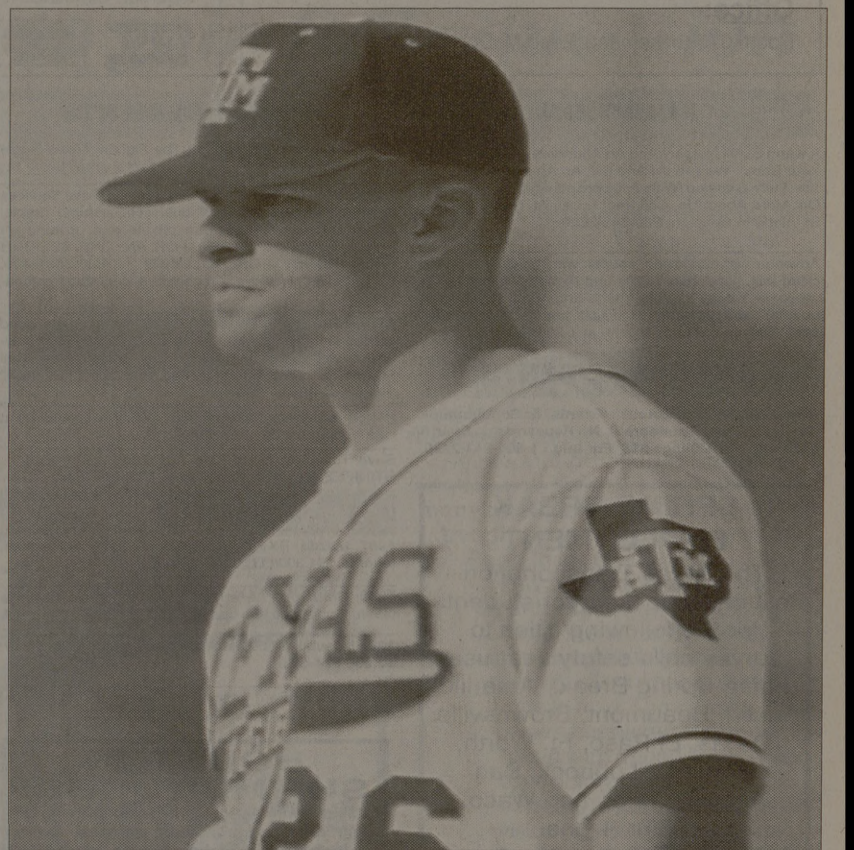
"He's been here one year longer than I have, so I try to follow him," Petru said. "He knows how to play the game. I respect him both as a person and a baseball player."

Petru said the team is aware of Stephens' goals.

"He's very unselfish," Petru said. "He's looking for a championship. You can see that in the way he plays and practices. This is his last year, and he wants to leave with a ring."

Head Coach Mark Johnson said Stephens' dedication has made him a dependable player.

"I've never seen him come to the ballpark, [at] practice or game time, when he's not ready to go," Johnson said. "He's very accountable to his



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Senior co-captain Jason Stephens was named the team's Marion Pugh Most Valuable Player last season.

teammates. He's a guy that's going all out and make sure he fulfills his responsibilities."

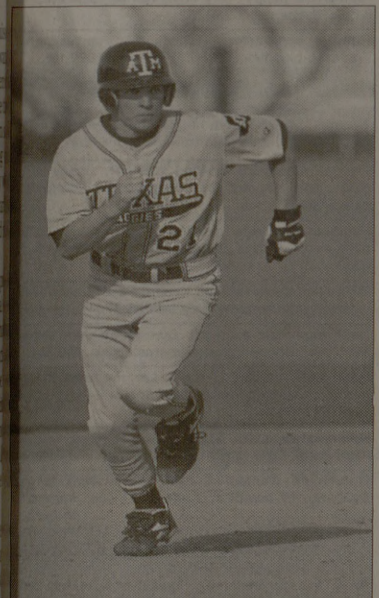
Johnson said he respects Stephens' dedication and determination.

"He wants to go to Omaha," Johnson said. "He wants to make sure he's doing his part. I don't think he's the guy that goes 0-for-4, we win the game, and he's disappointed. If he goes 0-for-4 and we lose by one run, then he'll take the blame."

Whether Stephens and the Aggies make it to the promised land this season, Stephens said he will be grateful for his degree and will have to see what happens from there.

"My first goal is to finish school," Stephens said. "If I get a chance to play professional ball, so be it. If not, I'll have a degree to fall back on. It's a win-win situation."

But for now, Stephens will not be satisfied until the Aggies earn a ticket to the Big Show.



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Junior catcher Matt Garrick runs the bases against Washington State.

'Mr. Mean' receives player of the week honors

The Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team finally got things to go its way at home, so it's a pity their two remaining games are on the road. Tuesday's much-anticipated rematch with arch-rival Texas in Austin and a Saturday meeting at Texas Tech in Lubbock will close out the season for Barone's bunch.

What Goes Around

Redemption arrived for senior guard Tracey Anderson against Baylor Saturday, if only in his own mind. One of the classiest and most hard working players on the team, and the only senior, Anderson played his usual solid, if unspectacular game (10 points, six assists) against the Bears. But it was his improbable driving layup, with 26 seconds left and A&M only up by a point, that led the Aggies to victory and put the finishing touches on what has been a brilliant two-year career in Aggieland.

Anderson received a much-deserved standing ovation from the throng at the Holler House before the game. Unfailingly



Men's Basketball
Matt Mitchell

polite, Anderson never hesitates to offer a greeting or a handshake, and his professional, do-it-for-the-team on the court attitude is superseded only by his amiable disposition.

As one may recall, it was Anderson's Chris Webber-esque gaffe Jan. 8 that allowed A&M to once again snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Though A&M Head Coach Tony Barone insists the play was all but forgotten by everyone but Anderson, it nonetheless contributed mightily to the Aggies' eight-game swoon through January. Anderson's play against the Bears rescued A&M from what could have eventually been a nine-game losing streak to end the season. Perhaps just as important, it added a sweet sense of closure to the low point in Anderson's season.

Tourney Time's a-Comin' ...

The Big 12 Men's Basketball Tournament is quickly approaching. The No. 1 seed will be the team with the best overall record based upon winning percentage in confer-

ence play (not A&M). That will be the Kansas Jayhawks. The No. 2 seed will be the top finisher in the South Division (not A&M either). After that, things get interesting, with five teams within two games of one another, each with two games left. All remaining teams will be ranked in order No. 3 through No. 12 (based on league winning percentage) for seeding in the tournament.

Player of the Week

Only recently shedding the mask that made him look like the villain in a Grade B horror flick, junior center Larry Thompson returned to full strength this week, which is bad news for the competition.

A workhorse, who has always been considered a hustle player, Thompson played well enough against Baylor and opposing center Brian Skinner to earn the start against Texas tonight. Thompson led the Aggies in both scoring and rebounding, with 13 and nine, respectively. What's more, he limited the highly touted Skinner to 14 points and just one (that's not a typo) rebound. That's unheard of for a 6-foot-11 center, even though Skinner looks like an oversized Urkel. A hearty welcome back to Mr. Mean.

Old-fashioned rivalry

The Aggies travel to Austin to face their archrival — Texas.

BY MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

After completing its home schedule, the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team takes to the road for its final two games, the first coming tonight against archrival University of Texas at the Erwin Center. Tip-off is slated for 7 p.m.

The Aggies (9-15, 3-11) snapped a six-game losing streak Saturday night with a win over Baylor. At this point in the season, the Aggies are looking to continue their high-level of play in order to build momentum and improve their seeding in the Big 12 Tournament.

A&M Head Coach Tony Barone said winning on the road is a big key come tournament time.

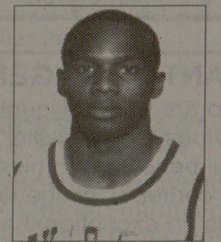
"I think what we have to understand is that going into the (Big 12) Conference

Tournament, we have to play as hard as we can possibly play," Barone said. "[We need] to go into the tournament with some confidence based on the fact that we've produced on the road and played with an intensity on the road that will allow us to compete."

Texas (15-9, 9-5) is coming off a 74-72 setback to Texas Tech in Lubbock last Saturday.

Texas uses its athleticism to increase the tempo of the game, getting transition buckets that simultaneously wear out the opposing team and supplement their weak half-court game.

"With Texas, you've got to be thinking about their transition game because that's how they score a lot of their points," senior guard Tracey Anderson said. "You've got to get back on defense — that's the biggest thing with Texas."



Anderson

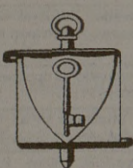
TAMU SCUBA CLUB

General Meeting
Tuesday, Feb 25

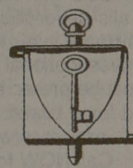
8:30 p.m. Koldus 110

Come find out information about this semesters dives & Spring Break

GOLDEN KEY NHS



General Meeting
@ 7:00 p.m. Koldus 111
Wednesday, February 26



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Ladies and Lords is located in the Gray and Rose Building at Texas and Walton across from the East Gate of A&M.



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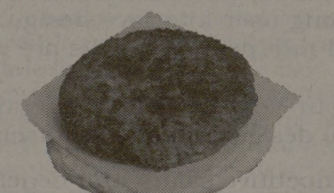
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