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- **Aggielife writer**
- **City Reporter**

These positions involve writing three feature stories (Aggielife) or news stories (City) each week and generating story ideas. No experience is necessary, but writers should be willing to learn journalism style. If possible, please include photocopied samples of writing.

Applications are available in 013 Reed McDonald.

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Codrington trying to overcome injury

► **Pitcher John Codrington has worked to recover from "Tommy John" surgery.**

By JEREMY FURTICK
THE BATTALION

Five years ago, the Texas A&M Baseball Team signed John Codrington, one of the country's top pitching prospects. The Austin Bowie High School product was completing his final season and looked to be destined for greatness.

Drafted in the 19th round by the Florida Marlins, the right-handed fireballer opted to forgo the majors and come to A&M as Baseball America's 25th-ranked college newcomer.

As a freshman, Codrington appeared in 19 games and compiled a 4-0 record with one save. Although he was not in the starting rotation, Head Coach Mark Johnson said the freshman's performance opened a lot of eyes in the conference.

"John pitched in quite a few games his first year," he said, "and gave us big-time hope of what was to come as a sophomore."

But things did not work out quite the way Johnson or anyone else expected.

Codrington had arthroscopic surgery on his pitching elbow in the fall of his sophomore year to remove bone spurs. The surgery was a minor procedure and was completed successfully, but it slowed his progress in the beginning of the spring season.

In Codrington's second season, his game appearances dropped to 12 and his record fell to 1-3. Although he managed to strike out one hitter per inning pitched, he was not the pitcher he was originally predicted to become.

Codrington still managed to enter his third college season as the country's 46th-ranked prospect by Baseball America — still the envy of hundreds of pitchers in college baseball. But another road block appeared in Codrington's path.

He pitched in only five games in 1995 before sitting out the remainder of the games with arm problems. That May he went under the knife again to have the infamous "Tommy John" surgery performed on his right elbow.

The surgery, named after the former Major League pitcher who returned to compete after the procedure's original trial, replaces a torn elbow ligament with a tendon stretching from elbow to wrist in the forearm. The tendon is disconnected from the wrist and wrapped around the elbow in a figure-eight fashion to replace the damaged ligament.

"When I found out I was going to have another surgery I was scared," Codrington said. "I didn't know anything about the surgery or how long it would keep me out, but I was really nervous."

Codrington's second surgery was also a success, but he and the coaches were skeptical about the future.

"When you start having second surgeries in the same arm there's a lot less chance you're going to make it back," A&M pitching coach Jim Lawler said.

Codrington said he began to feel better about

his return after he began rehabilitation.

"I had my doubts before I started rehab, but after getting underway I started feeling better and better each day," Codrington said.

There was still a long road ahead for Codrington, but Johnson said he made his biggest impact on the team during his rehab period.

"I am impressed with John Codrington because he had the desire to keep fighting," Johnson said. "He could have easily just shut it down."

Johnson was right. Codrington could have quit easily. He was beginning a year-long rehab program after a surgery that very few people completely recover from. But that did not stop him.

Codrington was forced to redshirt his would-be senior year after throwing only eight innings in the 1995 season. That meant a lot of time and practices would pass him by during his rehab period, but Codrington fed off the challenge.

"After all of the injuries and problems I'd had in college, I couldn't let myself quit," he said. "It made me work that much harder."

Johnson said Codrington maintained the desire to compete.

"What impressed me the most was that he kept coming out to practice," Johnson said. "He took on a different kind of leadership role."

Codrington continued to attend practices even though he could not throw.

"He didn't have to do anything," Johnson said. "He didn't even have to come to practice, but he did. He stayed with the team, rooted for them and was loyal to them."

Lawler said Codrington was the Aggies' biggest fan.

"He did it all — sat in the dugout during the games and cheered the team on," Lawler said. "He wanted the guys to know he was ahead of this thing and was still a part of the team."

Codrington wanted to be out there not only to work his way back into the game, but also to push his teammates.

After all of the long, hot days of rehab and missed games, Codrington was ready to attempt the final stage of his comeback last fall. Johnson said he did not put any expectations on his pitcher.

"He hadn't thrown in two years and was two years removed from any competition," Johnson said. "Plus, he was experiencing a whole new arm action."

Codrington came out in the fall under the microscope of coaches, trainers and teammates. He put their concerns to rest by showing a velocity recorded in the high 80s.

Junior pitcher Jamie Smith said it best.

"He's just tough, really tough."

The stage was now set for Codrington's return to the game he had come so close to losing two years before.

In the Aggies' first game this season against Southwest Texas State, Codrington made his first



Senior John Codrington keeps his arm loose by warming up during the Aggies' game against Baylor last Saturday.

appearance since March 19, 1995. He pitched the final inning for the Aggies, sitting the side out in order and striking out one batter.

"When people see you fall and work so hard to make it back and have success again, they can't help but feel excited for you," Lawler said. "But no one can appreciate it like John."

Codrington said this experience has changed his view of the future. Once touted as a shoe-in Major League player, he had to refocus his sights.

"Obviously my goals haven't changed," Codrington said. "I still want to get drafted and play pro ball, but this experience made me put everything in my life in perspective. I put more focus on my education and started looking for a job after I graduate in May. I realized there was more life than baseball."

Smith said Codrington is a very motivational player.

"He's a very inspirational person," Smith said. "He's our leader on the field and in the clubhouse."

SAWYER

Continued from Page 7

"I need to get my mind stronger because, at this time, I don't see myself qualifying," she said.

"Maybe it's a sign. Maybe I needed it. The injury has helped me out 100 percent, as far as getting my mind stronger, because I realize how much I miss doing what I do best. I guess this was maybe my wakeup call."

With a new mindset and a healing ankle, Sawyer is once again primed to reclaim her spot as one of the top track and field

athletes in the country. She will run relays both this weekend and at the College Station Relays the following week and should then be ready to return to the field events that have set her apart throughout her career at A&M.

"Adrian is extremely talented, extremely gifted as a track and field athlete," Brown said. "We're going to focus on her real strength, which is the long jump, and hope that by focusing on it, her hurdles will eventually come back and she [will] run well in the relays. We just have to make sure that we don't lose sight that Adrien Sawyer is an elite long jumper."

CANADA

Continued from Page 7

Canada acknowledges that this year has been exceptionally good to her and hopes that NCAAs are in her future.

"I have taken a lot of knocks since I have been here and I almost want to say this year has been my coming-out year," Canada said. "This year I have experienced the most successes, and I would love to qualify for the NCAAs because it would be a great way to end my senior year."

While she may have already qualified for two events at indoor NCAAs, Nelson said Canada can at least qualify in four

other events at the outdoor NCAAs.

"She certainly is more focused this year. She still has outdoors and there's a strong possibility she could qualify in other events," Nelson said. She is an extremely hard worker, and she has the potential to be the best long jumper at NCAAs. She will be very successful."

While Canada has the potential to keep adding her name to the A&M All-Time Performers list, she has been satisfied with her accomplishments thus far.

"A trip to NCAAs this year would be great to finish out my year with bang," Canada said. "But the truth is I would just like to leave this University and be satisfied with all of my athletic accomplishments."

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Wednesday, March 5, 1997
7:00 p.m., MSC Forsyth Center Galleries
(across from the Aggieland Post Office)

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