

# Rookies add spice to lineup

## Scarborough hopes to carry on A&M tradition

By CHRIS FERRELL  
THE BATTALION

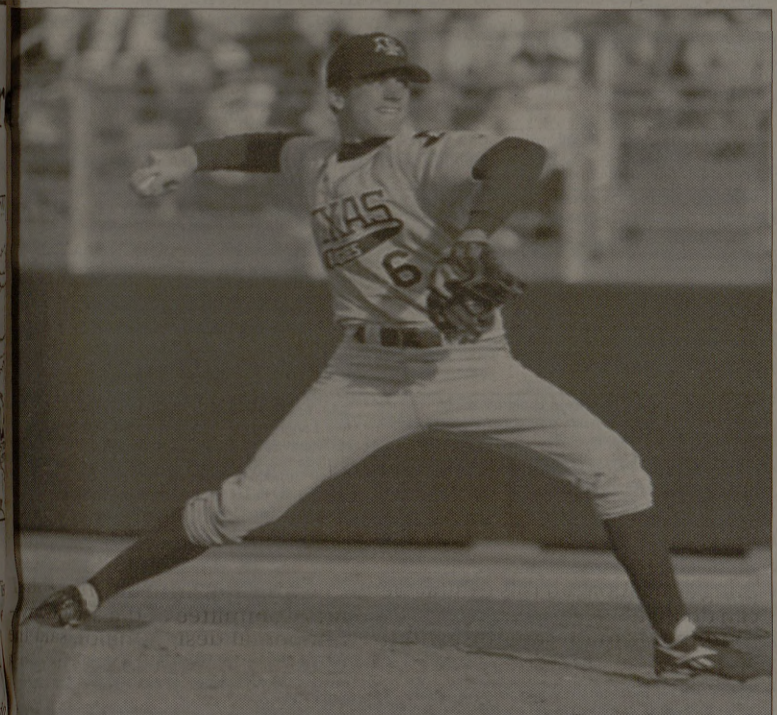
The argument could be made that over the past decade, no school in the country has enjoyed as much success at the shortstop position as the Texas A&M Baseball Team.

With two All-Americans in Chuck Knoblauch (who played shortstop at A&M before becoming a second baseman in the majors) and Robert Harris, who compiled five All-Conference performances, Texas A&M has been shortstop University. Over the past four years, the position has been nailed down by senior Rich Petru.

But like every great dynasty, the torch must be passed.

Freshman Steve Scarborough would like to add his name to the list.

"The idea is that he's our heir apparent," Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "But we're going to bring in some other guys, too. He's not going to have it just cushioned to him. It's going to be just like it was for Rich — we'll bring somebody else in. You've got to have people to push, people to back up. On paper and in my mind, I think he has a chance to be our shortstop next year."



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Freshman pitcher/infielder, Steve Scarborough, throws a pitch against Washington State.

Scarborough came to College Station with all the accolades of a future star. After his senior year of high school, when he was named an All-Area shortstop, his second consecutive season as an All-Area selection, Scarborough helped lead the Dallas Mustangs to the Connie Mack World Series title.

He was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, batting .667 in the World Series.

His hot streak continued upon his arrival at A&M. Scarborough picked up another MVP award, this one for the Aggie's Fall World Series.

However, Scarborough found the jump from high school to college a bit rocky, once the season got under way. While coping with the change in level, Scarborough has found speed to be the main factor.

"Speed [is the major difference], the speed that the ball's coming at you," Scarborough said. "It's pretty much the same game, it just gets faster each level you go."

He has started making the necessary adjustments and has played an important role for the Aggies this season. His versatility has made Johnson's job easier. Along with his steady play in the field, he has helped out a bullpen which has struggled for a large part of the season.

"We knew he also brought to the table a couple of pretty good weapons from the mound," Johnson said. "He hasn't pitched an unbelievable amount. He has very adequate, above adequate velocity. He's got that breaking pitch, he's got that change up. He's got three pretty good pitches so really dream on him a lot."

"I think he's got a chance to help us on the mound and he does have a strike-out pitch. That's what you look for in a relief guy. You'd like to have a guy who can strike somebody out with a man on third and less than two, and he has that capability."

But Scarborough is first and foremost an infielder. With the help of the A&M coaches and the incumbent, Petru, Scarborough has improved his game.

"Petru's taught me a lot of things this year," Scarborough said. "Just getting into the system this year, the little things that coach wants us to work on, Petru's known that because he's been in the system. He's taught me about fielding and how college hitters hit."

The desire to improve was a major reason Scarborough decided to come to A&M. He was drafted by the Colorado Rockies in the 19th round of the amateur draft, but opted for college.

"I didn't think I was ready," he said. "I need to work on a lot of things, obviously. I was nowhere near ready. I need to mature a whole lot before I go out and play."

"I need to work on my hitting quite a bit and my fielding. Fielding is footwork, that's about all it is."

Johnson has been happy with Scarborough's development.

"I think certainly he could step in right now and we wouldn't skip a major beat," Johnson said. "Rich is a guy that's been in the hunt for a while and really is a good defensive short stop."

"When you bring in freshmen, you know that not all of them are going to play. Your recruiting class isn't necessarily for the first year. We've had freshmen start, every year we have freshmen start. But it's unrealistic to think that, unless you have a real empty cupboard, that they can take someone's spot. But to know that we don't have to go out and find anybody with his talents is a great help to us."

## Martin brings calm strength to team

By CHRIS FERRELL  
THE BATTALION

With the Texas A&M Baseball Team leading the second-ranked Rice Owls 1-0 in the bottom of the fifth inning on March 4, Head Coach Mark Johnson was in a dilemma. Rice had loaded the bases with one out and the nation's most feared batter was on deck.

Enter Colby Martin.

As is quickly becoming the norm for the Aggies, Johnson turned to the 6-foot-3 left-hander with the team in a tough spot. As is also becoming the norm, Martin responded, getting an inning ending double play.



Martin

"It hasn't bothered him," Johnson said. "Some people it does. We brought him in with the bases loaded and (Rice All-American outfielder Lance) Berckman up, probably the top hitter in the country and, as it turns out, he gets him to hit into a double play and we get out of it."

Not bad for a guy A&M red-shirted a year ago because he did not have the mechanics to compete at the Division I level.

"Talk about mental," Martin said. "That was the hardest thing, mentally, that I've ever had to go through. Now when I get thrown in situations [with the] bases loaded, that's nothing compared to last year."

"When I came here, I had really bad mechanics. I had the arm, I had

the ability. Coach Johnson is always honest, he said, 'you have the ability.' You know, I was mechanically unsound. This year they feel that I'm ready and I can help the team. I look at it as another challenge."

The junior pitcher accepted the challenge and went after it in the same manner he does opposing batters — head on. An off-season of hard work has made Martin a key component in the A&M bullpen.

"At this school, everything is fundamental," Martin said. "The hitters are fundamentally sound, the pitchers are fundamentally sound, and if you aren't, coach Johnson plays the percentages. If you can't compete and be fundamentally sound, eventually the percentages are going to go against you."

"Every day I came in early. We worked on mechanics, we watched film. Every day I did extra work. I wanted to pitch here and I knew what I had to do."

An early season injury to fellow left-hander Shane King left Martin as the only southpaw in the bullpen and provided an opportunity for him to step up.

Martin has taken full advantage of his chance, thriving in a position most players would not like to find themselves.

"Coming out of the bullpen, you just have to accept those situations," Martin said. "Just look at it like it's your job. It's the starter's job to get the lead and keep the lead but when the games on the line — it's you, and that's the way I look at it."

"That's my job, it's what I'm supposed to do, especially against left-handers."

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## Truitt slugs way into starting lineup

By MATT MITCHELL  
THE BATTALION

Coming out of high school, Steve Truitt was on top of the world. He had just put the finishing touches on a stellar prep career by posting near triple crown numbers, hitting .539 with nine home runs and 41 RBI for Elkins High School.

Having just been named first team All-State and All-Greater Houston Player of the Year, Truitt opted for college instead of professional ball, though he was drafted by the Milwaukee Brewers.

But as so often happens, the freshman left-fielder for the Texas A&M Baseball Team was unable to smoothly make the transition from high school to college.

"I didn't know what I was doing wrong or what to try to work on or anything like that," Truitt said. "It's hard, when you come from a good background, to live up to the numbers I put up before, but that was high school and it's over with. This is college."

Truitt struggled during fall practices, and when the season began, he admittedly had little reason to think he would see much more than spot duty.

"I had a really tough fall and, coming in, I really didn't think I'd be playing that much," Truitt said. "I had a decent spring and we went to Southwest Texas for the first game and I was in there. I didn't know if it was by the grace of God or what, but I thought I'd bet-

ter do my best."

Though it may not be his best yet, Truitt has played his way into the lineup, starting 25 games, and ranks third on the team with a .326 batting average. Truitt's bat is the big reason he has been a regular in the Aggie lineup.

"I'm just getting more comfortable and being more aggressive," Truitt said. "I'm trying to be more aggressive so I don't have to be defensive. Now it's just like 'get in there, relax and use what got me here.'"

As much pop as he has supplied at the plate, Truitt's role defensively is decidedly less defined. A versatile athlete, Truitt has been unable, though not unwilling, to commit to a single position.

"He's a guy who's played a lot of different positions," A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "He's played second, third, short, the outfield and never really honed in on one of them, and I think that's part of the reason he's not further along in that area."

For Truitt, the matter is of secondary importance.

"I'd rather play infield, but it doesn't really matter," Truitt said. "I'll play anywhere they want me to, I just like playing."

Truitt's love for the game and his high expectations for himself and his team are immediately evident to coaches and teammates alike.

"He loves to play the game and he hates it when he messes up," said fellow freshman and Aggie pitcher/shortstop Steve Scarborough. "It keeps everyone focused on the game and lets everybody know how much he really cares. He lights a spark for us."

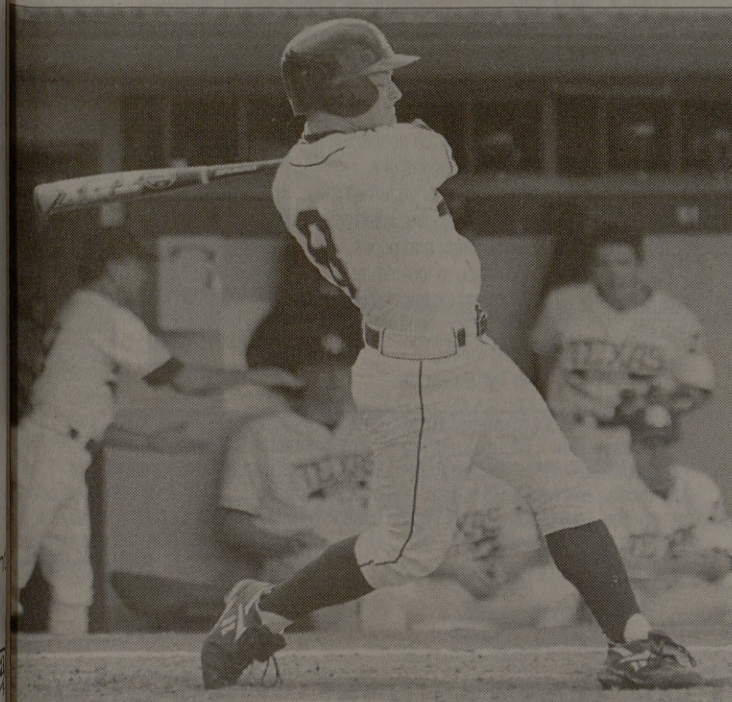
With his now nightly appearances in the starting lineup, Truitt's improving play, especially defensively, bodes well for the future.

"When you break it down, he's got some of the things you look for in a ballplayer," Johnson said. "He's got exceptional speed and he puts pressure on the defense. He's got a very adequate arm, and he's improving defensively."

"But he brings a bat to the lineup. He's got a very good chance to be a gap hitter, a doubles hitter, and hit some home runs, too, so he's not just a singles hitter. He swings a pretty heavy bat."

All things considered, it makes for a "decent" freshman year, though Truitt's standards for the long run are considerably higher. At present, however, Truitt's play has added a new dimension to the Aggie season.

"He likes to compete, he wants to contribute," Johnson said. "He has a great desire to contribute to the success of the team, and he knows he has the talent to do that."



Dave House, THE BATTALION

Freshman Steve Truitt takes a swing against Baylor.

## Chris Fulbright establishes himself as a Tuesday starter

By JAMIE BURCH  
THE BATTALION

With teammate freshman pitcher Casey Fossum staking his claim in the starting rotation, one might expect Texas A&M freshman right-hander Chris Fulbright to feel like the stepchild constantly trying to climb out from under his sibling's shadow. But Fulbright said he would rather view Fossum's success as a challenge.

Fulbright said he looks at Fossum with an, "if he can do it, so can I," mentality.

"We try not to let him think he's too good," Fulbright said. "We constantly remind him he's just a freshman. But he pushes us. He's a gifted pitcher."

Fulbright has used Fossum's accomplishments as a springboard to his explosive start. Prospering in the warm Texas sun, Fulbright (1-0, 1.66 ERA) has surrendered just four earned runs through 21-2/3 innings, emerging as the Aggies' fourth starter. Because of his success, Fulbright has received the starting nod four times on the all-important Tuesday game.

Pitching coach Jim Lawler said Fulbright plays a critical role, as a starter or coming out of the bullpen.

"He's a guy we're high on," Lawler said. "We feel like he has a chance to make an impact on this program. He's got some innings under his belt and is someone who needs to keep helping us down the stretch, whether as a reliever or as a Tuesday starter."

One of those Tuesday starts came against then No. 2 Rice University March 4. Fulbright held an explosive Rice offense (.390 avg., 48 home runs) at bay. The right-hander threw 4-1/3 scoreless innings, relinquishing three hits, four walks and striking out four. Though he was not credited with the win, the Aggies held a 1-0 lead when Fulbright vacated the mound. A&M won 2-1.

Fulbright said he was surprised by his performance against the Owls.

"The fact that they were No. 2 in the country upped the stakes a little bit," Fulbright said. "I was pumped up going in there. I was also a little nervous and a little scared. But once you get the first inning under your belt, you're ready to go."

Head Coach Mark Johnson said he was expecting A&M and Rice to light up the scoreboard.

"That was a little bit of a surprise and I think it was for Rice, too," Johnson said. "To think that would be a close game, 2-1. I thought it would be 14-10. He did an outstanding job in adverse conditions. For Chris to step it up the way he did and to give us a chance to win was huge."

Winning, and winning big, has been a way of life for Fulbright. While at Libertyville High School in Illinois, he posted a 29-3 career record, hitting .420 with five home runs and 38 RBIs.

Even with all his high school achievements, Fulbright said he has struggled with the transition to college.

"I'm not striking everybody out like I used to," Fulbright said. "The hitters have gotten a lot better. You have to start developing more pitches and start hitting locations. In high school, you could get away with throwing fastballs every pitch because hitters couldn't catch up with them."

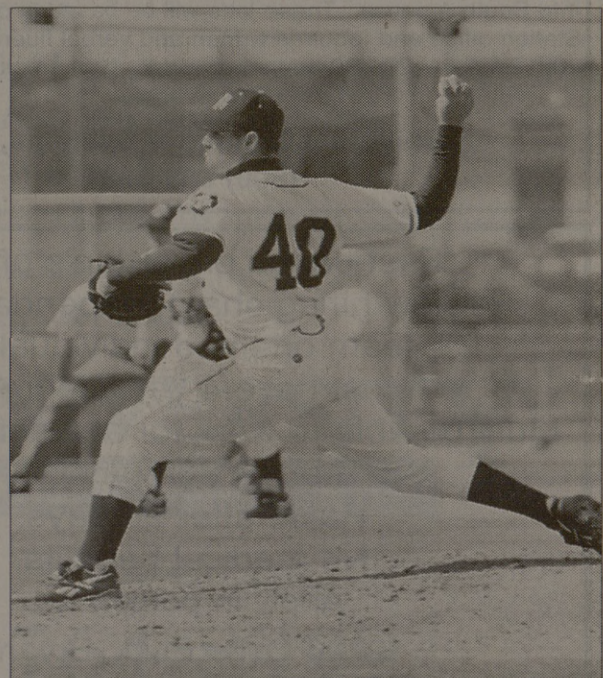
Fulbright also has battled with rebounding from starts. Lawler said after his last two starts, Fulbright has been unable to pitch out of the bullpen because of tenderness in his arm.

Fulbright said he is working to overcome the minor setback.

"It concerns me," Fulbright said. "I'm not worried that I've thrown out my arm. But I need to recover a little quicker than I have been. I'd like to fill in spots on the weekend. I want to throw out of the bullpen as well as starting on Tuesdays."

A durable arm would not only help bolster the Aggies' pitching staff this season, but also could fill a void at the season's end. Fulbright is the heir apparent to assume the third starter role next year if junior pitcher Ryan Rupe enters the major league draft.

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Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Freshman Chris Fulbright pitches against Nevada.