

# Front and Center

Senior Larry Thompson prepares for life after basketball

By COLBY MARTIN  
Staff writer

Senior forward Larry Thompson of the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team had trouble shooting free throws this year. It is something that has been exhausted in the media, and something that Thompson is probably tired of hearing.

"I just hope that Larry is not remembered for free throws," assistant Coach Porter Moser said. "I hope he is remembered for his leadership, and the fact that he is a great person."

Thompson shot 200 free throws a day in practice, but sometimes unexplainable things happen to people. However, instead of giving up, he worked harder.

"He comes to the court every day, whether it is practice or a game, and he leaves it on the floor," Moser said.

Thompson was forced to play center this year because of the injuries to his teammates, and even though he was usually out-sized, his defense was never lacking.

"Larry always understood what we were trying to do as far as a game plan, and that was very important for us," Moser said.

A&M's last game against Baylor was a prime example. Thompson was given the assignment of stopping a probable lottery pick in Brian Skinner. Saying that he accomplished the goal is an understatement. Skinner could only muster two of his 10 total points against Thompson's defense. Four came from the line and the other four came when Thompson was on the bench.

"I knew how important it was for me to stop Skinner if we were going to win the game," Thompson said.

His task was made even more difficult due to the fact that he had to stay out of foul trouble at the same time. With only seven active players, Thompson fouling out was almost catastrophic.

"Our plan was to have Larry make Skinner catch the ball outside of the paint because two feet from the basket is where he is most effective," said Moser.

So despite being outweighed by a good thirty pounds he effectively shut down the future NBA lottery pick.

"Before the game Larry came up to me and said that points did not matter; rebounds did not matter. Just winning the game was important," junior forward Shanne Jones said.

Thompson went up to every player in the locker room and said something to get them fired up before the game. Though Thompson might deny it, his teammates really won that game for him and the coaches that are moving on with him. They were not playing for a national championship, nor were they playing for anything more than pride. To an athlete that steps on any field of battle, pride is the driving force. It is what fueled a senior on a team that had not won a conference game all year to shut down one of the best players in the country.

"I want to do things that are expected of a leader, and whatever it is, I am willing to do it," said Thompson.

Sometimes what is expected from a leader does not make the headlines, but it gains the respect of your teammates. That is what defines a leader.

"It is great as a coach to see someone like Larry succeed because you know that he is going to make it in life," said Moser. "I have so much respect for Larry as a person because he has such an unbelievable attitude."

The fact that Thompson made the All-Big 12 academic team the last two years is proof that the man is going places.

"I just try to take care of my studies, because that is what is important," said Thompson.

He is leaving his basketball career options open, but his head is on straight with regard to his future.

"I do not know what the future holds but it will work out as long as I take care of business," Thompson said.

So as he heads off into life, it is abundantly clear he will not be bothered by irrelevant things like missed free throws. People like Thompson do not answer critics and obstacles by turning in their gym shoes and giving up. He smiles, shakes his head at his misfortune and then he sticks it to whatever challenge that comes flying toward the basket.

As he steps up to the line to prepare for the free throw that is the rest of his life, no thoughts about past misses will cross his mind: he will hear only one thing. The sound of the ball hitting nothing but net.

**"I do not know what the future holds, but it will work out as long as I take care of business."**

Larry Thompson  
Senior center



Photo/illustration by Ryan Rogers

## Baseball team loses heartbreaker in ninth

By TRAVIS HARSCH  
Staff writer

A young Aggie baseball team learned Tuesday that the old adage, "Better late than never" doesn't always apply to college baseball.

After committing three errors, walking three and hitting four Michigan batters to put themselves in a five-run hole, the A&M comeback ran out of innings, as they lost to the Michigan Wolverines, 8-6.

"We gave them everything they got, and they took advantage of it," centerfielder Jason Tyner said. "We just tried to show up in the ninth inning, and we coasted through the first eight. If we would have taken care of business in the first eight, we wouldn't have needed it."

Clancy Fossum pitched four and one-third innings in relief, giving up two hits, no earned runs and striking out two.

"At first I was a little wild, but I got my control about the second inning I was out there, I started throwing better, that first full inning was a little rocky," Fossum said.

Fossum kept the Aggies close with his performance, taking over with his team behind and runners on base and Coach Mark Johnson said Fossum's style had Michigan batters off balance.

"He's an interesting pitcher, because you want

to keep the ball down and get ground balls, but he gets strikeouts on the pitches up," Johnson said. "He did a pretty good job and gave us a chance to catch up."

Johnson also said he used the game a sort of a test ground for the upcoming Big 12 games.

"We needed to see some guys who hadn't gotten to play as we approach another conference weekend," Johnson said. "We put some some guys in some tough spots today to see how they'd respond."

The Wolverines (4-3-1) scored three in the top of the first and added another in the second to take a 4-0 lead.

Jason Tyner reached on the lone Michigan error of the day to lead off the third; Steven Truitt then tripled, scoring Tyner. Craig Kuzmic hit a deep sacrifice fly to centerfield to score Truitt and bring the Aggies within a run at 4-3.

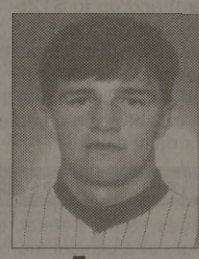
Michigan added one more in the fourth, as Shane King was called from the bullpen to relieve Scarella. The Wolverines then added two more in the fifth to run the lead to 7-3. Fossum came on to

spell King with two outs in the fifth, then pitched his way into a jam in the top of the sixth. After a hit, an error, a walk and a hit batsmen loaded the bases with no outs, Fossum kept Michigan from blowing the game wide open, striking out the next two batters he faced. Chad Hudson gave the Olsen Field faithful a reason to cheer in the bottom of the sixth with his first home run of the season, a deep drive to the power alley in right that cut the Michigan lead to four runs.

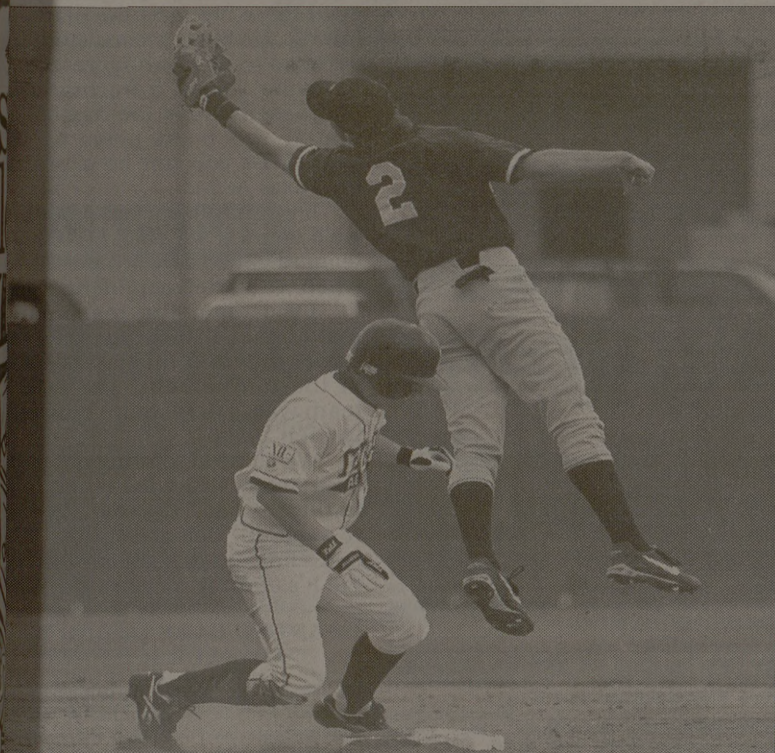
After two men reached for Michigan in the top of the seventh, Tyner made a Willie Mays-esque catch at the warning track in center with two outs to end the Wolverine scoring threat.

Three singles began the A&M comeback in the ninth. Tyner's single scored William Gray, who had been sent in to pinch-run for Sundstrom and cut the lead to three runs. A two-out walk to Craig Kuzmic loaded the bases again, and Pat Malone delivered with a single that scored Scarborough. Chad Hudson, who had a double in addition to his home run, then lifted a short fly ball to right field that looked as if it would fall in and tie the game. But right-fielder Derek Besco made a diving catch to rob Hudson and end the game.

The teams will close out the series Wednesday at 3.



Tyner



sophomore Chad Hudson beats the throw to second base against Michigan.

## The classic novel comes to life.



**To Kill a Mockingbird**, Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning literary classic, comes to life on March 10 and 11 in Rudder Auditorium. Set in a Depression-era southern town, Atticus Finch, attorney and widowed father of two young children, stands against fellow townspeople by defending a young black man falsely accused of raping a white woman. Featuring unforgettable characters like Scout, Jem and Boo Radley, *To Kill a Mockingbird* tells a story that will live in the hearts and minds of everyone forever.

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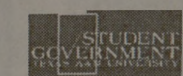
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