

Texas A&M Baseball Team face Southwest Texas at home

Aggies take break from Big 12 schedule for doubleheader

By Travis Harsch
Staff writer

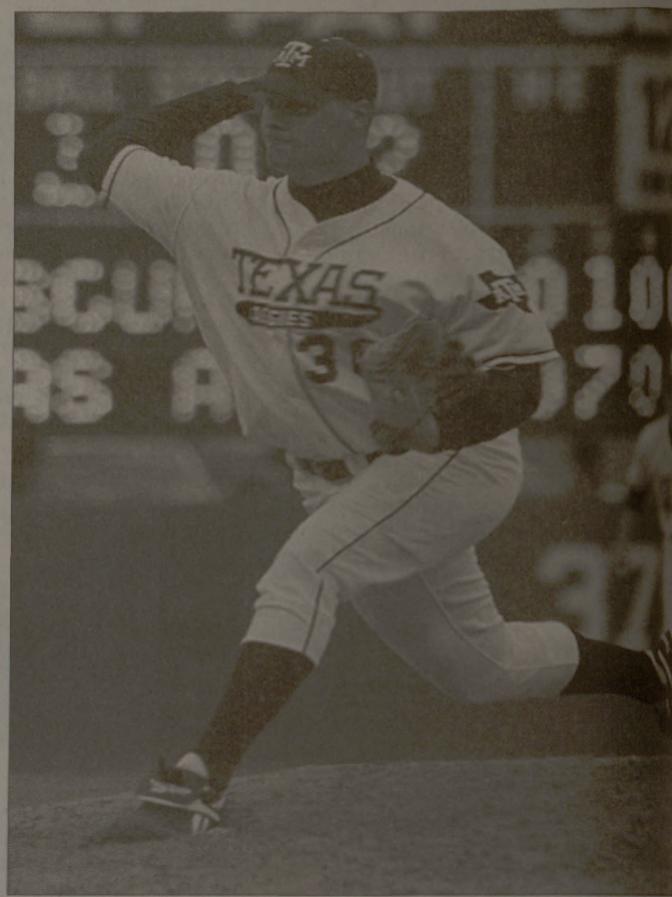
The Texas A&M Baseball Team will take a break from conference play as the team continues its homestand Tuesday with a doubleheader against the Southwest Texas State Bobcats.

Southwest Texas State is coming off a successful 1997 season, one in which they won the Southland Conference and beat both Clemson and Texas Tech in the NCAA regional before falling to College World Series-bound Rice. The Bobcats' fortune hasn't carried over to this year however, as they come into College Station owning a 9-10 record. Southwest Texas State split with Notre Dame last weekend and lost, 3-2, to Southern Illinois. The Bobcats did beat Rice, however, and Coach Mark Johnson said that gives the Aggies reason to be wary.

"They always play well, they're always a well-coached team and we've had trouble with them," Johnson said.

A&M will be coming off a weekend series win over the Missouri Tigers. The Aggies sandwiched 9-2 and 4-3 wins on Friday and Sunday around a 6-3 Saturday loss. In their last three midweek games, the Aggies have gone 1-2, losing to Sam Houston State 10-7, Michigan 6-8, then coming back to pound the Wolverines 12-0. Sean Heaney said the team had some trouble focusing for those games, something that he does not think will be a problem this weekend.

"The past two weeks when we've had the weekday games, we haven't really come out fully ready to play," Heaney said. "This week we're going to come out ready to play, especially with the doubleheader, we plan on taking two of them. These Tues-



RYAN ROBERTS

Senior **Ryan Rupe** has helped the Aggie pitching staff to a 3.73 ERA in 10 starts.

day games are big too."

Chance Caple will start game one for the Aggies. Caple is 3-0, leads the team with a 2.31 ERA and has 18 strikeouts in his four starts. Caple last saw action in the Wednesday game against Michigan, allowing only three hits and no runs while striking out four in seven innings of work to earn the victory.

Chris Fulbright will take the mound in the second game for

A&M. Fulbright has pitched this year, compiling three wins and one loss.

Southwest Texas State Aggies last year in College Station. Despite the loss, the teams having played since the inaugural game.

The first game of the header is scheduled to go away at 4 p.m.

"We use wood bats in the fall because it forces our kids to use their hands more," Harp said. "The aluminum bats are too light and (the players) sometimes form bad habits that they can't get away with using a wood bat."

There are alternatives to the current product now in use by collegiate players that could be adopted by the NCAA, Johnson says the most realistic one is to reform the current aluminum bat back to a product with qualities similar to the wood bat.

"Manufacturers can make a bat comparable to the wood bat," Johnson said. "So we could have a bat that wouldn't break, we could use it all year long and it would respond like a wood bat does."

Through a rule change, the NCAA could force bat companies

to make such a bat. However, Johnson warns that bat manufacturers would be an obstacle would have to be overcome.

"The manufacturers do to change the bats because are making a lot of money," son said. "If they whittle it a standardized bat, they're going to make as much money."

Change may come soon. Thurston's study was not scored nor endorsed by the Rules Committee, but across the country are pushing the committee to research sue and come up with scientific evidence to begin a the way bats are produced.

— Jeremy Furtick
journalist

FURTICK

Continued from Page 9

Jim Harp, baseball coach at Dallas Baptist University, said the aluminum bat has tipped the scales in favor of offense.

"I feel like the offense is dominating the game right now," Harp said. "In the past, pitching and defense were more important. I'd like to see something done to put pitching and defense back on a level field with offense."

Harp says he uses a composite bat (a wood bat with a plastic shell) during fall baseball not only to help his players with the adjustment they would have to make at the professional level, but also because he feels it teaches the proper hitting techniques.

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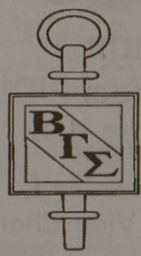
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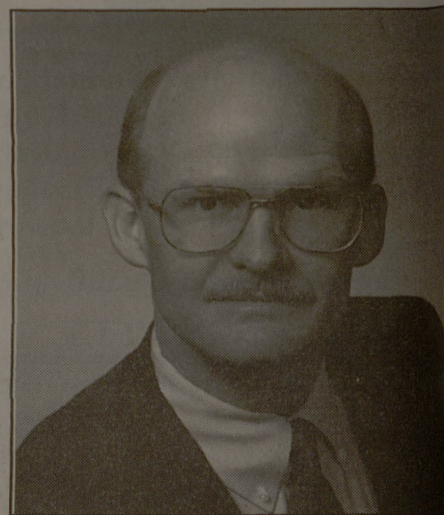
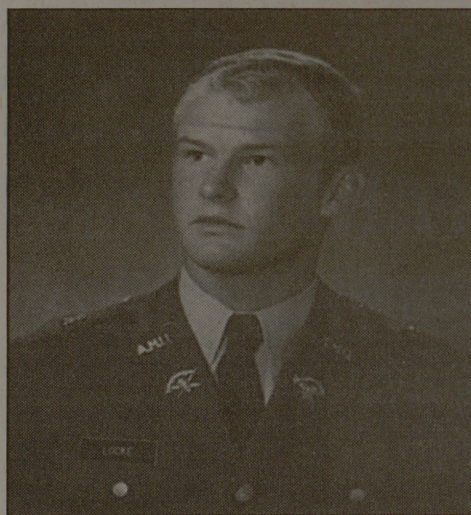
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