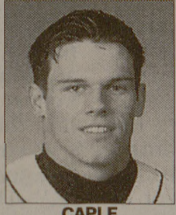


Former Aggie pitcher Chance Caple signs with St. Louis Cardinals

BY JEFF WEBB
The Battalion

The St. Louis Cardinals took a Chance Caple, a right-handed power pitcher who is now on the team payroll. Former Texas A&M pitcher Chance Caple signed a minor-league contract Thursday at Busch Stadium in St. Louis after the Cardinals made him the 30th overall pick in June's Major League Baseball amateur draft. The contract included a \$1.2 million signing bonus that will be spread out over a two-year period.



CAPLE

Cardinals Director of Scouting John Mozeliak said the parties agreed to terms when the club expected, but the team ended up paying a little more than they wanted. "It was a fun, unbelievable experience," Caple said. "It is an opportunity you don't always get." Mozeliak said the right-hander will make a fine addition to the St. Louis organization. "His makeup seems to be outstanding," Mozeliak said. "I enjoyed my time with him, and I like the way he carries himself — although good makeup doesn't get people out." Caple arrived Thursday in St. Louis and underwent a physical examination by team doctors. Team owner Walt Jockety joined the Caple family for dinner before they signed the contract.

The Cardinals held a news conference on the Busch Stadium field after the contract was finalized. Don Caple, Chance's father, said the experience was like living a family dream. "We toured the area and had a press conference on the field at Busch Stadium," Don Caple said. "You looked up and saw the Cardinals taking batting practice, and I realized, 'That's my son out there.'" "We talked to the news media, and it was a great experience, especially for the father. It was great, and there is no way to look at it any other way." The Cardinals assigned Caple to their New Jersey affiliate in the Class A New York-Penn League. He is throwing with pitching coaches every other day in the bullpen on a strict pitch count. He is not

expected to make his first start until early next week. Caple was 8-5 as a junior for A&M, where he led the team to the College World Series in Omaha, Neb. He started 17 times, averaging 6 2/3 innings per outing while striking out 125 batters (more than one per inning). The New Jersey franchise is part of a special rookie league which also boasts former A&M catcher and Caple's batterymate Shawn Schumacher as one of its members. The Cardinals do not know where Caple will be assigned next season, although his performance this year will be the determining factor in where he gets assigned. Caple said his main focus is regaining his pitching form while catching up to the other rookies.

"They haven't said anything about next year," Caple said. "I'm just trying to catch up right now. I've thrown a little on the side with the coaches just trying to get back into shape." "Everybody has their routine set up. They know exactly what they're supposed to do and when. I'll just have to work hard to get there." Don Caple said Chance could be assigned to the Arkansas Travelers, the Cardinals' Double A affiliate in Little Rock which plays in the Texas League. "It's my belief it's predicated on what he will do up there," he said. "But right now, he's just another ballplayer trying to get to the next step. God blesses people in different ways, and it was a humbling experience."

Scrummin'



PHOTO COURTESY OF A&M RUGBY TEAM

The Texas A&M Rugby Team competes in the Texas Rugby Union's Collegiate Divisions I and II along with LSU, Rice, Texas, Southwest Texas State and Sam Houston State University.

Texas A&M Rugby Team focused on taking next step toward national championship

BY RUTH STEPHENS
The Battalion

Ten years ago, the A&M men's rugby team may have been focused on socializing, but today's team is focused on working hard, winning and competing in the national championships. James Myers, former A&M rugby player and current team adviser, said the team has transformed greatly in the last 10 years. "When I played [1991-93], the main focus was on socializing, and winning was second," Myers said. "Now the main goal is to win a national championship." Myers said he believes the team can attain this goal within the next two years. "To win a national championship you have to be dedicated to the sport and the competition," Myers said. "These players show that everyday. They practice at 7 a.m. and do intensive cardio workouts. They have a goal and they're going to attain it." This year's team looks to improve upon a season in which the team came within five points of going to the Regional Tournament. Established in 1969, men's rugby has a long history at A&M, the high point coming as a national championship title in 1971. In the late '80s and early '90s the team lacked a competitive edge, seemingly more interested in socializing than winning, Myers said. All that changed with new coaches and a group

of dedicated players. Both Cole and d coach Alec Klinghoffer brought experience and enthusiasm to the program. Klinghoffer played collegiately in the United States and then in South Africa before coming to A&M to pursue his Ph.D. "Alec really turned the program around," junior finance major John Sturman said. Sturman became interested in rugby from his father who played for A&M's national championship team in 1971. "I played soccer and football in high school," Sturman said, "and this is by far the most rigorous sport I've ever played." The A&M rugby team has no problem recruiting players each fall. This year they will field three to four teams, or sides, and expect at least 80 players to come out for fall practice. Sturman said players are not turned away as long as they have the desire to learn and play rugby. Dedication helps too, as the team practices five days a week, including cardiovascular and weight-lifting workouts. Both Myers and Sturman credit the enthusiastic turnout to the large number of high-school football players and athletes who want to compete athletically when they come to A&M. "Rugby is the next best option for those guys who can't or don't want to play football at the collegiate level," Myers said.

SEE RUGBY ON PAGE 4.

A&M golf gets new course

BY REECE FLOOD
The Battalion

In the not-so-distant future, the Texas A&M Men's and Women's Golf teams will have a new course to play on. Texas A&M University and Club Corporation of America (CCA) are currently working on a 15-year contract to bring a new state of the art golf course to the Bryan-College Station area. A&M's Athletic Department has been looking to build a championship course for quite some time but could never afford it. CCA approached A&M with an offer the school could not pass up. The new facility will be a private country club course designed by Jack Nicklaus and owned and maintained by CCA. A&M has an affiliation agreement to assist them with marketing and membership, but will have no operational responsibility. In return, A&M's men's and women's teams will be provided with office space, dressing and changing facilities and a private practice area. The teams are also hoping to host NCAA and Big 12 events at their new home. In addition, A&M will share a percentage of the initiation fees, membership fees and annual dues, which gives the school a chance to make \$25,000 to \$50,000 per team each year.



BRADLEY ATCHISON/THE BATTALION

The new golf course for the A&M Men's and Women's golf teams will be located north of Easterwood Airport and to the west of 2818.

The building cost of this project is expected to be anywhere from \$5 to \$8 million, but A&M is not responsible for any of the construction expenses. Other schools such as Auburn University, Clemson University and Louisiana State University have similar arrangements for their golf teams. A&M Athletic Director Wally Groff looked at these schools to see if this arrangement would work here. "We checked on the idea and the principal behind all this and it looked like it was a feasible deal," Groff said.

CCA is a million dollar company and owns country clubs all over the world. One of its more notable courses is the Pinehurst Resort and Country Club, which was the home of this year's U.S. Open Championship and is visited annually by the PGA Tour. Groff is anxious for construction to begin but is not sure exactly when that will be. "The best case scenario, as I understand it, is if they can get all their permits approved and get some of their marketing completed they

SEE COURSE ON PAGE 4.

Armstrong denies drug use in Tour

PIAU-ENGALY, France (AP) — They are coming after Lance Armstrong, high in the Pyrenees. He lost more than a minute of his overall lead in the Tour de France yesterday when Fernando Escartin of Spain captured the 15th stage as the race dipped into his home country. Armstrong remains in command of cycling's premier race, but he grew weary in the last 2 miles of the mountainous stage. "I tried to control things," he said. "Tomorrow will be another tough and long day ... but I'm always optimistic." The 27-year-old Texan finished fourth, his lead cut to 6 minutes, 19 seconds. The course featured six punishing climbs, and he found it "very, very tough." If Armstrong can protect his lead today on the last day in the mountains, he will have taken yet another huge step toward winning the Tour. He then faces two flat stages, a time trial and the arrival in Paris on Sunday. This was the spot in the race Escartin had been pointing to all along, close to his parents' home. And with his father cheering him on, he moved from fifth to second in the standings. Still, he doubts he can beat Armstrong. "Armstrong is a very tough rival because he has such a strong lead," Escartin said. But he said today's second and final day in the mountains might not suit him — especially the final

38 miles on the flat stretch, where the race could turn into a mass sprint. Armstrong remains disturbed by suggestions in the French press that his success may be tied to drug use. The talk continued yesterday when Le Monde said small traces of certain anti-inflammatory drugs were found in Armstrong's urine, as well as that of other riders. Corticosteroids are banned except when used for legitimate medical purposes. The newspaper said the traces in Armstrong's sample were too small to be classified as positive. "That's news to me," Armstrong said in a TV interview. "I haven't heard that. They haven't told me. This is the first I know of this." He said again that he has taken no medication for several years, since his cancer treatment in late 1996. Escartin, knowing he needed to attack Armstrong, broke early and kept his lead most of the race. In second, two minutes behind, was Switzerland's Alex Zulle. France's Richard Virenque was third. Going into the stage, Zulle had been 7 minutes, 47 seconds behind Armstrong. But he also made up ground, and is now 7:26 off the lead. Spain's Abraham Olano dropped from second to eighth place. Armstrong battled Zulle and Virenque late in the race. With less than 6 miles left, Armstrong saw Zulle faltering on a hairpin turn and powered away. But

SEE ARMSTRONG ON PAGE 4.

Committee recommends keeping freshman eligibility for basketball

ROSEMONT, Ill. (AP) — Making freshmen ineligible to play college basketball might create more problems than it would solve, according to Syracuse University chancellor Kenneth Shaw, head of a committee studying problems with NCAA Division I basketball. "We have had to temper the enthusiasm of some with the realities of what we can accomplish," Shaw said. He said he favored making freshmen ineligible but that the majority on the panel did not.

Shaw said those opposed to making freshmen ineligible raised practical concerns as well as issues of fairness, and he and NCAA president Cedric Dempsey also suggested the likelihood of a court challenge. Instead, the committee wants the NCAA to encourage incoming freshmen to attend summer school to get used to the more challenging academic programs they will face in college. The 27-member committee, empowered only to make resolu-

tions, was formed to study issues such as low graduation rates, gambling scandals, recruiting problems and the influence of agents. Its proposals go to the NCAA's executive committee Aug. 5. The committee said it would urge tying the number of scholarships schools can award to the academic success of their players. Those schools with graduation and/or academic standing rates of 75 percent or higher

would be allowed 14 full scholarships, schools with rates of 33 percent to 74 percent would be allowed 13 and schools with rates below 33 percent could award 12. Schools would be limited to offering four new scholarships each year. The committee also called for new regulations for recruiting and for cleaning up the sport's image. "This is a showcase sport," Shaw said. "It is very important

to the people in this country, and we must and we do expect and demand more." Shaw said the committee wanted to offer athletes more help succeeding in the classroom while also demanding more of them academically. "This combination of extending opportunity while greatly increasing our expectations for student performance creates what I believe will be seen as a stern compassion for basketball student-athletes," he said.

In other recommendations, the committee would increase the period during the academic year when coaches can evaluate players and shorten it during the summer. The committee also would tighten regulations on events at which high-school players are evaluated and ban agents from any involvement in them. The committee also urged stiffer penalties for gambling and new rules to enforce proper behavior during games.