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SPORTS

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THE BATTALION

Friday, February 4, 2000

HOLT

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"I wish I knew what it was," Johnson said. "He is a guy that went from seven home runs to 34. That's almost unheard of. He really changed his game between his freshman and sophomore year. He worked at it. It didn't happen by accident."

"He did start to get a little bit different trajectory on the ball from the plate. He started lifting it a little bit. He hit some unbelievable doubles for us as a freshman that, had he picked it up some, would have been home runs. We worked on it, but he was the one that made the adjustments."

Holt started off the 1999 season with a bang, homering four times in the Aggies' first series against the University of Texas-Pan American. But the home run record was not even in his mind until a chat he had with former record holder, Aggie third baseman Craig Kuzmic.

"The first time it was brought to my attention, was after the first series against Pan Am [University of Texas-Pan American,]" Holt said. "Craig Kuzmic was here, and he said, 'What are you doing? You have a chance to break my record.'"

"And I said, 'What are you talking about? I've only hit four home runs.' So it was brought to my attention there, but I actually didn't think it was going to happen until I had 24

or something like that."

Holt hit the record breaker against the University of Texas and never looked back, becoming the first A&M player to lead the nation in home runs.

He was also a major reason why the Aggies made it to the College World Series in Omaha.

Holt was named first team All-American by the American Baseball Coaches Association, Baseball America and the National College Baseball Writers Association.

Looking back on his breakout season, Holt still has trouble believing it actually happened.

"It was unbelievable," Holt said. "To go back and actually think about it, it was unreal. We played around 70 games and I hit 34 home runs, so that's almost one every two games. That's crazy."

With most of last year's starters gone to minor league baseball, Holt has taken on a new role for this season—team leader.

Holt was named co-captain of the team along with second baseman Sean Heaney.

While he does not expect to put the same numbers as he did last year, his goal for the team this year is exactly the same as it was last season.

"The expectation has to be to get back to Omaha," Holt said. "There's no doubt. We were there and had a short last year so the only thing to do now is get back there."

INTERESTING

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To expect a team of freshmen and transfers to step in and replace those numbers immediately is ludicrous.

But don't expect the dropoff to hinder the Aggies' chances totally.

While the team won't put up the same gaudy numbers as last year's record setting team, the talented newcomers will give A&M a chance to win.

The mix of players who did return with the infusion of new talent should keep the Aggies competitive.

Team leaders like Holt and Sean Heaney will be the heart and soul of the team while talented freshmen Todd Deiningner, Travis Wong and Eric Reed

should step in and contribute immediately.

So what does this season hold for the Aggies? Throughout the season there will definitely be highs and lows and a third straight Big 12 championship is hard to foresee.

With perennial winner Oklahoma State having a talented team and Texas having its best team in years, a threepeat will be extremely tough. But when all is said and done, this team is at least getting into a regional.

Even though it is a young team, it is too talented and Coach Johnson is too good of a coach not to get this team to a regional. But after that, it's up in the air.

Actually, how far this team makes

it into the postseason might rely on how it starts off at the beginning of the season.

If the Aggies stumble out of the blocks and the youngsters get discouraged, it could spell doom for the Aggies.

However, if A&M starts off quickly and the new guys gain confidence, the sky is the limit with this team. Because if this talented bunch thinks it can win, it will spell trouble for everyone else.

So sit back, relax and enjoy another exciting and extremely interesting year of Aggie baseball. See you at Olsen.

Doug Shilling is a journalism major.

Sports in Brief

Agent: Morris innocent party in drug ring investigation

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Former Kansas City Chiefs running back Bam Morris "is an innocent party" in a federal investigation into an alleged widespread drug ring, his agent said.

Morris, who unexpectedly announced his retirement from the NFL last month, and teammate Tamarick Vanover were mentioned in an affidavit filed last week in connection with drug distribution charges lodged against a Kansas City man, Gregory Burns.

Rams coach Martz says he will still call shots for team

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Mike Martz said he won't be the NFL's No. 1 offense, even if he's now the coach of the Super Bowl champions.

Martz inherited the St. Louis Rams coaching job this fall, when Dick Vermeil resigned. Martz said he'll still be calling the plays, only from the sideline instead of the press box.

He said he would increase the responsibilities of some of his assistants, wide receivers coach Sanders in particular, to help fill the gaps.

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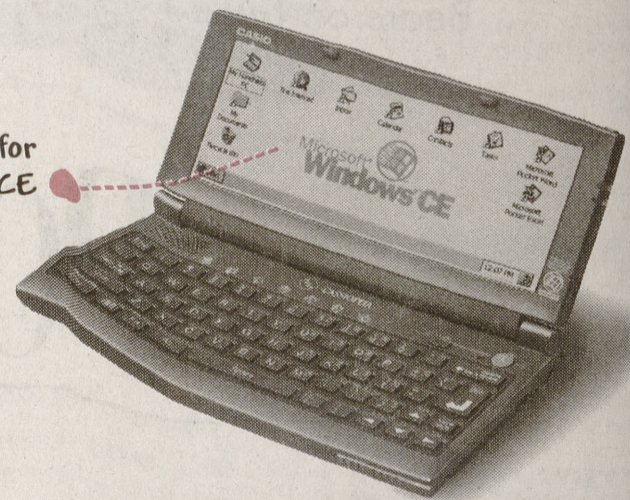
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