

SPORTS EXTRA



2000 **TEXAS A&M BASEBALL**

BY DOUG SHILLING The Battalion

For the Texas A&M baseball team, 1999 was a season to remember

The Aggies captured their second straight Big 12 Championship, won 52 games and captured Regional and Super Regional titles, sending A&M to the College World Series for the third time in school history.

But with eight starters gone from last year's squad, the 2000 version of the Aggies will have a new look.

While the team will have tons of ability, it will be an extremely young group. "I think it has talent; I like the talent of our ballclub,"

A&M baseball coach Mark Johnson said. "There is a jump from high school and junior college to Division I. It's a much faster game. But we'll have four or five freshmen out there at some times.

"It's going to be a season where we'll have to be patient

and one where the real critical thing is how we deal with everyone comes together as a team. failure. It's not going to be a journey with a smooth, straight path, it's going to have some bumps in it.'

The only starters returning from last season are senior second baseman Sean Heaney and junior right fielder Daylan Holt.

A preseason All-American, Holt is coming off the best offensive season in Aggie history. He batted .341 and set A&M records with 34 home runs and 105 RBI. Heaney is a three-year starter for the Aggies and last year hit .333 with 11 home runs and 48 RBI.

With the team as young as it is, both Heaney and Holt have been given larger leadership roles on the team this year, being named co-captains for the 2000 season.

"They're taking on a big leadership role," Johnson said. 'Not only those two guys, but I've asked all the returning guys to take an ownership in this team. Because we have so many new guys, the old guys have to lead the way.

Heaney said the returning players' job is to make sure

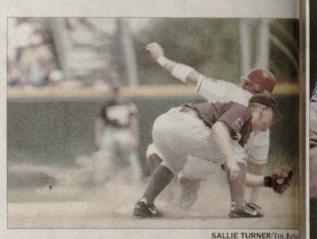
"The main thing in college baseball is how your team chemistry is because the talent level is so even," Heaney said. "So the biggest key this year will be how the team gels together. And that's the older guys job to get everyone in here and playing together on the same page.

Coming into the season, the Aggies' starting lineup is still in question. While second base and right field are solid, all of the other positions are still up-for-grabs.

The battle for the first base position will be between freshman Travis Wong and junior transfer Jeff Freeman. The right-handed Wong played for the USA Junior team over the summer and the left-handed Freeman transferred to A&M from Cowley County Junior College.

Sophomore transfer Ryan Wardinsky has the inside track on being starting shortstop. Wardinsky came to A&M from Walla Walla Junior College in Washington.

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A&M senior second baseman and co-captain Sean Heare hopes to lead the Aggies in 2000.

New faces hope to lead Aggies

BY JASON LINCOLN The Battalion

ast season marked one of the best seasons in the history of Texas A&M baseball. The Aggies successfully defended their Big 12 Championship and advanced into the College World Series behind the power of the Aggie bats.

Following the banner season, the Aggies found themselves in a dilemma after the major league draft claimed eight A&M starters. That loss left only two familiar faces, Daylan Holt and Sean Heaney, to lead the new look of Aggie baseball taking the field this spring.

"Most people are aware, now, that this is a new ballclub," A&M coach Mark Johnson said. "We had eight guys off our team sign. Some were juniors, and some were seniors, but they were key position guys."

The Aggies brought in 19 new faces for this season to fill the void left by some of the most productive players in school history. Eleven freshmen and eight transfers will compete with the 10 returning lettermen and three squadsmen for the open positions.

"I hope by the time we get to confer



A&M senior Matt Knight (L-R) and sophomores Ty Garner, Blake Whealy and Khalid Ballouli celebrate last year's Super Regional victor Even with talent loss, A&M should have interesting year

is that last year's team is no longer here. Eight starters from last year's squad were drafted and signed contracts with professional teams.

With those guys gone, the Aggies will have a dropoff this season. It's inevitable. It has nothing to do with the current team, it's just sheer numbers.

Gone from last year's squad are 54 percent of the home runs, 57 percent of the team's RBI, 58 percent of the wins

Swinging for the fence Holt looks to improve on stellar 1999 season

BY DOUG SHILLING The Battalion

The road to becoming Texas A&M's home run king was a bit different for Daylan Holt. Instead of coming in and setting the world on fire, the junior right fielder went through an awkward period during his first season in Aggieland. Home runs and records were the farthest thing from his mind. He was just trying to find his place on the team

"I remember for the first two weeks to a month, I was just scared," Holt said. "I felt like I had to impress the fans and all that stuff. It's very intimidating to come in here and play, and I was even on the home team.

"I think I made only four errors my

school. Then I came here and went bonkers. It got to a point where a ball was hit to me and I could hear the crowd just sigh and go, 'Oh, no.' Then that would make me nervous.

Holt eventually settled down shook off his early season jitters and ended up having a productive freshman year. He

was, nothing could compare to the year the nation in that category and sme he put together last year.

Holt did not merely break records last year, he obliterated them. In what was the best individual offensive season ever at A&M, he batted .341 with 34 home runs and 105 RBIs.

His 34 home runs led the nation and eclipsed the previous Aggie record by nine. His 105 RBI placed him second in

the old A&M record by 16 RBIs. He also set A&M single-sa

records for at-bats (287) and totals (228).

With the huge increase in produ from one year to the next, A&Mbed coach Mark Johnson said Holt's ethic played a big role in his offer explosion.

See HOLT on Pagel



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whole four years in high

started 59 games in right field and was the Aggies' designated hitter in five more games. Holt hit .316 with seven home runs and 48 RBIs and was even named second team Freshman All-America by Baseball America.

ence, we can figure out who our starters are," Johnson said. "Right now there are a lot of open positions.'

Johnson expects the A&M line-up to

See Newcomers on Page 7.

With the season A&M had last year, enthusiasm should be at an all-time high. A second straight Big 12 Championship and a trip to Omaha for the College World Series will do that. The only problem with that enthusiasm

DOUG

SHILLING

the grass is

freshly cut,

the chalk

lines have been

"Raggies" have

come out of their

winter slumber. It

Aggie Baseball.

must mean it's time

once again for Texas

drawn and the

and 65 percent of the innings pitched. Take away Daylan Holt's school record 34 home runs and only 20 percent of the Aggies' home run total is back this year.

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But as good as his freshman season



