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**A&M baseball team struggling to break even**

It has been a long time since the Texas A&M baseball team has seen times like these.

The Aggies have limped out to a 14-15 record this season, the latest in a season the team has been below .500 since 1960. It was also the last time A&M finished a season below .500, when it had a record of 5-17-1.

To put it in perspective, in 1960, Dwight Eisenhower was president, the United States was engaged in The Cold War with the U.S.S.R. and the current president, Bill Clinton, was only 13.



**DOUG SHILLING**

In other words, it has been a while since an A&M baseball team has stumbled this badly in a season.

A dropoff in production was expected this year since eight key performers from last year's team that ended up in Omaha left the team for minor league baseball.

But no one expected that the team would struggle as much as it has. One of the main culprits of the team's struggles has been its hitting. As a team, the Aggies are hitting a respectable .297, but because of their youth and lack of experience, have failed to come through with clutch hits in key situations.

The best example of the problems came in last weekend's Continental Classic. In a tournament that is designed to wear pitching staffs thin, the Aggies hit a paltry .265 as they finished in last place for the first time in the tournament's history.

The slump got so bad, the team mustered only eight hits in a doubleheader against Central Michigan and Ohio State.

A bright spot for A&M is that the losses in the Continental Classic do not go against their record in the Big 12 and as of right now — as improbable as it seems — the Aggies are in the thick of the race for first.

A&M is in a logjam with four other teams for third place in the conference behind conference leading Texas and second place Oklahoma. With their next two series coming against

Kansas and Iowa State, the team has a chance to get the ship pointed in the right direction.

But the true test of the season comes in April when the schedule becomes downright nasty.

Road series against Oklahoma State and Nebraska and home series against Oklahoma and Texas will decide the season for A&M.

If the Aggies weather the storm and become more consistent in their hitting and continue to have solid pitching, the season just might be salvageable. If they don't ... who knows where they will end up.

*Doug Shilling is a junior journalism major.*

**Cowboys re-sign DE Spellman to one-year contract**

IRVING (AP) — Unsure if Alonzo Spellman had rid himself of the demons which haunted him in the past, the Dallas Cowboys signed the veteran defensive tackle to a one-year contract at the league minimum prior to last season.

After a season in which Spellman kept his composure off the field and proved his worth on it, Dallas decided Spellman was no longer a risk, signing him to a multi-year contract Tuesday. Terms of the deal were not released.

"I felt very fortunate [last year] that we were getting Alonzo where we weren't strapped into a long-term situation because at that time we really didn't know what to expect," said Cowboys coach Dave Campo. "We

were fortunate that he's made the progress that he has."

Prior to signing with Dallas, Spellman had been known as much for his off-field antics as what he did on the field.

Before he was released by Chicago after the 1998 season, Spellman had barricaded himself in his agent's house for eight hours, knocked down a hospital door and fallen asleep in his car while parked in the fast lane of the freeway.

After his release, Spellman was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a mental illness that leads to erratic behavior and depression. Spellman turned to Christianity and righted himself last year.

Spellman's serenity off the field led to production on the field. He came off the bench at the start of the season, but was a starter by season's end and was praised by the Cowboys coaching staff for getting better every week.

Spellman had 16 tackles last season, including five sacks.

"We were obviously pleased with the contributions Alonzo Spellman made last season," said Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. "We were very, very pleased with how he played on the field and with the way he served as an inspiration to many of us personally and to the team."

Spellman's signing was the last major piece in the Cowboys' off-

season goals.

Dallas is still searching for a backup to quarterback Troy Aikman — veteran Paul Justin is scheduled to workout with the team Wednesday — and cornerback Deion Sanders has a foot out the door, but Campo said Spellman's signing puts the club in a good position headed into the NFL Draft next month.

"And now you go into the draft with the feeling that there is nothing so pressing that you have to make a reach on," Campo said. "You go in with the idea that you have a chance to just get someone that makes your football team better."

In addition to signing Spellman, the Cowboys locked up safety

George Teague and offensive lineman Tony Hutsen. They also brought in wide receiver Joey Galloway, cornerback Ryan McNeil, defensive tackle Dimitrius Underwood and tight end Jackie Harris.

Jones would not say if the Cowboys had to restructure any contracts to re-sign Spellman, but did say the earlier signings were made to leave enough salary-cap room to land Spellman.

"I think it's safe to say that we wouldn't have done anything this year, as far as contracts are concerned, that would have kept us from signing Alonzo," Jones said. "I would say that makes him a pretty big priority. It is significant to us that we got him signed."

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