

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Wednesday, June 5, 2002

Seven Aggies picked in day one of MLB draft

Ballouli selected by Brewers in sixth round

By True Brown
THE BATTALION

Seven Texas A&M baseball players were selected in the first day of Major League Baseball's First-Year Players Draft on Tuesday. Four pitchers, two outfielders and one infielder were among the Aggies drafted.

Junior right-hander Khalid Ballouli was the first A&M player taken, going to the Milwaukee Brewers in the sixth round. Ballouli, the Aggies' Friday night pitcher this season, completed the year with a 6-4 record and a 4.44 ERA.

In addition to Ballouli, pitchers Ryan Warpinski (Florida Marlins, eighth round), Todd Deininger (Chicago White Sox, ninth round) and Steven Ponder (Colorado Rockies, 15th round) were selected.

A&M head coach Mark Johnson said he had not heard any definitive plans from the players.

"Scouts haven't had time yet to make contact with players, and I haven't really had time yet to talk to most of the guys," Johnson said. "The pro teams have to get in contact with the players in 10 days, so it is too early to know what will happen."

Johnson said while there were no actual surprises Tuesday, he was surprised that catcher Rusty Meyer — selected in the 13th round by Kansas City — did not get picked earlier.

"I thought (Meyer) should have gone a little higher," Johnson said. "He missed several games with an injury and since he was hurt so much, his value for next year would probably go up if he decided to stick around another year."

Meyer missed 25 games this season due to a strained shoulder muscle, but managed to throw out 21-of-32 on stolen base attempts. From the plate, Meyer finished 2002 with a .321 batting average, four home runs and 19

RBIs and was named the team's MVP.

Warpinski, who struggled with a 2-5 record and a 4.68 ERA in 2002, was the second Aggie selected. The sophomore from Maribel, Wis., underwent Tommy John surgery on his right arm in 2000 and was granted a medical redshirt that season.

"The surgery is something that takes about two years to rehab," Johnson said. "I thought Florida can get a pretty good deal on him."

Outfielders Eric Reed (Marlins, ninth round) and Neal Stephenson (Baltimore Orioles, 14th round) were also picked Tuesday.

Johnson said he is expecting to lose a few players to the pros.

"We have some guys we think will end up signing and going. Ballouli will probably leave, and we are also expecting to lose Deininger and Ponder. I'm not surprised at that. If these guys want to play (in MLB) this is a great chance."



GUY ROGERS • THE BATTALION

Junior right-hander Khalid Ballouli was the first Aggie selected on day one of the First-Year Players Draft on Tuesday. A&M tied Texas for having the most draftees in the Big 12.

Is it the Curse of Aggie Alley?

Boston Red Sox fans blame their 84-year drought of World Series victories on the "Curse of the Bambino." In 1920, Babe Ruth was sold to the Yankees and the Boston fans have experienced nothing but heartache ever since.



DALLAS SHIPP

Aggie baseball fans have a curse of their own lurking over the left field wall of Olsen Field — "The Curse of Aggie Alley."

After the Athletic Department decided to charge \$50 to park in Aggie Alley following the 1999 season, the fans stopped coming along with the incredible number of long balls hit in '99. The Aggie offense has been anemic, finishing near the bot-

tom of the Big 12 each of the last three years.

In 1999, the Aggies went to the College World Series in Omaha, Neb. A&M finished the '99 season with 128 home runs, including a team record of 35 by Daylan Holt. They finished with a team batting average of .322, scored 591 runs and sported an overall record of 52-18.

However, 1999 was the last year for Aggie Alley and the last year that the Olsen faithful have seen such incredible offensive numbers.

In 2000, the Aggies lost eight of their nine starters from the power-hitting 1999 squad. 2000 also marked the beginning

of three miserable offensive years for A&M. The Aggies hit a measly .283 as a team and cranked out just 45 home runs as they finished the year 12 games below .500.

The 2001 squad did not fare much better. They did return to a plus-.500 record, but hit only 42 home runs and held a batting average of .291.

The 2002 team was expected to be different. They were going to be the team that would return Aggie baseball to its glory days of '98 and '99. As the season began, it appeared that dream would become reality. The Aggies quickly jumped to a 26-10 record. A&M fans



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Revised 4/22/02