

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Three A&M hurlers lead Aggies in '03 draft

Team picks MVP & other awards

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

Less than 48 hours after their season ended, several members of this year's Texas A&M baseball team awaited a call from one of 30 major league baseball teams announcing their draft positions.

Junior right-hander Brian Finch was the first Aggie drafted this year. Finch was picked by the Baltimore Orioles with the 44th overall pick in the second round, after posting a 6-1 record this year for the Aggies with a 5.40 ERA.

Finch, who was the second overall pick for Baltimore, gave up 54 runs on 89 hits in 65 innings pitched with 57 strikeouts for A&M this season.

A&M junior reliever Scott Beerer, who was named first team All-American before the College Station Regional, was the second Aggie taken in this year's draft.

The Colorado Rockies, a team that is in constant need of solid pitching in the thin air of Coors Field, picked up Beerer with their second pick. He was the 47th overall pick and was chosen just three picks after Finch.

Beerer led the team with a school record 13 saves this season and posted a 1.82 ERA with 58 strikeouts in 49 1/3 innings pitched.

At the plate, Beerer finished the season with a .335 batting average, 17 doubles, 11 home runs and 57 RBIs.

Beerer was voted as the Marion Pugh Most Valuable Player by his teammates on Monday following the season ending loss to The University of Houston Sunday night.

Sophomore pitcher Logan Kensing was taken six picks later with the 53rd overall pick by the Florida Marlins becoming the Aggies' third pick in the second round.

Most sophomores are not eligible for the draft but because of Kensing's early birthday, he will turn 21 in time to become eligible for this year's draft.

Kensing led all Aggie starting pitchers with a 3.83 ERA and posted 58 strikeouts in 89 1/3 innings pitched on his way to a 7-5 record.

The Aggies would wait four more rounds before junior outfielder Cory Patton would be drafted by the San Diego Padres with the 161st overall pick in the sixth round.

Patton led the team with 13 home runs and 58 RBIs to earn the Loraine B. Breazeale and William "Breezy" Breazeale RBI Leader Award. Patton was fourth on the team with a .331 batting average.

Junior right-hander Matt Farnum was picked up in the seventh round by the Texas Rangers.

Farnum finished 7-2 this season with an 4.20 ERA with 54 strikeouts in just more than 70 innings of work.

Junior southpaw Kyle Parcus was the final Aggie taken on day one in the two-day, 50 round draft.

Parcus was drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies in the 12th round. He finished the season 6-3 with a team-high 69 strikeouts and a 4.29 ERA.

Parcus was also awarded the C.E. "Pat" Olsen Most Outstanding Pitcher Award this year by his teammates.

All six of the Aggies taken on day one of this year's draft can return to play for A&M next season as long as they do not sign with an agent or violate any other NCAA rules.

The final 30 rounds of the draft will take place on Wednesday and can be found at www.mlb.com.

Senior designated hitter Jordy Mitchell and freshman outfielder John Infante also received team awards on Monday but were not involved in Tuesday's draft.

Mitchell, who played in 51 games this season for the Aggies, was voted as this year's Marion Pugh Spirit Award winner for the second straight year.

Infante received the Wally Moon Award as the most improved player on the team. Infante played in 44 games this season and hit all three of his home runs in the final eight games of the season.

	Brian Finch RHP Second Round 44th overall	
	Scott Beerer RHP Second Round 47th overall	
	Logan Kensing RHP Second Round 53rd overall	
	Cory Patton OF Sixth Round 161st overall	
	Matt Farnum RHP Seventh Round 197th overall	
	Kyle Parcus LHP 12th Round 355th overall	

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Top: Brian Finch pitches earlier this season.



Left: Scott Beerer glares at a hitter from Houston in the final home game of the season Sunday.



Bottom: Logan Kensing delivers a pitch to the plate against Houston in game two Sunday, which A&M lost 7-6.

FILE PHOTOS • THE BATTALION

Johnson not at fault for team's meltdown

Baseball fans enjoy going home after a tough loss to complain about each coaching decision that might have changed the outcome of a game. It's almost as much fun as going to the game itself.

No one ever goes home thinking, "wow, the coach made a great decision to bunt that ended up scoring two runs."

But they will voice their opinions loud and clear when a player doesn't execute a bunt and no runs cross the plate. All of a sudden the coach should have let the hitter swing away.

In recent days, fans have hit the Internet and radio shows complaining about coaching decisions made by Texas A&M head coach Mark Johnson Sunday night when the No. 10 Aggies experienced a meltdown in game two against The University of Houston in the College Station NCAA Regional.

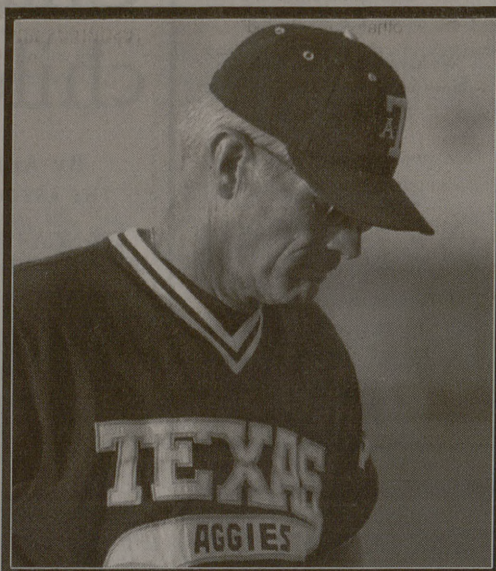
Johnson said that he has second-guessed many of his decisions, as he does after every game.

"From a coach's standpoint, you look back at a lot of decisions you make and there is a lot of second-guessing, which coaches do more than fans," Johnson said. "Fans think they are the only ones. But (coaches) have to make decisions without knowing the outcomes, and all the decisions I made were percentage ones and gut feelings. I can live with all the decisions I made."

Baseball is the hardest sport to predict the outcome because on any given day a Cy Young Award-winning pitcher can give up 10 runs or walk four batters in a row and it will cost his team the game. In football, if one linebacker has a bad day, there are other players who can pick up the slack.

If one basketball player can't hit water from a boat, there are four other guys who can take the shot.

On Sunday, Aggie All-American closer Scott Beerer simply ran out of gas. He has been as solid as any closer in the country, which was



Johnson's Career Highlights

- Inducted into the Texas Baseball Hall of Fame in December 2002
- Inducted into the American Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame on Jan. 4, 2001
- 12 NCAA regional appearances
- NCAA regional host five times (1989, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2003)
- Team ranked No. 1 in 1989, 1993 season and 1999
- SWC Coach of the Year in 1986 and 1993
- Big 12 Coach of the Year in 1998 and 1999

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solidified by his second round draft pick on Monday by the Colorado Rockies.

While it was painful for Aggie baseball fans to watch Sunday night as the Cougars celebrated on Olsen Field, Johnson is not to blame.

It was not Johnson who committed five

errors in Sunday's first game that forced a game two.

It was not Johnson who gave up five runs in the final three innings of the second game.

There is an old saying in sports, "Players win games, coaches lose them."

No one gave Johnson any public credit for Beerer's school record 13 saves this year, so why should he be blamed when Beerer and other pitchers have a bad night?

Aggie baseball fans could not have asked for more than a four-run lead in the eighth inning with their All-American closer on the mound at Olsen Field in a winner-take-all game.

Nine times out of 10 this season, Beerer came in and shut down A&M opponents late in the ballgame.

Johnson has built a first-class baseball program at A&M during the past 18 years, and no one will work harder to get back to the College World Series next year than him.

There are many knowledgeable baseball fans, but the only person in attendance this weekend who has won more than 800 Division I college baseball games is Johnson.

This team was predicted to finish no higher than seventh in the 10-team Big 12 Conference this year and was a single base hit away from being co-champions.

Johnson was deservedly awarded Big 12 Coach of the Year by the Dallas Morning News for his quick turnaround this year.

College baseball is the most difficult sport to recruit because so many high school players go pro. Coaches cannot recruit the top notch players out of high school because there is a distinct possibility they will skip college ball.

Some claim that Johnson shouldn't get credit for recruiting because he filled the team with junior college transfers this year. Who cares? When former A&M football head coach R.C. Slocum didn't recruit junior college players on a consistent basis he was criticized. Fans can't have it both ways.

Aggie baseball will return next year, and Johnson will too. Many faces on the team will change but one thing will remain constant with all the players new and old: they want to play for Mark Johnson.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Spurs and Nets to kickoff NBA Finals tonight in San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The New Jersey Nets plan to run, and the San Antonio Spurs plan to stop them from running.

The NBA Finals begin Wednesday night, and if the best-of-seven series can be broken down into one central theme, that's it.

If the Nets are successful with their fast break, as they were in the first three rounds, they'll have a much better chance of erasing everyone's collective memory of their dreadful performance in the finals a year ago, when they were swept by the Lakers.

If the Spurs can stop them, San Antonio will dramatically increase its chances of taking home the franchise's second championship.

The Nets outscored the Pistons 94-15 in fast-break points during the Eastern Conference finals after outscoring the Boston Celtics 78-22 in the same category during the conference semifinals. New Jersey swept both series.

"If we can limit their transition baskets, we'll have a great opportunity. If not, it'll be a long night for us," Bowen said.

The Spurs held the Mavericks to no more than eight fast-break baskets in five of their six games during the Western Conference finals, and they were only outscored in that category 91-64 over the course of that series.

In order to keep the Nets from running, the Spurs will need to sprint back on defense while staying aware of where the ball is.

The Nets will look to run whenever they can — off steals, off missed shots, even off made shots. But the key will be turnovers.

"Our weakness is obviously at the free-throw line and committing turnovers," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "Hanging onto the basketball is really a priority for us."

Only five NBA teams had more turnovers during the regular season than San Antonio, and New Jersey led the NBA with an average of 18.7 fast-break points per game — 2.6 more than the second-place Memphis Grizzlies.

Also, the Spurs were ranked 26th in free-throw shooting at 72.5 percent.

Both teams will be well-rested when the series finally begins. New Jersey will have been off for 10 days when Game 1 tips off shortly after 8:30 p.m. EDT, while San Antonio hasn't played since last Thursday.



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