

# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 1B • Tuesday, February 17, 2004

## Patton-led Aggies streak into Huntsville

Padres' loss is Aggies' gain as Patton stays at A&M

By Troy Miller  
THE BATTALION

For most elite college baseball players, careers are finished in three seasons instead of the usual four. With professional contracts awaiting them in the minor leagues, once that third collegiate season is finished, they're usually gone.

Once in a while, a player will finish out his eligibility in hopes of increasing his draft status, but when a player is drafted in the sixth-round after being projected much lower, the response is usually "Where do I sign?"

But that wasn't the case with Texas A&M senior outfielder Cory Patton. Patton declined a sixth round pick from the San Diego Padres to return for his senior season as an Aggie.

"It was a tough process," Patton said. "I was kind of stressed out about it. Nobody told me I was going to be drafted that high, so I was kind of shocked."

The prospects of having Patton's bat in the third spot of the Aggie lineup after hitting 331 with 13 home runs and 58 RBIs is a pleasant surprise to Aggie faithful, but A&M head coach Mark Johnson said Patton's return is also valued because of the leadership Patton provides in the clubhouse.

"I think it's huge (to have Patton back)," Johnson said. "We looked out, and I think Cory is going to have a great year."

Patton has been the star everywhere he's gone. At Ovaso High School in Ovaso, Okla., Patton led his team to the Oklahoma Class 6A State Championship his junior season and to a state runner-up finish his senior season. He hit



JOSHUA L. HOBSON • THE BATTALION

A&M senior outfielder Cory Patton is warming up in the on-deck circle before batting in the second inning of Saturday's 15-0 Aggie win over Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. Patton returned to A&M this season despite being picked in the sixth round by the San Diego Padres in the 2003 Major League Baseball draft.

.380 and .388, respectively.

Patton then moved on to Seward County Community College in Liberal, Kan. In the 2002 season, Patton hit .465 and led the nation with 31 home runs and 119 RBIs. He was also named National Junior College Player of the Year and NJCAA Male Athlete of the Year in the 2002 season.

With an impressive junior campaign after transferring to A&M, Patton proved that he could put up big numbers no matter the competition.

But playing for a national championship and increasing his draft status weren't the only reasons Patton stayed at A&M, nor were they the main ones.

This past August, Patton got married, and now that he is starting a family, he said getting a degree became more important than an early paycheck. Although Patton hopes baseball can pay the way in the future, he knows that the odds of making the major leagues are long.

"After my second semester

last year, I was really close to getting my degree," Patton said. "I had the opportunity to stay and play and finish my degree, and getting married definitely had a lot to do with it too."

Junior agricultural development major Bobbie Patton, Cory's wife, said she wasn't influential in Patton's decision but she knows their future together weighed in.

"Playing ball is what he

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## A&M baseball tries to make it four in a row

By Kyle Davoust  
THE BATTALION

After opening the season with a three-game sweep over Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, the No. 21 Texas A&M baseball team will travel to Huntsville Tuesday to square off against Sam Houston State, which is looking to improve on last year's disappointing 9-18 record.

The Bearcats opened their season in the UTPA/Al Oglethorpe Classic in Edinburg, Texas, two weeks ago. They played three games in the tournament, each producing a different result: a win, a loss and a tie.

SHSU started off the tournament with a 7-2 victory over Texas-Pan American in which senior Ryan Rafferty and freshman Chris Gresset combined to pitch a four-hitter.

The loss came at the hands of Southland Conference foe Lamar University. The Bearcats gave up seven straight runs as Lamar was able to rally from a 4-0 deficit to win 7-4.

However, in the consolation game against Kansas with the score knotted up at 8-8 after the eighth inning, the game was called due to a curfew rule in order for KU to make a 4:20 p.m. flight back to Kansas City, Mo.

"I've never been involved in a baseball tie other than maybe Little League and certainly not on this high of a level," said Bearcats assistant coach Phillip Gutzman. "There was an agreement before the game that we couldn't start an inning after a certain time because they had a plane to catch, so that's just

kind of the way it went. It was tied and we reached that limit, so there was nothing we could really do about it."

While the Bearcats have already felt the after-effects of these three contrasting results, the Aggies have only felt the joy of winning this season. The Aggies are hoping to carry their winning momentum into Tuesday's game.

"It's not going to get any easier, so we're going to have to get better and improve."

— Mark Johnson  
Texas A&M baseball head coach

"Definitely, to start off 3-0 and sweep our first series, that's big for us," said sophomore first baseman Coby Mavroulis. "And we'll carry some of that momentum into (Sam Houston State)."

Aggie head coach Mark Johnson said he was happy with his team's play against Corpus Christi, but that he still sees room for improvement and hopes to see more out of his club with each passing game.

"It's not going to get any easier, so we're going to have to get better and improve," Johnson said. "But we're learning more about our ballclub and

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