

Character, talent lead Austin sophs to title

BY GARY MARTIN

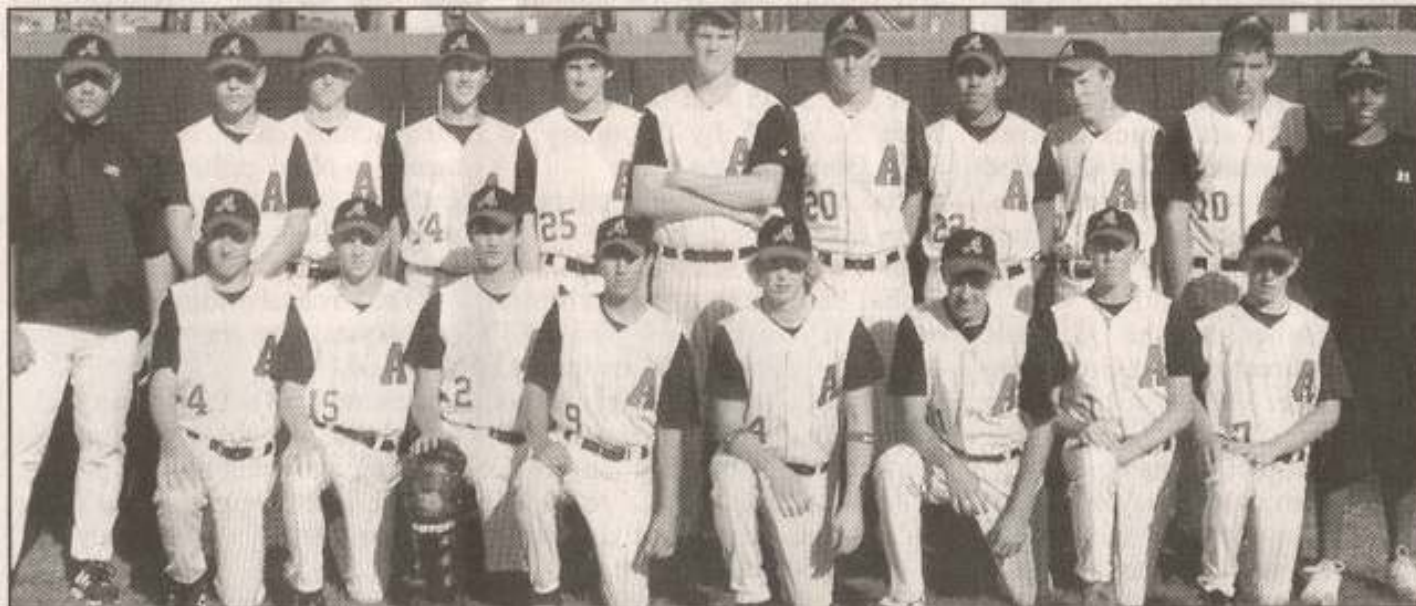
SUGAR LAND — At first glance, Austin sophomore baseball coach Kenneth Sharp knew his team was talented. After a 16-0 run through one of the toughest baseball districts in the state, and a 25-3 overall record, he can say it with confidence.

"The success during the season was a great accomplishment for this team, but it needs to be put into perspective," said Sharp. "By the nature of the game of baseball and playing the tough district schedule that we did, it is tough to come out unscathed and it will be very difficult to repeat especially at a higher level.

"Every player needs to remember that the season was not achieved through complacency or respecting mediocrity, and then they will continue to be successful in baseball and life."

The undefeated run to the District 20-5A championship was special to Sharp in how the team handled itself throughout the season.

"As a baseball fan, my expectation for this team was to play the game in a way that respected the game in itself," said Sharp. "We strove to show everyone who watched us play, fans and opponents alike, how to play the game the right way and these guys took a great deal of pride in that. When you have a team that plays with that much pride, they are tough group to beat."



District Champions

Members of the Austin sophomore baseball team were, front row from left: Lance Judy, Austen Smith, Drew Miller, Matias Perez, Cory Weaver, Alex Bynum, Caleb McKinney and Taylor Rammrath; back row: coach Ken Sharp, Ryan Dalton, Jake Kacal, Daniel Rockett, Luke Mulcahey, Clint VanTilborg, Blake Doerr, Clay Tucker, Tony Gigliotti, Matthew Baughman and team manager Barrett Barnes. Not pictured are Andrew Fekete and team manager Ryan Boddeker.

The Bulldogs got impressive performances from every facet of the game: hitting, pitching and fielding.

With the bat, Austin had five players hit over .400 and four more hit over .350. Leading the way were Daniel Rockett (.439, 20 RBIs), Luke Mulcahey (.421, 27 RBIs), Tony Gigliotti (.415), Jake Kacal (.409) and Matt Baughman (.400).

Also carrying hot bats were Blake Doerr (.395, 35 RBIs), Clay Tucker (.380, 14 stolen bases), Ryan Dalton (.356, 26 RBIs) and Caleb McKinney (.356).

"Our main goal as an offense was to battle every at bat and hit the ball

hard on the ground," said Sharp. "We did that and scored over 10 runs a game and had a team average a little over .350."

On the hill, the Bulldogs allowed just 60 walks during the season and finished with a 2.24 earned-run average.

Dalton (7-0, 0.53 ERA, 46 strikeouts) led the way, followed by Lance Judy (6-0, 0.64 ERA, 37 Ks), Matias Perez (5-0, 1.54 ERA, 31 Ks) and Tucker (3-0, 2.77 ERA).

"Our pitchers did a great job being aggressive and challenging hitters," said Sharp. "Not taking anything away from our pitchers,

but you can only be as aggressive as we were if you have a lot of confidence in the defense behind you and our defense behind our pitchers was phenomenal."

According to Sharp, the pride his players took in everything they did is a major contributor to their continued success.

"I believe that they have a great future as a part of the Austin program," said Sharp. "The key is that they continue to work hard and strive to improve every time they step on to the field whether it is in the summer on their select teams or at school."