

Astros looking at top...

Texas Pro Baseball Outlook

...Rangers still at bottom?

By TONY GALLUCCI
A couple of managerial changes in Texas major league baseball teams are responsible for Loel Passe's annual statement that this is indeed the "Year of the Astros" and Bob Short's sale of the Texas Rangers to a group looking for a winner.
In what is becoming an annual event for the Astros, the replacement of managers, Preston Gomez has taken over the helm from fiery Leo Durocher.
Durocher removed himself from the job after less than a year somewhat due to pressure

little more than last year offered from either ball club.
Houston's Astros are generally picked to hold up the third position behind Cincinnati and Los Angeles, considered to be about equal in potential.
The Astro's mediocre finish last year, 17 games behind Cincinnati, should be slightly improved this time around.
Houston fans will be missing some familiar faces when the season opens at the Astrodome. Jim Wynn, Jerry Reuss, Jim York were disposed of early this year and yesterday Skip Jutze and James Rodney Richard were cut to make the 25 player limit.
Gomez sent Wynn to Los Angeles in a trade for disintegrating Osteen. Gomez might have thought twice about the trade if he had a time machine to let him know that Cedeno would be cooling off in a jail cell for awhile.
The Astros weakest fielding spot is right field where one-deep Bob Gallagher spends his time.

sixth place finish of last year, although they see the possibility for a better winning average than last season's .352.

Burroughs pounded out 30 homers last season, had 85 rbi's and a .279 average at the plate. His ability inspired Bob Short (while still major owner) to shorten the rightfield fence, to give the righthander an equal chance at all the walls.
Look for the Rangers to be weak at third base or short stop whichever position Toby Harrah does not field, first base, one of the outfield positions (Burroughs, Cesar Tovar and who else?) and at catcher.

Disregarding an above average starting four, look for hitting to be less than major league quality.
While the Astros could make waves at the top of the National League West, look for either the Los Angeles Dodgers or Cincinnati to duel either Pittsburgh or the New York Mets for the NL title.
The Oakland A's are a solid choice in the American League West which they share with the Rangers among others. Either the Boston Red Sox or the Baltimore Orioles should take the East and possibly the AL ticket to the World Series.

BATTALION SPORTS ANALYSIS
from the powers that be and somewhat from the less than expected fourth place finish.
Billy Martin takes over where Whitey Herzog left off with the Rangers and has brought in some fresh talent that won't turn the franchise around but might help win more than last year's 57 games.

Although both managers are expecting the most from their teams, the sages who make their annual predictions in various pro baseball magazines and numbers of city newspapers are expecting



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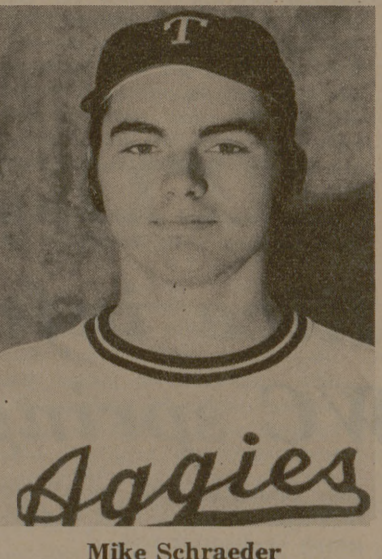
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Kevin's Korner



By KEVIN COFFEY, Sports Editor
Baseball, just like any other sport, often comes down to a game of breaks. Good breaks and bad ones. Tuesday, the Aggies got a large share of the latter when junior second baseman Mike Schraeder collided with center fielder John Woods. Schraeder ruptured his spleen and his services are lost for the rest of the regular season. With some luck, Schraeder could be back for the playoff if the Ags hold on to the Southwest Conference lead.



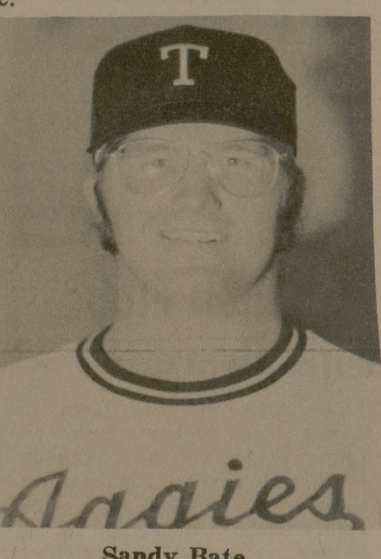
Mike Schraeder
spring break, Jim Hacker couldn't buy a hit while Al Thurmond couldn't make an out. Hacker would hit a shot right at an enemy fielder while Thurmond's bloopers fell for doubles. Against TCU Hacker found his just reward by pounding Frog hurlers for seven hits while Thurmond went hitless in 10 attempts.

Coach Tom Chandler said an injury can often spur a team on because of added determination. "We've been behind in games and haven't panicked," Chandler told the team yesterday. "I don't see why we would panic now."
Chandler said that this 1974 bunch exemplifies togetherness more than his past teams. "When one guy is down, someone will pick up the slack," the Aggie coach said. "We'll have to battle harder now and we can't expect to win games by just throwing our gloves on the field. We don't have any easy games left, we'll have to fight."
Chandler's point of picking up the slack has been shown all season. During the teams trip over

Bate for Schraeder

The job of filling in for Schraeder falls in the lap of Sandy Bate. This is a break of the good variety as many teams don't have an experienced player like Bate available.

Bate has seen almost all of his action this year as the designated hitter. He filled the role well, hitting .333 on the season. Schraeder was hitting .364.
Bate has fielded one ball this year. He is making up for the lost time now on the practice field. Yesterday the Lufkin native came to workout with a new glove and promptly fielded 400 ground balls to break it in.
"Sure will miss Mike (Schraeder) and I'd be a liar if I said any different," said Bate. "All I can do is give it my best shot and work hard to get ready. I don't think the team will let this get us down. We're more determined to break it in."
Bate is a three year let-terminan. His class of seniors have won more games at A&M than any other group.
Senior Pitcher Jackie Binks said the pressure of picking up where Schraeder left off falls on the seniors and rightfully so. "If we (seniors) can't pull the team through this, well then we don't deserve a championship," Binks said. "We just have to bow our necks."



Sandy Bate

Hargett jumps to WFL's Hawaii

Former Texas Aggie great Edd Hargett has agreed to terms with the Honolulu Hawaiians of the World Football League.

Hargett has one year remaining on his contract with the Houston Oilers. He has been a taxi squad member on the team since being traded from New Orleans before last season.

Hargett never played a down for the Oilers in regular season play after playing second fiddle to Archie Manning at New Orleans.

Aaron opens against Reds

CINCINNATI (AP)—Hank Aaron was put into the opening game lineup by Atlanta Manager Eddie Mathews today, and the 40-year old slugger said he would play against Cincinnati.

The first game of the 1974 major league baseball season was scheduled for 2:30 p. m., EDT.

Conditions appeared to be ideal for Aaron to break Babe Ruth's hallowed home run record of 714. Aaron needed only one homer to tie the mark.

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