

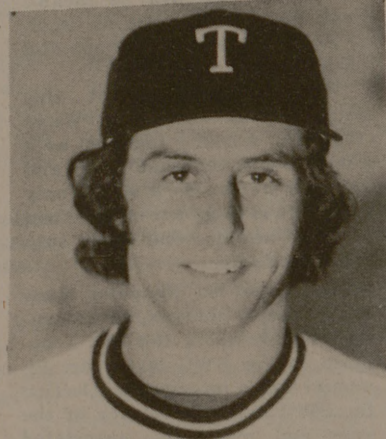
PEANUTS

By Charles M. Schulz



Hacker gunning for 3 wins

Third-baseman looking for championship



Jim Hacker

By KEVIN COFFEY
Sports Editor

Jim Hacker enters today's Southwest Conference baseball series with the loop batting title at stake. But the outcome of the series is far more important in his mind.

A&M needs to sweep all three games of the series to claim the conference crown. It is no simple matter since the University of Texas is the opposition. Hacker makes no bones about the fact he wants the title dearly.

"In 1971, we were 31-3 and ranked No. 4 in the nation and we lost our last six games," said Hacker. "The one thing I want when I came here was a championship and we haven't won one yet."

This is Hacker's last try. The senior third baseman has held that hot corner for four years since coming here. He has been rated the No. 2 third sacker every year since his freshman season.

Hacker only considered two schools after finishing a brilliant career at Temple: A&M and UT. Strangely enough, the Texas third baseman has been the all-conference selection each year in front of Hacker.

David Chalk now a regular with the California Angels was all-SWC in 1971-72. Keith Mooreland, conference batting champ last year, won the honor in 1973.

Hacker now has the advantage because he appears to have a solid lock on the batting title. He's currently hitting .474 in SWC action, 40 points above the nearest competition.

"I guess I have started to think about the batting championship a little," admits Hacker "but winning the conference is more important. Besides, Texas represents the best pitching in the league and anything could happen. I fight not get a hit."

Hacker is an all-America candidate. His .397 season's average includes 40 runs scored and 33 runs batted in. In 121 official at bats, Hacker has struck out only four times while running up the school record for bases on balls. He also holds the career record for runs scored and doubles and is just four RBIs short of that mark.

The Boston Red Sox selected Hacker as their No. 1 draft choice following an outstanding high school career, but Hacker passed up a big bonus to come to A&M. Last summer he hit .426 for the Boulder Collegians and was named to the All-America Amateur team.

Last October, Hacker was one of the stars for the U. S. team which won the World Amateur Baseball Title by defeating host team Nicaragua, 1-0, in the finals. "That was really an experience," Hacker recalls. "All during the game fans were throwing lighted firecrackers on the field. Those conditions were about as tough as you could ever face." Hacker hit .333 in the World Tournament.

Although Hacker may hold on and win the batting title, you can bet he'd trade it for three big wins over Texas.

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