

Ags win home run derby with Bears

BY DERRICK GRUBBS
If someone were to write a novel about this past weekend's A&M-Baylor baseball series in Waco, the appropriate — if not original — title would have to be "Gone with the Wind."
With strong southerly gusts blowing out in compact Ferrell Field, the Aggies belted a total of 11 home runs and swept the Bears in three games, 5-3 Friday and 8-4, 11-9 Saturday.
The sweep gives A&M sole possession of second place in the SWC standings, a game and a half behind Arkansas, who swept a three-game set with SMU this weekend.
The fact that only eight runs were scored in Friday's game came as a surprise to most observers, considering the stiff wind in which anything hit fairly deep into the outfield had a good chance of clearing the fences.
But both pitchers, Mark Ross for the Aggies and senior lefty Burl Coker for Baylor, kept the ball low on most of the batters in an attempt to make them hit it on the ground. Both were fairly successful in that there were 33 ground outs in the nine-inning contest.
But it was still the long ball that accounted for most of the scoring. Baylor jumped into the lead early on

a solo home run by Luke Prestridge in the second.
A&M took over the lead in the fifth when Mike Hurdle reached base on an error by the Baylor shortstop and went to third when Buster Turner lined a double into right-center field. A single by Gary Bryant scored Hurdle and Turner followed him in when Randy Woodruff lofted a sacrifice fly to shallow center field. Turner beat the throw to the plate and the Ags were up 2-1.
Hurdle added to the lead in the seventh with a solo home run and David Pieczynski provided A&M with some extra insurance in the eighth when his fly ball to center got caught in the wind and dropped over the fence for a two-run homer.
Ross, who had shut the Bears down magnificently through six innings since Prestridge's homer, ran into trouble in the ninth when the first two batters greeted him with base hits.
A ground out allowed one run to score and after another Bruin was thrown out at first, Coker looped an RBI single to make the score 5-3. The next Baylor batter, Mike Johansen, popped one into shallow left field. Aggie leftfielder Tim Feickert charged in and made a spectacular diving catch to end the game.

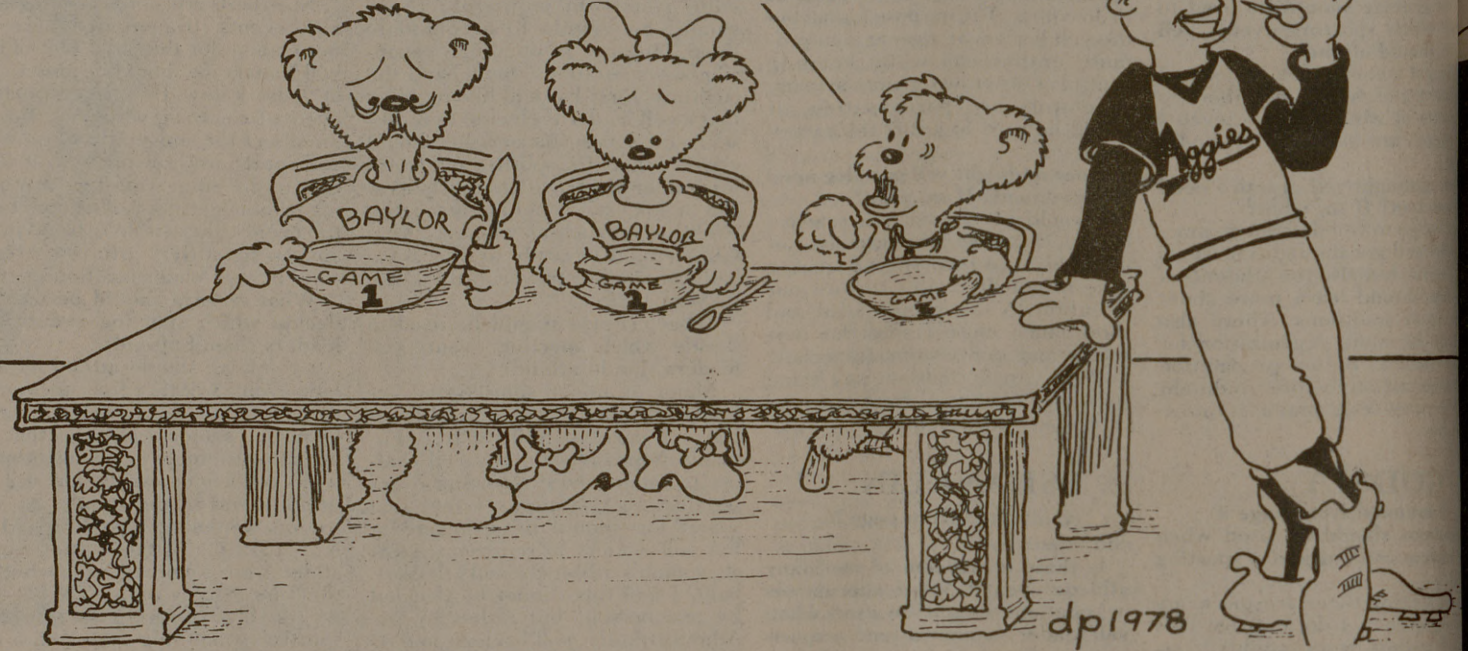
The loss for Coker was his first of the season, dropping him to 5-1 on the year.
Baylor out-hit the Aggies 12-8 with Prestridge the leader going 3-for-4.
A&M was paced by Hurdle and Turner, both of whom had a pair of hits.
The win for Ross put him 4-3 on the year. He was aided by some outstanding defense by his teammates who provided him with three double plays that killed potential Baylor rallies.
Saturday's twinbill was enough to make a pitcher paranoid.
There were 16 home runs hit in the two games, 12 by the Aggies and four by Baylor.
The wind was blowing out even stronger than the day before and the hitters had a field day.
The Aggies jumped out in front early in the first game and led 2-1 after two innings.
No one had homered to that point but in the third, Hurdle and Hawthorne teed off with solo blasts that began the barrage.
After A&M pushed across a run in the top of the fourth, Prestridge belted his second four-bagger of the series in the bottom half of the frame with a man on and the score came to 5-3.
Shane Nolen brought the Bears to within a run with a solo homer in the fifth. Nolen had been Baylor's starting pitcher in the game but was relieved in the fourth by John Perlman. Nolen stayed in the lineup as the Bears' designated hitter.
The Aggies padded their lead with one run in the sixth and two in the seventh to come away with the 8-4 win.
Mark Thurmond again went the distance and recorded his seventh win of the year without a loss. The run Baylor scored off him in the second ended a string of 28 straight shutout innings compiled by the junior lefty in SWC pitching dating back to last year. He was unscored upon in 1978 league play coming into the game against Baylor. The win also marked Thurmond's 18th straight regular-season victory without a defeat.
A&M got two hits in every inning except the second when they col-

lected three singles, ending the game with 15 total hits. Verde led the way, going 3-for-5 with two RBI's. The senior third baseman also scored three runs.
Baylor, the SWC's top hitting team, could scrape together just six hits off Thurmond. It was only the second time this year a conference team has gotten that many hits off the Aggie ace. Thurmond shut out Houston and Rice on three-hitters and blanked Texas on a six-hitter.
Nolen got the loss for the Bruins, he drops to 1-3.
A&M set a SWC record for home runs in a single game in the nightcap as they put seven out of the park in a contest the Ags won in ten innings.
After the Aggies scored a run in the first, Feickert and Baylor's Greg Pennington traded solo homers in the second to make it 2-1 A&M.
In the fourth, a pair of walks and an error loaded the bases for the

visitors before shortstop Robert Bonner belted the first grand slam of his Aggie career. The Corpus Christi senior had a good idea the ball was gone when he hit it as he stopped halfway to first base to watch it sail over leftfield fence.
It was Mark Warriner's turn in the fifth as he lofted a solo round-tripper to center field to put A&M in front 7-1.
But as Aggie coach Tom Chandler told his players in the team meeting Friday, no lead is safe in Ferrell Field. He was proven correct.
Johansen and Nolen homered in the fifth to highlight a four-run Baylor rally. The Bears scored a single marker in the sixth and A&M starter David Pieczynski was relieved by lefty Jim McWilliams, who got the Ags out of the inning without further damage.
Chandler then opted to go with a righthander to begin the seventh and brought in freshman Perry Swanson. Although his curve ball was effective he got one up too high on catcher Kenny Kolkhorst who belted the pitch over the left field fence for a two-run homer to put the Bears in front, 8-7.
John Pockrus came on in relief in the eighth that was to begin the most dramatic three innings of the series. The Corpus Christi junior got A&M out of serious trouble in that frame and brought them to bat with one final chance in the ninth.
Verde tied the game with a solo home run that the wind blew over the center field fence. Hawthorne

stepped up a few minutes later two out and belted another blast for his second of the day. shot also broke the A&M record for career homers as Hawthorne's 20th four-bagger. Aggie. But more importantly, A&M ahead 9-8.
But the Bears were not great let Pockrus and the Aggies easily as Fritz Connally boomed a 0-2 pitch over the left field fence to tie the game at 9-all.
On to the tenth. Feickert led the inning with — you guessed — a home run on the first pitch of the inning from Mike Roberts. The senior leftfielder's second hit of the game.
Before all the Aggie players even had a chance to retreat to dugout after greeting Feickert home, Turner hit Roberts' first into the trees beyond left field to put A&M on top, 11-9.

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"A Bible?!"
As I approached my early teens, I had decided that God was simply a myth created by primitive man to explain the unknown. Now, as man became civilized and science discovered the answers to mysterious phenomenon, belief in God remained for those weak persons who needed a "crutch." My junior high physics book confirmed my thought when it reported scientists who could trace the origin of life to 4 basic elements combining together to form amino acids, the building blocks of life. Though I wouldn't stand on a soapbox to declare it, it seemed rational to me that God didn't exist. The few people I knew who did believe, were too weak to face reality and needed some re-assurance that something was out there. My only exposure to Christianity was a stiff formal service, confined to reciting after the minister.
A few Christians tried to argue with me. None of the answers ever satisfied my questions, and to be honest I didn't care. Through my reading, I also discovered Charles Darwin's theory of evolution which reinforced my conclusion even more. "There simply is no God, science can explain everything," I thought.
During my junior year in high school, I met a guy in my English class who intrigued me. By observation, I noticed he was nice to everyone. In my high school there was a rigid caste system and few crossed the class boundary lines. He dressed like a hippie so I deduced that was why he was so friendly. The hippie movement was novel and I felt this new group must have something, so I joined them. As I got to know the school's local band of hippies, I discovered they differed little from the other kids. Only this guy in English class seemed to transcend the class prejudices.
We began to sit together and become friends. He puzzled me. What was it that was different? One day, his stack of schoolbooks contained a Bible and a paperback by Billy Graham. "A Bible!, Billy Graham!" my thoughts screamed. How could he! The mystery guy read the Bible. My friend noted my astonishment. He explained to me that he enjoyed reading the Bible and that the Lord was real to him. He said he experienced the Lord as warmth, peace and joy inside. I was fascinated. I never heard such a thing. At first, I thought he made up the whole thing until he had me read John 3:1-6, about the Lord telling Nicodemus he must be reborn. Rebirth, no one had ever told me about rebirth. I asked to borrow his Billy Graham book. At home, I devoured the book like a starving man. I wanted to get to the part about being reborn. I desperately wanted to experience joy and peace on the inside like my friend.
As I read, it awed me that this Jesus died for me. Whether I ever choose to believe in His existence or expressed any gratitude, He did it just same. He did it out of pure love not expecting thanks. The day, after class had broken decided I would pray. I was Him so badly. All my questions and reasonings had been followed up by this burning desire to experience joy and peace on the inside of my being. I knew what to say to Him. My hands clenched and eyes shut. I asked the Lord to please let me know what was different. The rest of the day was a blur. Next morning when I awoke there was someone sharing the same body. There was a presence inside me I felt before. Jesus had made home in my heart.
When my friend saw me in class, he knew what had happened. That weekend brought me to the church. I so relieved to find other people who were as happy and excited about the Lord Jesus as I become. I wasn't alone in my new experience of Jesus. I knew I had found home.
That was seven years ago. I married, and it describes my relationship with Jesus. At first meeting Him was thrilling and exciting, now I deepened to knowing and loving this one who has committed Himself to me for the rest of my life and cares and accepts me as I am. I'm glad I'll never be alone.
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