

# ATTENTION

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## sports

# Astros prep for season

By MARK PATTERSON  
Battalion Sports Staff  
The Houston Astros road show rolled into town Wednesday for their final pre-season game before opening up the National League season against the Cincinnati Reds this afternoon.

Wednesday's game against the Aggies was the last stop on a barnstorming tour for the Astros in which they've played five games in five days in five different cities since they broke camp Friday. Their pre-season tour has taken Houston to Baton Rouge, Little Rock, Tulsa, San Antonio and back to Houston for a series of games against the Texas Rangers as a final tune-up for the season ahead. The Astros took three out of four games from Texas on the road-trip.

Last night, both the Rangers and Astros faced the University of Houston in exhibition games in the Astrodome.

After the games yesterday, the Rangers left for Austin where they faced the University of Texas Wednesday in an exhibition game. And the Astros traveled here to face the Aggies.

So what was the purpose for all the extra games that the two teams have been playing since breaking

camp in Florida? Simply, the Astros and Rangers are professionals and the two, as all sports teams, are a business. In order for a business to prosper, good public relations have to be developed with its paying customers.

So the Rangers and Astros have adopted the idea that a few extra games right before the season could possibly help the two teams at their gates.

Help or no help at the gate, the Astros players have their own views of the extra games they are asked to play.

"Playing these games is just like an extension of spring training for me," said J.R. Richards, the Astro's pitching ace and starter today against the Reds. "I don't know how the owners approach it, but at least it keeps my mind on baseball."

"But I just can't see why we play an exhibition game the day before we open up the season. We've almost got some guys hurt on the trip. But we're professionals and we're getting paid for it."

Relief pitcher Gene Pentz voiced an opinion for the five-game series.

"I like breaking camp and getting away from Cocoa Beach," said Pentz. "We've been down there for

five weeks and I'm tired of the place.

"The only thing I don't like about playing on all the bad fields is that the budget of the Astros is not as good as the other teams. Plus the travel conditions can really get you down. At Texas A&M, the college teams are in good time."

One of the Astros' starting pitchers, Mark Lemongello, sees the advantages in doing the pre-season tour.

"It's really good to promote the game around the area, and I've felt that Lemongello about playing a program. A&M. "It gives people a chance to see us and hopefully become interested in us this season. Even though we have to do something before the season starts."

Bill Viridon, in his third year as the Astros' manager, sees the area as the final tune-up for his team. "I think playing the teams of the cities is both a training and a scholarship trip," said Viridon. "In my opinion, we're still in spring training. We're getting paid for it."

But these games are good for the team. It gives us a chance to play against a team before the season starts. Anytime you play a game, you're against it's good for the team."

By David Boggan

## Astros are colorful

What is it about an afternoon of professional baseball that brings out the kid in me?

As a youngster, I traveled to Houston twice to watch the Astros play ball. The first time I saw Doug Rader, Jim Wynn, Joe Morgan and Co. take the field, they lost a game to Philadelphia. On my next outing at the Dome I saw the Giants, with Willie Mays unfortunately on the bench defeat the Astros.

But both times I remember clutching a baseball and a pen in my small hands, running down to the fence and getting the autographs of as many of the Astros as I could get to pass my way.

I thought about this yesterday as I walked out to Olsen Field to watch Cesar Cedeño, Bob Watson, Jose Cruz and Co. play an exhibition game with Texas A&M.

"Those were the days," I said to myself, knowing that my autograph-seeking years had passed with time. Yes, I was ready to shake hands with the Astro stars, but surely I was too old to be asking for signatures.

Then, there I was watching my third Astros' game from the Houston dugout. To my complete surprise, I found myself clutching a baseball and a pen in my hands. There I sat with the grin of a 10-year-old on my face asking, "Can I

have your autograph?" And in between comments and questions about baseball at Texas A&M, the Astros were kind enough to say, "Sure," to this 21-year-old kid.

The Houston Astros are as colorful in the dugout as their rainbow-striped uniforms are on the field. The variety of accents that come from the Astros' dugout indicates that the Houston club is one of the biggest cultural conglomerates in baseball.

"The crowd here is great," Jesus Alou said in his Caribbean accent. But the 36-year-old Alou had a question about the Aggies' between-inning yells. "Do they practice that or do they just come out here and do it?"

Pitcher Joe Sambito said that the Astros could use some of the Aggie fans in Houston.

"We ought to ship these guys to the Dome," the Brooklyn native said. "We couldn't get 10,000 people to make this much noise down there. We couldn't even get 20,000 people to make this much noise."

Then, in the seventh inning when Kyle Hawthorne made an over-the-

shoulder catch of a foul ball, bito looked surprised.

"These guys really want to see this game, don't they," Sambito said. "They're really playing a game, the score indicates that."

Cesar Cedeño, the Astros' bullpen man, agreed that the Astros played good baseball.

"This is a good ball club," Cedeño said in a Caribbean accent. "I'm particularly impressed with our first right-hander who pitched against us (Mark Ross)."

"This was really a tremendous experience. We're helping both club and their club and at the time it was really enjoyable."

But one facet of Aggie baseball impressed the Astros more than anything else.

"I hope we come back here and start doing this regularly. We can come back and look at the girls," Cedeño said.

The Astros have no Diamond Darlings.

No, I don't know what it is watching major league baseball brings out the kid in me, but I'd do it again tomorrow.

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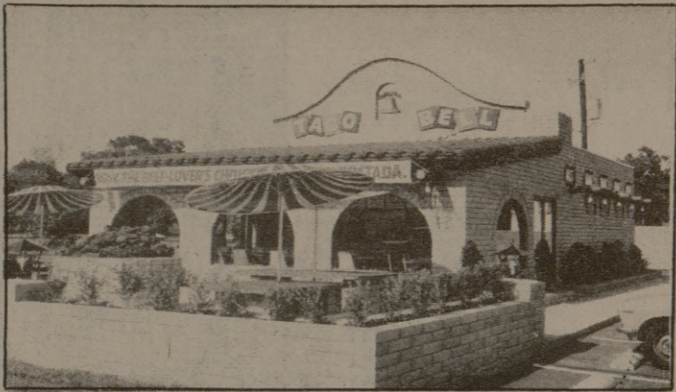
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Interested students should pick up application forms in Rm. 216 MSC (at the Secretaries' Desks) and sign up for an interview time.

Applications Open: Tues. Apr. 11 8 a.m.  
Applications Due: Mon. Apr. 17 5 p.m.  
Interviews will be conducted from 6:30 p.m. on Tues. April 18 in the MSC Council Conference Rm. — 138 MSC.  
MSC Travel Committee