

sports

Chandler's crew hops past Froggies

By DERRICK GRUBBS

The Texas Aggies moved a step closer towards clinching a spot in the SWC Post-Season Baseball Tournament by sweeping a three-game series from the TCU Horned Frogs this past weekend at Olsen Field.

The long ball and some clutch late-inning pitching allowed A&M to come away with a 4-3 win in Friday's game. It took another masterful pitching performance by junior lefty Mark Thurmond followed by an offensive outburst to account for a 3-1, 14-3 doubleheader sweep Saturday.

Friday the Aggies found the going somewhat difficult as TCU hurler Dale Arnold kept the home team in check throughout most of the afternoon. He allowed only six hits, but of those six, four were for extra bases and led to A&M runs.

In the third inning, shortstop Robert Bonner belted a solo home run, his fourth of the season. After Gary Bryant doubled to the alley in right-center, Kyle Hawthorne lowered a two-run homer over the scoreboard in leftfield to bring the score to 3-0. It was Hawthorne's thirteenth home run of the season, TCU put together three singles in

the fourth to push across their first run of the game and leave Aggie starter Mark Ross with just a two-run cushion.

Ross was given some insurance in the eighth when third baseman Robert Verde led off with a triple and came home moments later on Hawthorne's ground out.

The Horned Frogs weren't going to let Ross and the Aggies off easily, however, as they used a pair of singles and a walk to load the bases with two out.

TCU catcher Danny Rosellini then crossed up the A&M defense with a squeeze bunt single that worked to perfection. One run scored and the bases remained loaded.

At that point Aggie coach Tom Chandler brought in lefty Jim McWilliams to pitch to left-handed hitting Biff LeFevre.

McWilliams walked the TCU first baseman to force in another run and bring the score to 4-3.

With the bases still loaded, Chandler made another strategic move and brought in righthander John Pockrus to face right-handed hitting John Shelley.

The move was successful as Shelley popped up to catcher Buster Turner to end the game and preserve the win.

The win for Ross was his fifth straight and brings his season record to 5-3. Pockrus was awarded a save for his efforts, his fourth of the season.

In the opener of Saturday's twin-bill, Thurmond turned in one of his patented mound performances in recording his eighth win of the year without a loss. He allowed TCU only

two hits in the game and struck out seven in pacing the Ags to the 3-1 victory.

In what he judged his best game of the year, Thurmond came within two outs of registering his seventh career shutout but a lead-off double by LeFevre, a wild pitch and a ground out allowed the Frogs to score their only run of the contest in the seventh inning.

A&M took the early lead in the second when they pushed across three unearned runs. The big blow in the inning was a two-run double by second baseman Randy Woodruff that staked the Ags to a 3-0 lead at that point.

TCU starter Rueben Tomlin, although allowing A&M just three hits, was pegged with the loss and drops to 3-6 on the year.

The Aggie bats woke up in the nightcap as they pounded 19 hits enroute to a 14-3 win. A six-run outburst in the third ignited the onslaught as A&M sent eleven men to the plate and rapped out seven hits before the inning was over.

They added four unearned runs in the fourth, a single marker in the sixth and three more in the seventh to complete the massacre.

Hawthorne led the way for A&M as he went 4-for-5, including a pair of doubles and four RBIs. The four hits were just one short of the SWC record of five, held by a number of players, including Robert Bonner, who was 5-for-6 in the third game of last year's A&M-TCU series.

There was one home run in the game, that by centerfielder Mike Hurdle, whose three-run blast in the fourth was his fifth four-bagger of the season.

Hurdle and Bonner each had three hits in the game, which marked the second time this season A&M has collected as many as 19 hits in one game. They pounded Texas Lutheran for that many in a game during spring break.

Aggie starter David Pieczynski picked up the win to bring his record to 4-3. He got relief help from McWilliams and Perry Swanson. Pieczynski went seven innings, gave up seven hits and struck out six.

The losing pitcher for TCU was Cameron Young, who drops to 2-4.

The Aggies have swept their last three SWC series to run their current winning streak to nine games, their longest of the season. With three home runs in the TCU series, they brought their season total to 45, breaking the old record of 42 set last year.

A&M is now 25-10 on the season and 12-3 in SWC. TCU dropped to 10-21 on the year and 4-11 in league play.

The Ags remain a game and a half behind Arkansas in their games from Texas Tech this weekend and stand 15-3.

A&M will have a chance to move into a tie for the league lead this weekend when they travel to Dallas to take on SMU. Arkansas will be idle in conference play and an A&M sweep of SMU would tie the Aggies with the Hogs for first place.

The Friday game against the Ponies will be a night contest slated to begin at 7 p.m. with the Saturday twinbill set for 1 p.m.

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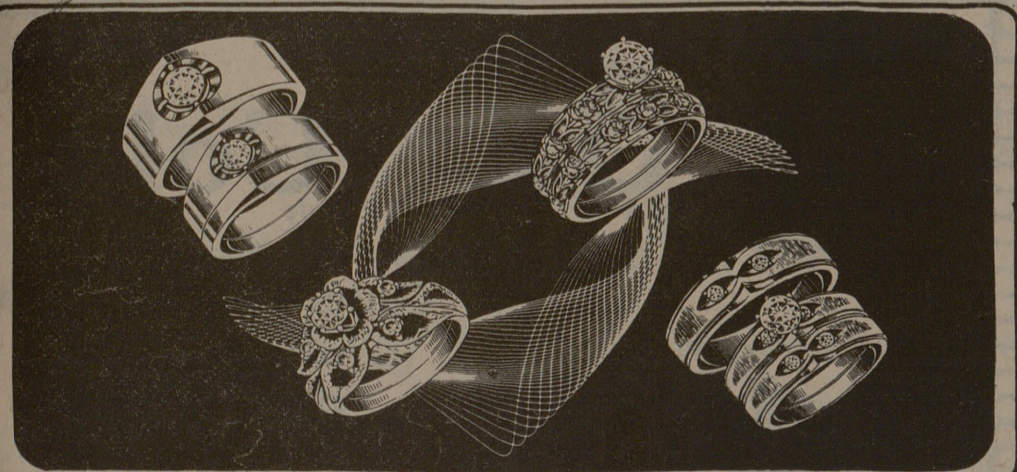
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