

sports

# Ags finish second in Ann Arbor

By DERRICK GRUBBS  
The Michigan Wolverines continued their dominance over Texas A&M on the athletic field as the Aggies dropped two games to the Big Ten champs to finish second at the NCAA Midwest Regional Tournament in Ann Arbor, Mich. last weekend.

Following a disappointing 8-1 loss to Michigan in their first-round game, A&M came back to defeat Missouri 5-1 and Eastern Michigan 6-1 before ending their 1978 season with a 3-0 loss to the Wolverines in the finals.

Michigan now advances to Omaha, Neb. for the College World Series. Their first opponent will be South Central Regional champion Baylor.

One of the key factors that prevented the Aggs from earning the CVS berth was a defensive breakdown as they committed nine errors through their four regional contests. Another element that aided in the A&M demise was the superb defense played by their opponents, in particular that of Michigan. The Aggies hit seven balls in that final game that could have fallen for base hits if it had not been for some alert play by the Wolverine defense.

In Friday's first — round contest between A&M and Michigan, the Aggies drew first blood with a run in the first inning. But the Wolverines jumped on Aggie starter Mark Ross for eight hits and six runs to hold a 6-1 lead after four innings.

David Pieczynski came on in relief and after giving up a pair of runs in the fifth, shut down UM through the remaining three frames. He retired the last ten batters in order.

But A&M could not make up the deficit and even though they hit the ball sharply, finished the game with just four hits.

Ross was the losing pitcher, snapping his consecutive win streak at seven.

The Aggies were then faced with the difficult task of working their way through the loser's bracket of the double-elimination tourney. They quickly responded to the challenge.

Behind the 5-hit pitching of Mark Thurmond, A&M took a 5-1 decision from Missouri, eliminating the Tigers from the tournament.

Missouri was the runner-up in the Big-5 tournament Friday but had lost their first-round game to Eastern Michigan and were sent packing by the Aggies Saturday.

Thurmond was denied his sixth shutout of the year as the Tigers scored a single unearned in the sixth. The win ran his season record to 13-1 and was the junior lefthander's first post-season victory after four straight losses during his Aggie career.

Play continued Sunday with A&M meeting Eastern Michigan to determine who would battle for the Midwest Regional crown. The Wolverines had edged out a 6-4 win over EMU Saturday to earn their spot in the finals.

Mark Ross, having thrown only 50 pitches in Friday's loss to UM, was fresh enough to start Sunday's contest against Eastern Michigan and looked like the Ross that helped pace A&M to the SWC championship. The junior breezed through eight scoreless EMU innings before the Hurons broke up the shutout with a run in the ninth to make the final tally 6-1.

Throwing almost effortlessly, Ross yielded just four hits in bringing his season record to 11-4. During one stretch, he retired 18 batters in a row.

The Aggies continued their torrid offensive pace by rapping out 10 hits and securing a 6-0 lead after just four innings. Four A&M players had two hits apiece, led by senior shortstop Robert Bonner, who ripped a pair of doubles and had three RBIs.

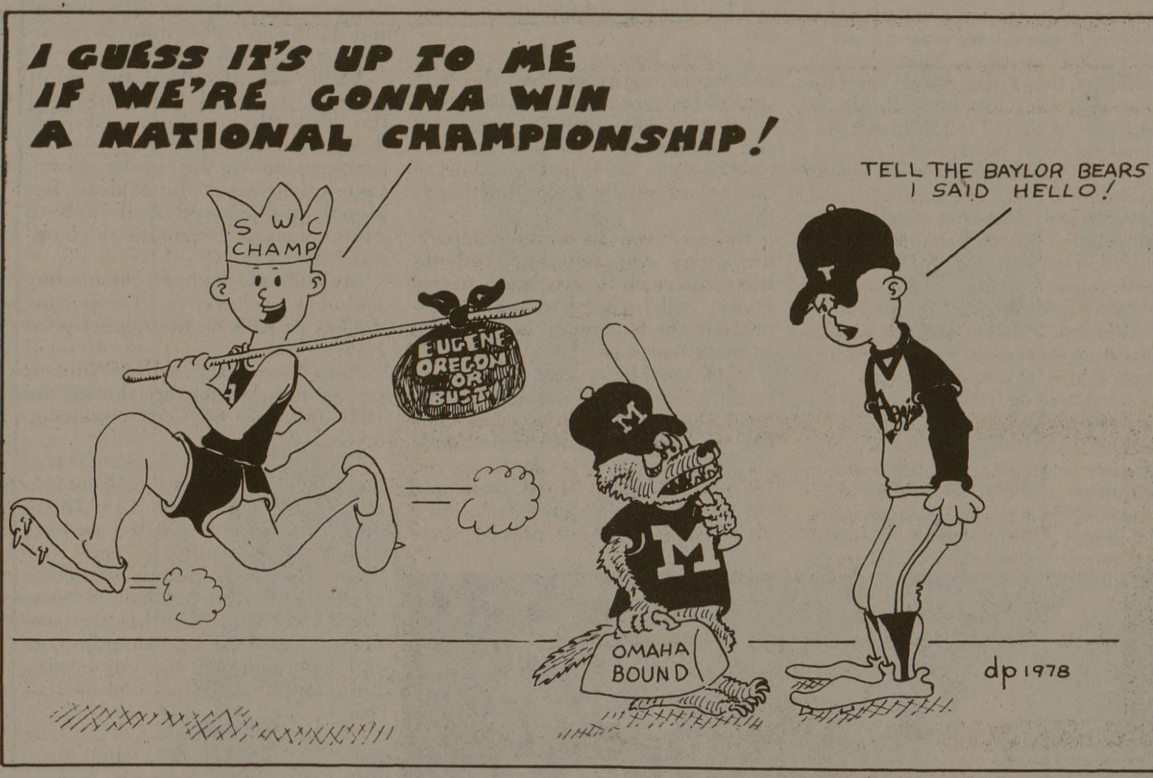
The magic wore off, however, in the final game that same afternoon as Michigan refused to give an inch to the Aggies and came out with a 3-0 win and the Midwest Regional championship.

It was only the second time this year that the Aggs have been shut out.

David Pieczynski started for A&M and pitched six and one-third solid innings, giving up only five hits. The Wolverines bunched three of those safeties in the fourth inning to push across two runs, and then took advantage of an A&M error to score their third marker in the seventh.

The Ags out-hit UM by collecting nine hits, and might have had more had it not been for the excellent defensive display staged by the Wolverines. Rightfielder Mike Parker, who was selected as MVP of the tournament, twice robbed A&M batters with sensational catches that earned him standing ovations from the 3,000-plus crowd.

The Aggies threatened in every



inning and got hits in each frame but the ninth.

"I'm really proud of our guys, they just kept coming back," said A&M coach Tom Chandler after the final game. "Michigan just made some unbelievable plays. I don't think I have ever, in all my years of coaching, seen so many of the type of plays that they made in the field. There's a cliché that baseball is a game of inches and that certainly was true in this tournament. Just an inch here and there and we might have had a double or a triple. We had several players hit some bullets that were caught. But it's been a great year and our players have proven that they are true competitors in every sense of the word."

The Aggies finish the season 39-16. Those 55 games were the most ever played by an A&M team in one season and they were just one victory short of tying the school record for wins in a season.

Besides finishing first and second in the regional, Michigan and A&M dominated the all-tournament team, both schools landing five players on the honor squad.

Thurmond, Bonner, Robert Verde, Tim Feickert and Mike Hurdle were selected to the all-tournament team.

By David Boggan

## Equine athletes

He's a great athlete — Steve Cauthen

With those words, Steve Cauthen, the 18-year-old sensation of the horse racing circuit, accented his mount, Affirmed, with the exciting Preakness victory at Pimlico a couple of Saturdays ago.

Opponents of the sport probably wince at the thought of a four-legged creature being called an athlete. These are the type of people who doubt that Nadia Comaneci's floor exercise or Al Unser's Indy victory should be termed athletic events.

Admittedly, it did seem strange at first to hear the young jockey refer to his horse as an athlete, because

one normally thinks of an athlete in terms of bench press, 40-yard dash and any number of statistics that go along with the various sporting events. But Webster defines an athlete as "one who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports or games requiring physical strength, agility or stamina."

Every 3-year-old colt on the track at the Preakness had trained throughout most of its young life. So a horse is just as much an athlete as is a halfback.

Perhaps there are even super-athletes in the horse racing community. What O.J. Simpson is to football and what Pete Rose is to baseball, horses like Affirmed and Alydar are to horse racing.

The Triple Crown is the Super Bowl or the World Series of horse racing, and look at the frequency of Triple Crown winners of late.

In 1973, when Secretariat crossed the finish line first at Belmont Park, the nation saw its first Triple Crown winner in 25 years. Ridden by Ron Turcotte, clad in the familiar blue-

and-white-checked silks, Secretariat accomplished what no horse had since Citation in 1948: victories in the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont.

Last year, Jean Cruguet rode Seattle Slew to victory in the three jewels of the Triple Crown. Slew became the first unbeaten winner of the Triple Crown in the history of horse racing.

Now, with a first place finish in the Belmont, Affirmed has the chance to become the third Triple Crown winner in six years. If Cauthen can ride the colt to a win, Seattle Slew and Affirmed would become the first back-to-back Triple Crown winners in history.

So, perhaps the era of the super-horse is upon us. It will be interesting to see what effect this will have upon horse racing. Will it increase interest in the already popular sport, or will the prestige dwindle from the prestigious Triple Crown? Imagine what would happen to the Super Bowl if the same team won the event year after year.

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