

viewpoint

By SEAN PETTY
Battalion Staff

Aggies' non-opener diplomatic, different

I guess you could call Thursday's opening day for the Texas Aggie football team a non-opening opener. It was supposed to be a game between the Stars and Stripes and the Rising Sun but turned out to be an interesting lesson in diplomacy and a little knowledge gained about our neighbors.

It was a very weird scenario. There were two teams present, Texas A&M and Hosei University of Tokyo, Japan, but no crowd of screaming fans.

There was the introduction of both teams and the opening ceremonies, complete with the first pitch thrown by C.E. "Pat" Olsen to start the 1979 season, but no umpires.

Both the national anthem of the United States and Japan, along with both teams' school songs, were played, but no Cokes and peanuts were sold and there was no baseball to be played.

THE RAIN AND WET FIELD had wiped out the game between A&M and Hosei, a team from halfway around the world, but there were interesting sidelights nonetheless. The gameless afternoon had some humorous aspects and a touch of irony to top it off.

I watched the Japanese team with as much interest as they watched various goings on around them. In many ways I felt like a kinder-keeper around them because I could not understand a word they said. So I continued to watch them in quiet ignorance.

As they were introduced, each player came out, bowed and kept a very serious look on his face. They carried themselves with dignity and pride and they were very quiet. There was none of the casual hand-slapping, smiling and joking that goes on between American players.

After all the announcements and exchange of gifts were made, the two teams got together and played catch. It was interesting to watch the Aggie players go over and ask the Hosei players to throw the ball around. Most of the A&M players would go over, hold the ball up, and not say anything, just standing there smiling, would coax the Japanese players onto the field.

THE TWO TEAMS THREW THE BALL around until the rained forced them into the dugout. Apparently, the players on both teams had a common interest because they were laughing and talking among themselves about something. I was still lost.

Meanwhile, A&M coach Tom Chandler was at one end of the dugout talking with some of the Hosei pitchers about curveballs, fastballs and other such pitcher-talk. And the amazing thing is they understood Chandler and even picked up a couple of tips from him.

I decided to get into the act and satisfy my burning curiosity about baseball in Japan. I don't know what I expected from the Japanese but they did throw the ball like American baseball players and did everything else the same. I just had to know how this Hosei team compared with American teams and what they thought of the U.S. So I acquired the services of Chris Martine who is from College Station and was at the game to welcome the Japanese team and translate for those of us who have not yet whipped the Japanese language.

I TALKED TO HOSEI COACH KATSUO KAMODA through Martine and found out how it is to play in the U.S. Hosei played Baylor Wednesday in Waco losing both games, 6-0, 8-1.

The adjustment from the jet lag is the hardest part of the trip," Kamoda said. "We wake up about three times a night because of the time difference. It's daytime in Japan and night here.

"I just wish we could have played Baylor when we were at full power. The level of team is slightly higher in the United States," he said in reference to the difference between U.S. and Japanese teams. "The facilities are much better in the United States also. Universities in Tokyo are very limited in space. We only have so much room to build and work with."

"Hosei is in the center of Tokyo in the old Imperial area," said Takahiro Miura who is traveling with the team and does speak English. "In fact, the school is very close to the Imperial Palace.

"We just can't believe how much open space there is here. Tokyo is so crowded and our campus is very cramped. We have 30,000 students and have mostly seven-story and other tall buildings on campus. But we do have a very large plot of land in suburban Tokyo where the University may be moved in a few years.

"BASEBALL IS THE MOST POPULAR SPORT in Japan because we don't have a lot of room to play such sports as football. Our baseball stadiums are so much smaller than the ones here in the U.S.

"It's hard to describe the difference and the adjustments the Japanese players have to make here. The atmosphere is different. In Japan the umpires call strikes and balls in English but they say it a different way. American umpires use one syllable and say 'strike' whereas Japanese umpires say 'sa-trike.' Everything is a little faster here and it catches the players off guard.

The team was able to come to the U.S. by an agreement with Baylor University. Baylor pays for the team's stay in the U.S. while Hosei pays for the transportation here. They also have an exchange student program with Baylor.

I wondered about some of the baseball terminology in Japan and found the American influence has stuck but with a slight twist. A curveball is a "kouball" and knuckleball is a "knockball" but a fastball is a "sokyu."

BUT THE FUNNIEST THING OF THE AFTERNOON was a prime example of world trade. While Aggie coach Chandler was looking at the Hosei equipment he picked up a catcher's mitt and said, "Hey, this glove is made in America." The Japanese players nodded yes. They were also wearing American made shoes and uniforms. Chandler said, "That's funny, our gloves and shoes are made in Japan."

Oh well, just a perfect example of how the balance of trade should be but isn't. Sayonara.

Super Bowl call was bad, Rozelle says

United Press International
DALLAS — National Football League Commissioner Pete Rozelle has conceded an official's call that may have cost the Cowboys the Super Bowl was wrong.

In a letter responding to an irate fan, published Thursday in the Dallas Times Herald, Rozelle agreed official Fred Swearingen should not have called pass interference on the Cowboy's Benny Barnes on a pass play to Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swann.

During the game, which the Cowboy's lost 35-31, Barnes and Swann went up for a 33-yard Terry Bradshaw pass, collided, tumbled to the turf and the ball dropped harmlessly to the ground. Swearingen tossed his flag in the air, however, calling the penalty on Barnes and giving the Steelers the ball on the 23.

Pittsburgh scored four-plays later to take a 28-17 lead.

"After viewing films of the play, we are of the opinion that there should have been no penalty called on the Swann-Barnes play in the Super Bowl," Rozelle wrote in a letter to Winifred Hale of Forney, Texas, who had written him to protest the call.

"Careful analysis of tape and films indicates that Barnes tripped himself while incidental contact was occurring and Swann fell over him as he cut toward where the ball was coming down."

Cowboy's general manager Tex Schramm said he was surprised by the admission, especially since nothing had been sent to the Cowboys of an official nature.

"They usually don't write anything like that," Schramm told the Times Herald. "Like during the season, our coaches will send in a report after each game, notes on different calls by officials. Wrong call. Good call. Shouldn't have been called."

The Times Herald quoted an official in Rozelle's office as saying the admission in a letter to a fan was unusual.

"We got a number of such letters from people, as always follows a controversial play," said Don Weiss, an assistant to Rozelle. "Pete decided the answer in detail. We usually don't have that much time for that thorough review of films and tapes from so many people and cameras. Now Pete has said several times publicly that, one, it was a very difficult call and, two, that he wished no call had been made."

Rozelle's letter said all other calls in the game were sound.

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Rockets down Washington

United Press International
LANDOVER, Md. — Moses Malone scored 35 points, grabbed 23 rebounds and led a furious fourth-quarter surge as the Houston Rockets ran past the Washington Bullets, 120-110 in an NBA game Thursday night.

Houston led 58-57 at halftime after trailing by as many as 11 in the first quarter.

Elvin Hayes scored 25 points and had 10 rebounds, while Kevin Grevey added 18 points for the Bullets, who played without Tom Henderson who was out with the flu.

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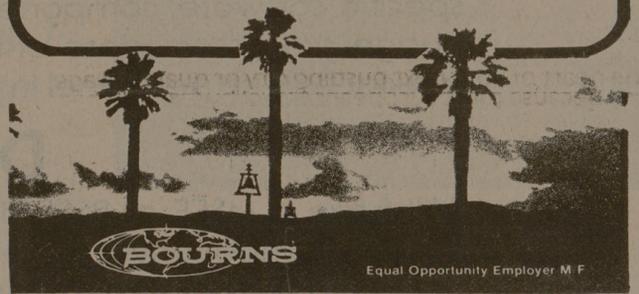
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