

the sports

Cougars next

Ags, Indians split twin-bill

By MARK PATTERSON
Battalion Sports Staff

At least the Aggies got four baseball games under their belts before conference play begins this weekend. After Texas A&M's first two home series were lost to rain, Northeast Louisiana University drew the lucky card as the Aggies' first opponents.

And before going home to Monroe the Indians managed one victory out of the four-game set. After dropping the first three, 11-2 and 3-0 Monday and 14-1 in the first game Tuesday, NLU won the finale 10-5.

Nightcap is an appropriate word to use in describing the final game Tuesday, the first loss of the season of the Aggies. The game was called on account of darkness in the bottom of the seventh inning, the Aggies trailing by five with the bases loaded and two outs.

"I don't blame the umpires for stopping it," Coach Tom Chandler said. "After all, the concern of the players comes first. It was getting too dark to see the ball."

It was as if it was too dark for the Aggie pitchers to see the plate as well. In the seven innings, four Texas A&M hurlers combined to walk 12 Indian batters. The Indians took advantage of the Aggie wildness to score runs in five of the seven innings played.

"Giving up 12 walks in a game will kill you," Chandler said. "When

batters are going up to the plate and not swinging the bat the other eight players on the field don't have a chance to contribute.

"But I wanted to experiment in that last game, give my young pitchers a chance to see what they could do and hope one of them would come to the front and be my third starter."

After Randy McDonald started for the Aggies, pitching three innings and giving up five runs, four hits and walking four, Chandler started the freshmen waltz to the mound.

Steve Thelen came on to pitch the fourth inning, walking three but getting out of the staza without giving up a run. Steve Davis pitched the fifth, giving up a single and a double for one run. Brad Wiggins finished up for the Aggies.

In the two innings Wiggins pitched, the Indians tagged the freshman for four runs on two hits. Wiggins walked the bases full in the sixth before catcher Phil Roark cleared the bases with a two out double. The Indians added a run in the top of the seventh on a single, base on balls and an error by shortstop Bryan Little.

"I was really disappointed in our pitching depth," Chandler admitted after the loss. "I really thought our youngsters would perform better. But we really haven't concentrated

on getting them in shape. We've really worked on getting our front-line pitchers ready for the season."

While the pitchers may be lagging behind, Aggie batters are grooved and ready for the University of Houston in the conference opener Friday. In the opening end of Tuesday's twin-bill, trailing 4-1 in the bottom of the third, Texas A&M erupted for six runs on four hits. Buster Turner ripped a three-run home run to supply the big blow for the Aggies, the second home run of the season for the Aggie catcher.

"I'm surprised that I'm hitting the ball so well this early," Turner said. "That's pretty unusual for me. I'm a free-swinging and it usually takes me two or three series to get my timing down."

"I'm laying back and waiting on the ball. My confidence is high, and for being so early that's good. I'm in a groove. I just hope to stay in it through conference."

The SWC competition comes quickly, with the Aggies traveling to Houston this weekend to face the Cougars in a three-game series, a single contest Friday and a double-header Saturday. Chandler announced that Mark Ross would pitch the opening game, with Mark Thurmond pitching the first game Saturday. The pitcher for the night-cap has not been decided yet.

With the bulk of the Aggies'

workouts being held on the parking lot and not on the infield, the team isn't in top shape as yet. But Chandler thinks the squad is ready to challenge the Cougars.

"Mentally, we're ready to play ball," the coach said. "Defensively, we played some pretty good. All we need is a good pitching staff to carry us."

Kyle Hawthorne feels that his fellow teammates are ready for the season to commence. Tuesday, Hawthorne clubbed a double, reached base twice on base-on-balls, and collected one RBI.

"It's not a question if we're ready," said Hawthorne, who broke Texas A&M's home run record last season with 14, "we have to be ready this weekend. I was skeptical going into this series. But we looked alright."

"We're as ready as the Cougars are, maybe even more. They beat us four out of five last season and we haven't forgotten that. You don't forget when somebody gives you a hard time."

"If we can play our kind of ball we'll come away with three (victories)."

Friday's game is scheduled to begin at 3 p.m., with the double-header Saturday scheduled for 1 p.m. The games will be played on the Cougars field, near Hofheinz Pavilion on the University of Houston campus. The Aggies return home March 20 to face the University of Arizona in a short two-game series.



Battalion photo by Lee Roy Lester

Texas A&M's Mike Hurdle is tagged at the plate by NLU catcher Frank Seclro.

Tennis first for Martina

United Press International
DALLAS — Tennis is still No. 1 in the life of Martina Navratilova. She wants to win at Wimbledon again and then win the United States Open for the first time, so she can be ranked No. 1 in the world without question.

But, Martina insists, that doesn't mean she can't spend her day off between tournaments doing whatever she pleases.

"Who in the world is to say I can't do anything I want to on my day off?" she demanded, in her precise English.

The question came up because of her schedule earlier this month. Martina had played in a tour event on the West Coast and she remained in California the following Monday to tape a segment of the television show, "Hollywood Squares." She stayed in California that night and flew to Michigan

Tuesday morning, the day of her first match in the Detroit tournament.

She demolished her first opponent in Detroit. "It (the travel) didn't bother me," she said. "I played 1 and 1 (6-1, 6-1) and missed only two or three shots the whole match."

But in the news conference following the match, Martina was repeatedly questioned about her decision to travel on the day of a match. "After the question was phrased three or four times," she said, she somewhat sarcastically told reporters that she had stayed in California because Hollywood Squares meant more to her than tennis in Detroit.

"They made such a big deal out of it," Navratilova said of the reporters. "I felt it was just all out of proportion."

Martina, 22, does not plan to play in as many tournaments this year as she has in previous years. She already is thinking ahead to some unspecified time several years in the future when she will ease out of professional tennis and into some other career. She thinks she would like to be a television sports announcer.

The appearance on Hollywood Squares was important to her because she seeks more "visibility" in areas away from the courts and because it gives her more exposure to broadcasting. Furthermore, Navratilova and representatives of the club which sponsors the women's tennis "enhance the image of women's tennis."

Martina owns a home in Dallas but in the past year lived in three months. She was 16 when she first won the Czechoslovakian women's championship and since then she has traveled almost constantly from tournament to tournament. She defected to the United States in 1975.

When asked if she is tired of constant travel between tournaments, she candidly answered, "Yes. A little bit, I guess."

Then she quickly added, "It's my favorite thing to do. I still plan to do it for six or seven more years." She will play in "about the same number of tournaments that I did last year," she said. "I don't feel my heavy schedule is a year 'didn't get me anything'."

Ladies get at-large bid

The Texas A&M women's basketball team received an at-large bid to the AIAW regional tournament in Tulsa, Okla. The tournament will be held on the campus of Oral Roberts University March 7-10.

The Aggie Ladies will face sixth ranked Louisiana Tech in the first round of the single-elimination tournament.

Texas A&M and Texas Tech are the only two teams from Texas that received at-large bids. The Aggies will play Wayland Baptist College in Plainview on Friday.

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Correction

In the Tuesday, Feb. 26 Battalion, an article about the Texas A&M-Northeast Louisiana baseball game incorrectly reported that NLU's nickname is the Tigers. The Northeast Louisiana baseball team is nicknamed the Indians.

The Battalion regrets this error.

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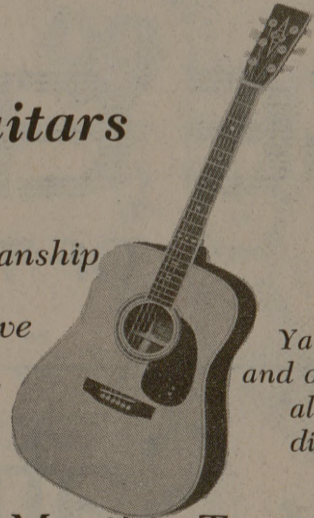
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