

Aggies travel to fun and sun of Florida

By DAVID BOGGAN
Battalion Sports Editor

Spring break is generally a time when the Iranian situation and the energy crisis take a back seat to fun and travel.

Students tend to pack their bags and head for one of three places.

As the dust begins to settle on the text books, one group of students pack their sweaters and travel to the slopes of New Mexico or Colorado. And then there are those pale students who pack their ice chests and go to Galveston or Port Aransas or South Padre. Still another group of weary students pack their laundry and head for that renowned vacation resort — home.

But there is one group of Aggies that will not be going the mountains or to the Gulf coast or home this spring break.

The Texas A&M baseball team is traveling to the sun and the fun of Florida over spring break where the Aggies will participate in the Hurricane Invitational Tournament. Ain't life rough?

"Yeah, it's a killer," Aggie outfielder Simon Glenn said with a grin. "We were looking so forward to going home."

The Navasota native had reason to smile. The banks of the Navasota River have nothing to compare with the sparkling beaches of Miami, which are just a fastball away from Coral Gables, the site of the tournament.

"There is definitely going to be some rays getting soaked," outfielder Mike Hurdle said of his spare time plans in the land of Copper-tone and cuba libras.

"We're also going to get to see some of the pro teams that are holding their pre-season camps in Florida," Hurdle added, grinning like a 12-year-old. "I'll get to get some autographs and see my idol, Reggie Jackson."

First baseman Kyle Hawthorne promised that the Aggies would not let beachcombing interfere with baseball.

"We're not going to overindulge," he said, "but we're going to have a

good time. We won't show up late to a game because we've been on the beach too long.

"Knowing that I've got to come back and do homework that I should have done before I left makes it kinda rough."

Schoolwork was the farthest thing from the Aggies' minds Thursday. As they prepared to load the bus and drive to Houston to catch their plane, the most pressing problems of the afternoon seemed to be securing suntan lotion and making sure someone packed a week's supply of Copenhagen.

But it will not be all sand and snuff for the Aggies on this outing. Coach Tom Chandler has some definite plans for his team, which returns to Olsen Field to host Arizona and Minnesota beginning March 20.

"Our objective is this," the Aggie coach said. "We will use this tournament as a continued conditioning program since we were set back by 10 days of bad weather earlier."

"At the same time we will be trying to develop a little depth in our pitching staff. We need to find somebody to fill those third and fourth spots. (Freshman) Bobby Taylor will get a good shot. He has been plagued by a little arm trouble recently. (Senior) John Pockrus is nice to have in the bull pen, but I don't know if we can afford to keep him in there."

What kind of tournament does Chandler expect?

"The Hurricane Tournament is a tournament of champions," Chandler said. "You've got Texas A&M, which is the Southwest Conference champion. There's Oklahoma State, which is the champion of the Big Eight. Miami University was fourth in the College World Series last year. Miami of Ohio is good. There's just a lot of good teams in this tournament."

Mark Ross will start on the mound Saturday when Texas A&M plays Miami of Ohio. The rest of the Aggies' schedule looks like this: Florida International, Sunday; Southern Illinois Monday, Oklahoma State, Tuesday; Miami of Florida, Wednesday; Wisconsin State and Southern Illinois, Thursday; Oklahoma State, March 17; Bowling Green and Miami of Florida, March 18.

The Aggies, who smoked the Houston Cougars like a Havana Cigar last weekend, hope that the changes in latitude will not mean changes in their winning attitude.

"We are a better team right now than we were this time last year," outfielder Shelton McMath said of the 6-1 Aggies. "We've got more depth this year. There are going to be some real good people sitting on the bench this year, people who could be starting for other teams. This is good because it makes us more competitive. We know if we don't do our job today, we'll be on the bench tomorrow."

No one can accuse the senior right fielder from Houston of not doing his job. After seven games, McMath leads the team with a .458 batting average.

"I just hope it keeps up," he said. "I'm a streak hitter. I go hot and cold. I just hope that if I do go cold, I do it now and get hot again in time for conference."

"Right now, everybody's pretty hot."

Well, almost everybody. At the opposite end of the batting average column from McMath sit Hurdle and Hawthorne.

"Everybody's kinda leaving us behind," Hurdle said of himself and Hawthorne, who are the only starters batting below .300. "I started off slow last year."

Hurdle, who is hitting .269, explained that his move in the lineup has something to do with his slow start. Last season he batted in the third spot and was often in the position to knock in base runners. This season he is batting in the second spot, where he takes more pitches in an attempt to get on base.

"There are going to be some good pitchers at this tournament," the junior center fielder said. "Anytime you see a good pitcher, it makes you concentrate more. The conference has a lot of good pitchers this year, so the more good pitchers we see in this tournament, the better off we'll be for conference."

Hawthorne, the Aggie homerun king who is presently hitting .227, said that his game will improve.

"I've been hitting the ball," the senior from Beaumont said. "They just need to move the fielders around. If they would change positions, I'd be hitting a thousand."

"If I come back (from Florida) and I'm still hitting the same, I'll get upset because that's nothing but repetition day after day. I should improve in that situation. But it's too early to lose my cool about it yet."

It is not too early for the Aggies to brush up their skills, find a third pitcher and show the rest of the country that Texas A&M knows how to play baseball.

"This is going to be great for us," Hurdle said. "We will get some good exposure and show people that we can play well down here. We're going to prove something."



Texas A&M's Mark Ross warms up with catcher Buster Turner during last weekend's series with Houston. Riding high after sweeping the Cougars, the Aggies travel to Coral Gables, Fla., to participate in the Hurricane

Invitational Tournament during spring break. Ross will start for the Aggies Saturday. Texas A&M opens the tournament against Miami of Ohio. The game starts at 9 a.m. and will be broadcast on Bryan's KACG.

Rangers defeat Yankees

United Press International
POMPONO BEACH, Fla. — Top rookie prospect Billy Sample, who had doubled earlier in the game, delivered a two-out, two-run single in the 11th Thursday to bring Texas a 3-2 victory over the New York Yankees in their opening exhibition game.

During the game New York center fielder Juan Beniquez broke a

bone in the small finger of his right hand and will be lost to the Yankees for at least two weeks.

New York had gone in front in the top of the 11th, 2-1, but Tim Lollar, the fourth Yankee pitcher of the day, walked Mike Bucci to lead off the bottom half of the inning.

Bucci moved to second on a ground out, but Lollar walked Marty Scott and Mike Heath to load

the bases. Then, after Oleson struck out, Sample lined a

left. Both teams played young pitchers the most part and among the starters, Texas reliever Jim Kern was the sharpest. Kern, acquired in the offseason from Cleveland, struck up two hits over three innings, striking out three.

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