

## the sports

There's no tomorrow

## Ags battle Raiders

By MARK PATTERSON  
Battalion Sports Staff

It was a year ago Sunday that Mark Thurmond took the mound for the Aggies and pitched a no-hitter against the Texas Tech Red Raiders. Thurmond will try to repeat his historic feat when the senior left-hander takes the rubber against the Raiders in Lubbock Saturday.

With nine conference contests left on their schedule, the Aggies are going to a game of catch-up. Texas Tech, 10-4 in conference, trails the Aggies, 14-1, by 3 1/2 games going into SWC action this weekend.

The Longhorns will host the SMU Mustangs and the Aggies make the trip west to face Tech. The Aggies, 7-11 in conference play, had three games to the University of Houston last weekend.

With second-place Arkansas and Texas left on its schedule, Texas Tech cannot afford another loss in the remaining nine conference games. The Aggies hope to have a chance at the conference crown.

"We can't lose another game if we hope to win conference," Coach Tom Chandler said. "We have to play every game like we're playing for the pennant. We've got to win; there's no tomorrow."

With the pitching depth that Texas has, we can't depend on one pitcher to beat them. We have to win it ourselves."

The Marks brothers, seniors Ross and Thurmond, will start the first two games of the Tech series for the Aggies. Ross, 6-3 on the year and 3-2 in conference play, carries a 2.66 ERA into Friday's game. Ross will be bing unopposed by Tech's Jamie Miller.

Ross has been pitching as well as he did last year (compiling a 10-3 record and a 2.46 ERA), Chandler said. "The competition he's gone up against this year has been a lot from what he's pitched against last year."

He lost a tough game to the University of Miami earlier in the year which was a 2-0 heartbreaker to Rice's Alan Ramirez. His pitching hasn't been all that bad."

## Astros have early success

United Press International  
HOUSTON — The Houston Astros to have early-season success may be enough to make Bob Watson wish he had kept his critical remarks to him from last year.

Pitching — four shutouts, seven complete games and a 1.89 staff ERA — is the primary reason for a 1580 on the face of the veteran first baseman who asked early in 1978 to be traded to a contending ball-

club. "I'm in our clubhouse since 1972 and I've been at the top for awhile," Watson said. "And our confidence is high now as it has ever been."

The Astros, 9-4, returned home Thursday to begin a weekend series against Pittsburgh with a two-game lead in the National League Western Division. J.R. Richard (3-0) and Ken Forsch (3-0) are scheduled to pitch the first two games against the Pirates today and Saturday.

Shutouts over Los Angeles by Forsch and Vern Riffe this week helped Houston to its first winning trip since September, 1977. They came home with a 4-3 record.

A lot of people probably thought they'd fall apart after we lost our first two games of this trip in San Francisco, but this team doesn't quit," said manager Enos Cabell said.

In eight of their 13 games, Houston has taken an early lead. "That's a big key," Cabell said. "Our speed puts so much pressure on the other guys early. Then our pitchers shut them down."

Houston's record ties its best start ever recorded. It was not until June, 1972, that the Astros faded. They were not challenged for a pennant in 1972.

Many losing seasons caused Watson, a 10-year veteran, to ask Astros manager Tal Smith early last season to be traded. He was highly critical of the team's attitude and he said he wanted to play for a winner before he retired.

No deal materialized despite Watson's hard work to satisfy the disgruntled slugger.

Before this season Watson said he would give 100 percent to the Astros. "However, he is hitting .227 and there is sentiment among some media members for Manager Bill Virdon to replace Watson with outfielder Jose Cruz in order to get the hitting outfielder Jeff Leonard into the lineup regularly."

Leonard, a rookie, is not the only hitting Astro. Leadoff batter Jerry Puhl (.333) is 13-for-30 on a current seven-game hitting streak. Cesar Cedeno is batting .375 and Jose Cruz (.282) shared the league lead with 14 RBI.

Watson said the attitude of the Astros has pleased him. "I sense a big positive change on our club," he said. "And it's important that we maintain it, win or lose. Let's hope everyone thinks positively about our club for a change."

Thurmond will pitch the opening game of Saturday's twin bill. Thurmond, 8-1 on the year, pitched the first no-hitter for the Aggies since Bobby Wittkamp performed the feat in 1974.

"Realistically, when I go out to pitch Saturday, I don't think I'll throw another one," Thurmond said. "No-hitters are few and far between. You never expect to throw a no-hitter, much less two of them. There's a lot of luck involved."

It was two years ago, against Tech in Lubbock, that Thurmond began to make a name for himself in the Texas



Mark Thurmond

A&M record books. In the first game of the series, after Mark Ross developed a blister on his finger, Thurmond came on in relief, pitched seven innings and gave up one earned run. Following the Tech series Thurmond was inserted into the starting rotation and has been a member ever since.

Since that win in Lubbock two years ago, Thurmond has compiled a 20-1 conference record, his only loss coming this season to the Baylor Bears. It's a loss he says he hasn't forgotten.

"I couldn't wait to pitch after I lost to Baylor," Thurmond said. "I don't like that losing taste in my mouth. I needed to win again."

"I pitch better in hot weather and it's about my time of year. I'm starting to throw the ball better. The last two years I've finished strong. I pitch my best ball at the end of the season."

Coach Chandler hasn't decided on his starting pitcher for the third game of the series this weekend. What happens in the first two games will dictate who will start in the series finale.

"I won't know who the third starter will be until I see how Ross and Thurmond pitch," Chandler said. "If they can pitch complete games, then Johnny Pockrus will probably start the third game."

After having their problems at the plate earlier in the season, lately the Aggies have been picking up the clutch hit when they need it. Shelton McMath enters the Tech series as the leading hitter on the Texas A&M club, carrying a .341 average with 21 RBIs and five home runs on the year. Randy Woodruff is close behind with a .330 average.

The team's shown some signs of snapping out of their slump," Chandler said. "Shelly's having a great year for us. He's really hitting the ball well."

"And I'm really impressed with his play in the field. He's made some great catches for us and he's got that great right-fielder's arm. I'm very happy with what he's done."

The Red Raiders counter with adequate hitters as well. Outfielder Larry Selby ranks second in the SWC in batting with a .415 average. "Down through the years the Raiders have always had a tough ball club," Chandler said. "Before the season they were picked to finish in the first division. But their pitching hasn't measured up like it should have. They just haven't been getting consistently good pitching."

Junior Mark Johnston will oppose Thurmond in Saturday's first game. Johnston leads the Tech staff in victories this season. Posting a 4-4 season record, he is 4-2 in conference play with a 3.09 ERA. Robert Bryant, 3-2 and 1-2, will pitch the series' final game for Tech.

"This is a must series for us," Thurmond said. "We need a sweep to keep the pressure on Texas. They have to lose or we don't have a chance."

"We just have to keep battling for everything we can get."

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