

the sports

Raiders bump Ags

By MARK PATTERSON
Battalion Sports Staff

LUBBOCK — The Texas Tech Texas A&M baseball series last weekend was like a good party; it was great while it lasted, but no fun cleaning up afterwards. The three games had a little bit of something for everyone.

Fighting a 30 m.p.h. wind in the first game, Mark Ross five-hit the Raiders on the way to 9-0 win. It was his first shutout of the year and the fifth of his collegiate career.

The Aggies jumped on Tech starter Steve Ibarguen in the first inning, scoring three runs on three hits. Bryan Little led off the game with a single, followed by a walk to Randy Woodruff.

After an infield out by Rodney Hodde, Kyle Hawthorne slammed a double, collecting his 24th and 25th RBIs of the season. Shelton McMath knocked a single to drive in Hawthorne.

The Aggies added two runs in the third, solo scores in the seventh and eighth and two more tallies in the ninth, giving Ross, now 7-3 on the year and 4-2 in conference, all the pitching he needed.

"The wind didn't aid me at all," Ross said. "I tried to jam them in, but they would jerk it into left field. I knew it wouldn't go anywhere out there."

"I found the strike zone and was getting ahead of the hitters so I was making them hit my pitches."

The party, and the wind, continued Saturday afternoon in Lubbock. But it was the hosts' turn to dance when the band began to play again.

The Aggies jumped out to an early 2-0 lead with Mark Johnston nailing the mound for the Raiders. Little was beat by a double in the first followed by Woodruff's single.

Hodde came to the plate and lined a shot at second baseman Johnny Vestal. The Tech fielder bobbled the ball, couldn't make avert a play and Little scored for the Aggie lead.

The score remained 1-0 until the third inning when Little led off with a single and then scored on Hawthorne's single, giving A&M starter Mark Thurmond a two-run cushion.

After giving up a single to Vestal, Buonasera got the third Tech out to end the rally. It was the last time the Raiders would threaten in the game.

The Aggie bats were silent until the ninth when trailing 6-1, they

started their comeback. After Gary Bryant grounded out to open the last frame, Harry Francis ripped a single. Simon Glenn drew a walk from Tech's Bryant and Little followed with a single.

At that point, Tech coach Kal Segrist elected to pull his starter and go with junkball pitcher Steve Dennis. Woodruff greeted Dennis with a single to drive home Francis and Hodde followed with a shot to shortstop Brooks Wallace.

Wallace, who had but nine errors all season, bobbled the ball, allowing Glenn to score. Hawthorne followed with an infield grounder that Tech second baseman Rusty Laughlin kicked, allowing Little to score.

McMath came to bat and, against a strong wind blowing in from left field, sent the Tech left fielder to the fence with a shot. The sacrifice fly scored Woodruff from third and set the scene for Mike Hurdle.

Hurdle came to the plate with the score 6-5 and men on second and first. But Hurdle would be no hero this day as he popped up to first baseman Noonan to end the game and give Tech the victory.

With the two losses Saturday, A&M fell to 11-6 in the Southwest Conference play and five-and-a-half games behind league-leading Texas.

"Our title chances are more or less dead," said A&M coach Tom Chandler. "We have to end up as high as we can, we have to shoot for the playoffs. But we're not assured of a spot yet."

"We need to peak out going into the tournament. We lost the edge the last two years but I hope we can peak our last six games and into the tournament."

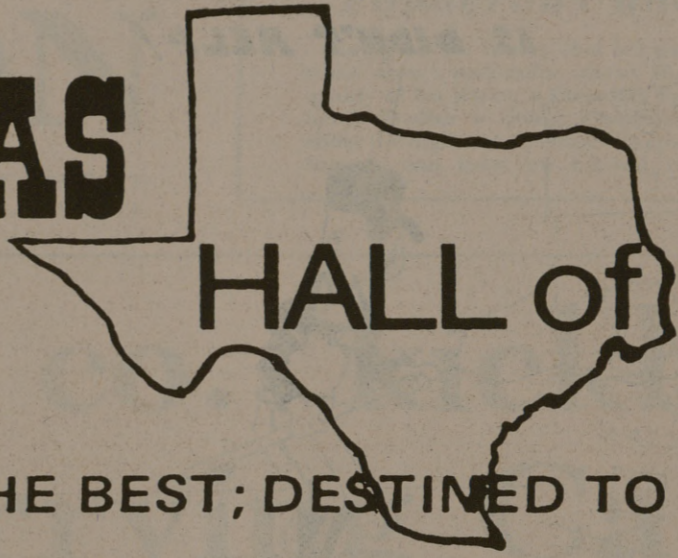
McMath, the leading hitter on the A&M club going into the Tech series, agrees that the Aggies' championship hopes are bleak.

"Our chances are pretty much gone," McMath said of the championship. "We blew it. We just need to get some momentum now and we've got to win the tournament."

The Aggies are not in the same position they were last year going to the SWC tournament. Last year, the Aggies had a guaranteed trip to the NCAA tournament.

"The pressure wasn't on us at the tournament last year," McMath said. "We knew we were going to go on. But not this year. If we don't win the tournament we go home early."

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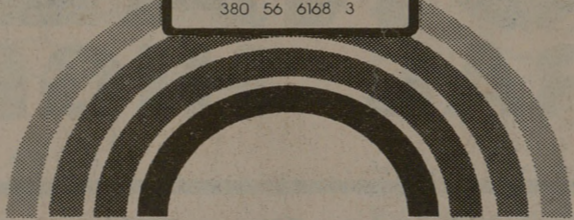
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