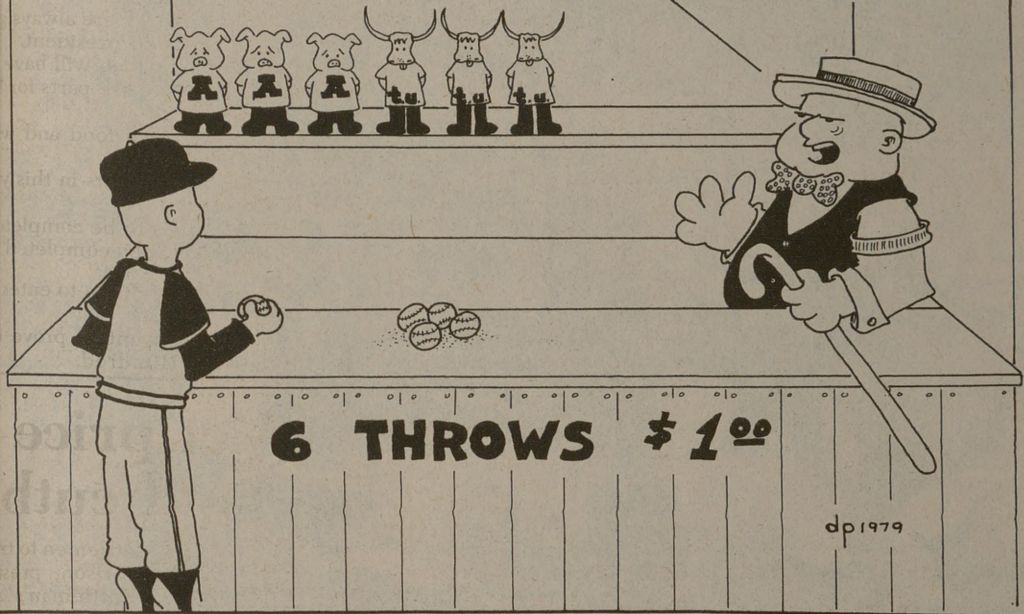


the sports

JUST KNOCK 'EM OVER ONE AT A TIME AND WIN A PRIZE! ... START WITH THE PIGS!



Aggies host Hogs

By MARK PATTERSON
Battalion Sports Staff

The 1979 baseball season has wound down to six regular-season games for Texas A&M. And, as is usually the case this time of the year, all are crucial for the home dependent.

Going into today's game against the Arkansas Razorbacks, the Aggies are five-and-a-half games behind league-leading Texas and four games behind the visiting Hogs. The top four teams in the Southwest Conference receive bids to the post-season tournament and the Aggies are only a game in front of the fourth-place Baylor Bears. The fourth-place finisher draws the conference champion in the opening round of the tournament.

The Bears wind up regular-season play against TCU this weekend while the Aggies look forward to hosting a three-game series against the Longhorns next weekend.

Going into the Tech series last weekend, we felt like we could still win the championship," assistant coach Jim Sampson said. "But the way things went (losing two-out-of-three), we washed that out."

From a coaching stand point, we're shooting to finish second or third. That way we wouldn't have to play the host team, assuming it's Texas, in the opening round of the tournament."

Since joining the SWC's round-robin schedule in 1974, Arkansas has never won a game in its six trips to College Station. In last year's series at Arkansas' George Cole Field, the Aggies took two-out-of-three to clinch the SWC championship. This year, the Hogs are again challenging for the crown.

Every series has been important but it looks like this one will be the most crucial of the year for us," Arkansas coach Norm DeBriyn said. "We had hoped to be in a position to make a run at the league title when we got to the A&M series and we at least still have a chance. Of course, the series could mean a lot in determining an NCAA bid."

With an overall record of 27-14, we only hope the Aggies have in receiving an NCAA bid is to win the SWC tournament in Austin May 13. The thrust of the Aggies' hope rests in the arms of Mark Ross and Mark Thurmond. On the year,

Thurmond is 9-2 and Ross is 8-3. In today's game, scheduled for 3 p.m., Ross will be opposed by right-hander Rich Erwin. Erwin set an Arkansas school record this season, compiling 11 wins against one loss. He leads the team in pitching and is second in the conference with a 1.29 ERA.

After the second loss of his college career last weekend, Thurmond will try and rebound against Steve Krueger in the first half of Saturday's double-header. Scott Tabor will pitch the third game for the Razorbacks.

"Discipline at the plate will be very important to us if we are to beat Ross and Thurmond," DeBriyn said. "We can't afford to swing at bad pitches."

"As always, Texas A&M has excellent fast balling. Ross has a good fast ball and an excellent slider. He keeps his pitches down and is tough to hit."

If any team in the conference can hit against the Aggie pitching staff it is the Razorbacks. Coming into this weekend's series Arkansas has a team batting average of .304, second in the conference behind the Aggies' .317. Seven Razorbacks are hitting over .300 on the year.

The Razorbacks have set six school records in the hitting department this season, including most runs (270), most doubles (76), most triples (31) and most home runs (30).

"They're having an outstanding year at the plate," Sampson said of the Razorbacks. "We didn't know that much about them at the beginning of the year because of all the new kids they brought in. Their junior college transfers and the freshmen they signed are doing the job. Things are just falling into place for them."

"But the past two years Arkansas has gone through the same thing we have. They start the year off well but have tailed off in the tournament. We'll see if the same holds true this year."

Mathematically, the Aggies have a shot at finishing anywhere from first to fifth in the conference chase.

To win it, the Aggies would have to sweep their last two series and have Tech sweep Texas this weekend. To finish as runner-up, the Ags would have to sweep Arkan-

sas and take two-out-of-three from Texas. And to avoid finishing fourth behind Baylor, the Aggies would have to win four of their next six games if the Bears sweep TCU this weekend.

But there is also the chance that the Aggies might be staying home the weekend of the SWC tournament. If the Raiders sweep the Longhorns and the Aggies drop their last six games, it's bleacher time for the Aggies.

"If Tech somehow sweeps Texas and we take these last two series, we can win the thing," Sampson said. "So if you're going to talk about fifth, you have to talk about first as well."

"The key for us is how the team reacts this weekend. The pressure that comes with repeating as champions is off. Now we're playing for pride and a spot in the tournament."

"Tomorrow will answer a lot of ifs and buts on who'll finish first and who will finish fifth. We'll just have to wait and see the whos and wheres when it's over."

Spurs lose

United Press International

SAN ANTONIO — Julius Erving broke open the game with 16 points in the third quarter Thursday night to carry Philadelphia to a 120-97 thrashing of cold-shooting San Antonio and keep the 76ers alive in their NBA Eastern Conference semifinal series.

San Antonio had hoped to clinch its first NBA playoff series victory, but the 76ers' win left the Spurs with a 3-2 advantage and sent the best-of-seven game battle back to Philadelphia for Game 6 on Sunday.

The Spurs, who hit 50 percent of their shots in the first four games, hit only 21 percent in the first quarter Thursday and could not make a basket during the first 3:41 of the contest.

Philadelphia scored the first 12 points and San Antonio could seldom come closer than that as George Gervin, the NBA's leading scorer for the past two seasons, missed all seven shots he took in the first half and finished with only 13 points.

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