

Sports

Astros sign ex-Dodger Sutton

United Press International
HOUSTON — Free-agent Don Sutton, the winningest pitcher in Los Angeles Dodgers history, Wednesday signed a four-year contract with the Houston Astros at a salary his agent said made him one of the 10 best paid players in baseball.

Sutton disclosed Houston originally had been his third choice among teams that drafted him but said the Astros offered the best contract.

The Astros, unable to depend on all-star J.R. Richard's full recovery from a mid-season stroke, guaranteed the first three years of Sutton's salary. At 35, Sutton became the sixth starter 30 or older on Houston's all right-handed NL West division championship staff.

Sutton told an Astrodome news conference Richard's status was not mentioned during the negotiations. "If he (Richard) does come back,

are we gonna be awesome? I defy any club to match us nine deep on this pitching staff," Sutton said.

The signing was announced by Astros President Al Rosen and John McMullen, the New York shipbuilder who last week saw his role as managing partner diluted by limited partners who share ownership of the team and who were unhappy with his management of the franchise.

But Sutton praised McMullen while subtly criticizing Tommy Lasorda, his manager at Los Angeles.

"Were I not dealing with the two men that I dealt with here, I think I would have gone somewhere else," he said.

"Bill Virdon is a stable man like the Walter Alston I used to know," he said in reference to the Astros' current manager and the Dodgers' long-time former skipper.

While no one disclosed salary, Sutton said, "I know it's a heck of a lot more than I would have gotten on the West Coast."

Sutton said of the 10 teams that

drafted him, Milwaukee was his first choice and Houston his third behind the New York Yankees.

"My two agents thought at first that I would be playing for the California Angels, but for some reason right from the start I thought I would sign with the Astros," he said, citing Rosen and Houston's lifestyle versus that in New York as primary considerations.

Sutton will be 36 next season, a factor which did not stop 10 teams from selecting him in the Nov. 13 free agent draft. He was 13-5 in 1980 with a 2.21 ERA. He has beaten the Astros 21 times in his career but only once in the last three seasons.

The uncertainty of Richard's return made Sutton more desirable to Houston where he joins starters Joe Niekro, Nolan Ryan, Ken Forsch, Vern Ruhle and possibly Richard.



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Aggie swimmers head to Lubbock for meet

By RICHARD OLIVER
Sports Editor
After taking perennial power SMU down to the wire in a meet earlier this semester, the Texas A&M men's swimming team has every right to be confident now. And they are.

The Aggies will travel to Lubbock this weekend to participate in the SWC Invitational against those same Mustangs and favorite Texas.

On Nov. 15 at A&M, the Aggies shocked the Mustangs by pulling to within six points, 56-50, before the final event of a dual meet between the two.

SMU won the 400-yard freestyle relay by .11 of a second and the meet, 63-50. The Aggies, however, were happy with their performance. Traditionally expected to be no better than a fifth or sixth place team the last few years, Texas A&M is now full of experience and raring to go.

"We'd like to take a high position at the meet," said Head Coach Mel Nash Wednesday. "We see it as our coming out party. When we did well against SMU it let people know that we're alive and kicking."

"Texas is definitely the favorite in the meet. Arkansas, Houston and SMU are expected to battle it out for second, third and fourth."

"I just got off the phone with the Texas coach last night, and he said the folks there were really happy,

they couldn't believe we were that close to SMU."

One reason for the Aggies' early success — they also knocked off Tulane Nov. 8 in New Orleans, 68-45, and TCU in College Station, 67-45 — is the upsurge of the relay teams. Nash said it all comes down to togetherness.

"What we have on our team is rare on most," he said, "it's a tremendous team unity and a sense of caring. It shows through on our relay teams most of all."

"The relays are a team event, whereas swimming is a very individual-oriented sport. Like in basketball, one guy can score 45 points and carry a team. In swimming, a guy can win a race by 25 seconds and still only score five points for winning

the race. Everyone on the team has to have a '45-point' performance, like we did against SMU."

Another reason for the Aggies' performance is Pat Roche, who has probably been the most consistent team member. Roche usually competes in the 400-yard medley relay and the 200-yard individual competitions.

Today, however, Roche is hobbled by what Nash calls a "mysterious leg ailment."

"The guy can barely walk," said the head coach. "He's been our best up until this point. He's definitely the top performer."

The meet in Lubbock will begin Friday and run through Saturday evening.

Houston may lose franchise

United Press International
CHICAGO — The American Soccer League may lose its franchise to a new league because of geographic divisions, league officials said today.

The league arranged for a vote on the matter before both the Chicago and Houston franchises.

Chicago's vote was 10-0 in favor of the new league. Houston's vote was 10-0 in favor of the American Soccer League.

The new league is expected to start in 1981. It will have 10 teams, including the Chicago and Houston teams.

The American Soccer League has 10 teams in 1980. It is the only professional soccer league in the United States.

King advances to third round
Max King of the Texas A&M University men's tennis team has advanced to the third round of the Yonex Invitational Pro tournament in Houston.

He was the only member of the team to advance after the remaining members of the team were beaten in the first round.

"I am real proud of Max," said coach David Kent. "He has improved with each match throughout the fall season."

King is playing sound, aggressive tennis, said his coach. He is stronger

than last year and it is showing in his stamina and power.

King defeated Richie Rennerberg 6-2, 6-3 and David Woods 6-2, 6-3. Both are pros from the Houston area said Kent.

Doubles play for the Yonex begins Friday at 5 p.m.

"This will give the rest of the team a chance to redeem themselves," said Kent.

The doubles teams are King-Jim Grubert, Ron Kowal-Tom Judson and Leonard Smith-Genero Fernandez.

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Battenfield joins staff

Fred Battenfield, 25, duate of UT-Austin, has joined the staff of the Texas A&M men's basketball team as coordinator of press operations of women's basketball.

A native of Mercedes, Texas, Battenfield is a 1973 graduate of North and Die Laredo, and went to Yavapai in Prescott, Ariz., graduate in 1975. While at Texas he was assistant sports information for women's athletics. He has a strong background in sports, promotions and public relations. He assumed his duties

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