

Sports

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



By GLENN KRAMPOTA
Battalion Staff

The Aggie baseball team finds itself in a deja vu situation turned backwards this spring. Last year they began the season with an experienced, heavy-hitting lineup, but shaky and unproven pitching. 1981 finds them needing to replace most of their infield and two of the three outfield slots.

But the trio of starting pitchers who came out of nowhere to combine for a conference mark of 15 wins and 3 losses is back with a year of experience under their belts.

Rick Luecken, Robert Slavens and David Flores, whose pitching as freshmen enabled the Aggies to finish just a half game out of first place last year should be powerful forces in the conference again.

The two top starters from last year, Luecken and Slavens, have different appraisals of their 1980 seasons, but similar views about the team and the upcoming year.

Rick Luecken, out of Houston Spring Woods High School, said he is not satisfied with his individual performance last year despite a 6-2 conference record and a

team-leading 2.21 earned run average.

"I want to get rid of the walks I gave up last year," he said. "I'd also like to control the game more." This would include staying ahead on the count and placing the ball so that opposing batters would take the ball where he would like them to take it.

Luecken said he has worked over the off-season on those things, and thinks he has made real progress toward improving his control.

He said he is not gearing himself to get up for any particular team more than another, but he did say this about the league race: "Texas and Arkansas are the teams to beat, but we're definitely as good as they are."

Luecken said, "Last year we had all the seniors. Everybody knew what they could do and looked for the long ball."

"This year we have a lot of new young people and we're going to surprise people."

Robert Slavens was the the Southwest Conference Newcomer of the Year in 1980 with a 7-0 record in conference play. He said he was satisfied with his own performance, "but was surprised more than anything else."

The Houston Westbury sophomore said he will keenly miss last year's defense.

"But we have more depth this

Baseball team begins season

year and more competition for individual spots," Slavens said.

He also tabbed Arkansas and Texas as the Aggie's toughest conference foes. The conference will hinge on who gets the breaks in the big games he said.

"We're up in their league, it just depends on who gets the breaks in those big games."

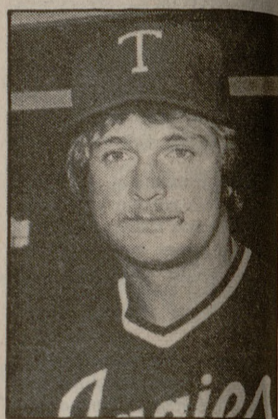
Coach Tom Chandler, entering his 23rd year as head man, also looks to Texas and Arkansas.

"It should be an exciting season," he said. "The league is well-balanced this year, but Arkansas and Texas have outstanding teams."

About his own team Chandler said, "We have strength in our team pitching and we have some team speed this year, but we lack power."

Chandler returns three starters, excluding the pitchers. At first base Rodney Hodde comes back after a conference season in which he hit .295 and had six home runs. He tied a Texas A&M record with three homers in one game against TCU last season, so the Aggies will definitely will look to him for the long ball.

He is a senior and a three-year letterman. So is outfielder Joe Paul Bramhall who hit .260 in conference games. Sophomore catcher Joey Szekely is the third returning regular and he was .222 against SWC opponents last year.



Terry Lawrence

Battling for the second base right now are sophomores Clay Heard and David Kennard.

Heralded football recruit freshman Billy Cannon, has the edge for the shortstop position.

Last year's shortstop, Twig Little, gave up his last year of eligibility to turn pro. Third baseman Harry Francis did the same and now junior transfer Grant Pines and senior squadman Tim Boyer are vying for that position.

The Aggies begin the season Friday at 1 p.m. with a doubleheader against Northeast Louisiana at Pat Olsen Field. Another twinbill will be played Saturday beginning at 1.

Seattle uses tough defense to defeat Mavericks by 18

United Press International
DALLAS — Fred Brown led a Seattle second-half back-court barrage Tuesday night in bringing the Superonics a 102-84 decision over Dallas, handing the Maver-

icks their seventh straight home loss.

The Mavericks, losers for the 56th time this year and 1-18 on Tuesday evenings, opened a 20-8

first-quarter lead behind the early scoring spree of Jim Spanarkel. But Seattle outscored the Mavericks, 12-2, at one point in the second period and took a 55-53 lead at intermission.

Seattle, behind John Johnson and Jack Sikma, outscored Dallas 23-11 in the third quarter as the Sonics widened the gap to 78-64.

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Reds may institute a dress code
United Press International
CINCINNATI — The Cincinnati Reds are surveying fans to decide whether to institute a "dress code" for spectators at games.
Some fans have complained to Reds' officials about people who take off their shirts in Riverfront Stadium.
"Some say they find it distasteful sitting next to someone who has his shirt off," says Reds' Vice President Roger Ruhl, who is conducting the survey. "And, they might have a point. After all, we are not the beach."
But, Ruhl quickly points out he has not made up his mind on the "shirtless" issue or any other points of a possible dress code. He hopes survey results in a few weeks will indicate whether ballpark dress standards are necessary.
"We may find out that only a very few people are complaining and nothing should be done at all," he says.
But, enough people already have commented about various states of undress or "distasteful" dress at the stadium to spark the study.
"We read our fan mail pretty good," says Ruhl. "It's called listening to your customer."

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