

Luecken, Flores A&M starters

Baseball team opens today

by Frank L. Christlieb
Sports Editor

The Texas A&M baseball team, ranked number 14 in the national pre-season polls, opens its season today by hosting the St. Mary's University Rattlers in a doubleheader at 1.

The Aggies' Rick Luecken, 5-2 with a 2.86 ERA in 1981, starts the first game, and David Flores, 8-3 with a 4.92 ERA, will start the second game. The second game will start about 3 this afternoon.

Catcher Joë Szekely, shortstop David Bernard and centerfielder Billy Cannon are three top returnees off Coach Tom

Chandler's 1981 squad, which finished 35-16-1 and 10-10-1 in the Southwest Conference. Three newcomers to the Aggies' starting lineup will be first baseman Titus Wells, third baseman Grant Pries and leftfielder Ronnie Risinger.

The Aggies, who finished with an overall average of .298, will have a great deal of quickness and pitching strength, Chandler said. He said he believes that the Aggies will easily surpass last year's record of 72 stolen bases.

Senior Steve Davis, who finished with a 6-1 record after being inserted into the starting rotation when Luecken was injured last April, will begin the season as a starter.

Chandler, who will rely on Bobby Taylor (3-2, 3.82 ERA) as his top reliever, will probably experiment with his pitching staff before deciding upon a set rotation.

St. Mary's is led by first baseman John Kosub, who had a .333 average last season while helping the team to a 25-16 overall record. The Rattlers, defending co-champions of the Big State Conference, compiled a 15-3 record in 1981.

St. Mary's pitching is its weakest point, as Coach Elmer Kosub returns only one starter from last season. David Covell, who had only a 1-5 record, should start one of today's games.

Texas still sliding

Red Raiders' late rally sinks Longhorns

The University of Texas baseball team has had so much ill fortune this year it probably has a sorcerer somewhere with a little doll shaped like a Longhorn that has a whole lot of pins in it.

And if there is, the sorcerer didn't just use another pin Monday night. He used a stake that was aimed right at the Longhorns' heart.

Thanks to a magnificent night at the free throw line, Texas was finally on the verge of winning another Southwest Conference game — which could have been only its second in a month.

The Longhorns were ahead, 56-55, with less than 70 seconds play. But when the buzzer sounded it was Texas Tech that was the winner, 67-65.

"I just sat there and watched said disheartened Texas coach Abe Lemons, "and I still don't believe it. I've never felt this low."

Tech coach Gerald Myers, who is in his 11th year with the Red Raiders, said: "This definitely was the greatest comeback I've had since I've been here. I'd be quite honest it all boiled down to our guys not ever giving

up when the coach probably had."

The astounding comeback allowed Texas Tech to clinch no worse than a sixth-place finish in the SWC race, which means the Red Raiders will be home next Monday night for a first-round game in the league's post-season tournament.

Texas, meanwhile, lost its ninth conference games in 10 tries and will go on the road for its first-round game. Texas Tech is 8-7 in SWC play, Texas is 6-9.

Conference action continues tonight with TCU, still hoping for a finish as high as second place, visiting Texas A&M, which is currently tied for second, and the Houston Cougars, sharing second with the Aggies, traveling the few miles to play Rice.

No matter how Rice fares against Houston, the Owls game with Texas next Saturday will decide the seventh and eighth seeds in the SWC tournament.

In Lubbock, the Longhorns turned a three-point halftime lead into a nine-point advantage in the opening moments of the second period and Texas still led by nine when James Tandy hit two free throws with 1:31 to

play. They were the last in a 23 of 24 performance from the line by the Longhorns.

James Swannegan hit what appeared to be no more than a token basket with 1:06 left that trimmed the Tech deficit to seven, but during the next three quarters of a minute the Longhorns went into shock. They could not even manage to get the ball past mid-court while the Red Raiders were scoring eight points to go in front.

First the Longhorns threw the ball away under a withering Red Raiders press and Jeff Taylor quickly scored for Tech. Then there was a charging foul against the Longhorns and Charles Johnson scored. Next there was

another throw away and Steve Smith threw in a jump shot. Finally there was a steal of an in-bounds pass and a basket by Johnson with 27 seconds to go that put the Raiders ahead.

Texas finally got the ball down court only to miss two shots and Smith was fouled on the rebound. He made one out of two free throws to increase the Raiders lead to two with eight seconds left and a wild shot by Virdell Howland at the buzzer failed to go in for Texas.

"All we had to do was get the ball in bounds and get fouled," Lemons said. "We threw the ball directly out of bounds twice, with nobody standing there. Everybody played hard."

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds

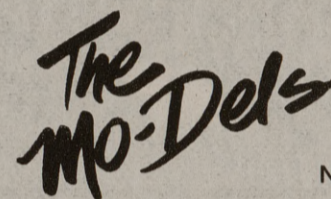


North Stars come back from deficit to win 8-7

United Press International BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — It wasn't exactly playoff hockey. "It's two points and that's about it," said Minnesota Coach Glen Sonmor, whose North Stars spotted Hartford a three-goal lead Monday night but rallied for an 8-7 win. "You've got to play better defense than that in the playoffs."

The North Stars responded with four goals in a five-minute span.

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Howard Payne's coach resigns

United Press International BROWNWOOD — Howard Payne University's head basketball coach and assistant coach, Chester Story and Billy Williams, resigned Monday.

"The two coaches felt their resignations as of today would save the basketball program a chance to develop under a different direction and we agreed," School President Dr. Ralph A. Phelps Jr. said.

The Yellow Jackets suffered

their first losing season in 17 years this season, posting a 10-17 record. Story had an overall 52-23 record in three years with Howard Payne.

Howard Payne was in contention for the Lone Star Conference title when the league's leading scorer, Kenneth Wallace, was declared ineligible at mid-term. Four conference victories were forfeited and the Yellow Jackets effort dwindled for the rest of the year.

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