

SPORTS

Astros get hot, 'Cruz' past Mets

Pitching, hitting mesh together for 10-3 win

Associated Press

National League

Astros 10, Mets 3

NEW YORK — Jose Cruz, homered, singled twice, drove in three runs and scored three Wednesday night to back Bob Knepper and the Houston Astros to a 10-3 victory over the New York Mets.

Knepper, 2-0, worked five innings, giving up three runs on seven hits. Frank DiPino, the third Houston pitcher, worked the final two innings for his third save. New York's Ron Darling, 1-1, who pitched a shutout in his last start, gave up five runs, two of them unearned, on nine hits in his 6 1/3 innings' work.

The Astros' first run, in the second inning, was unearned, scoring on an error by Mets right-fielder John Christensen. Cruz led off the inning with a single, and Jerry Mumphrey followed with a single to right. When Christensen let the ball get past him, Cruz scored.

The Astros scored two more in the fourth with the help of another Mets error, again on a single by Mumphrey. With one out, Cruz singled. Mumphrey hit a single to left-center that got past George Foster for an error, and the runners wound up at second and third.

One out later, Mark Bailey singled to score both runners. One run was unearned.

The Mets scored twice in the fifth to cut the deficit to 3-2. Ray Knight led off with a broken-bat single, and he scored on Christensen's triple into the right-field corner. Christensen scored on a single by Ronn Reynolds, playing in his first game of the season in place of injured catcher Gary Carter.

The teams traded sixth-inning runs.

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Women's sports need own identity

By PETE HERNDON
Sports Writer

For the first home football game next fall, at least 50,000 dedicated Texas A&M fans will pack Kyle Field to yell for the Aggies, a .500 team over the last three years under Head Coach Jackie Sherrill.

But the A&M women's softball team, ranked No. 2 in the nation, was lucky to get 1,000 people out to watch its entire Aggie Invitational Tournament a few weeks ago.

At a university that prides itself on the value of Aggie fans supporting "The Ags," attendance for women's sporting events falls way short compared to men's events.

Tom Turbiville, A&M's Sports Information Director, said some of the attendance problems would be solved if women's athletics could get more regional television coverage of their events, creating more interest

in both the college and conference programs.

But for that to happen, women's sports would need wealthy commercial sponsors to cover the cost of television production.

"The only real yardstick the buyer has on the value of an event for advertising is the attendance records," Turbiville said. "If you don't fill up the arena, you won't get sponsored. The situation is sort of like a dog chasing his own tail."

So to have a decent chance of getting a crowd, you have to have advertising, but to get a decent chance at getting advertising, you have to have a crowd.

It's a "Catch 22" situation.

One measure taken in past seasons, to improve attendance at women's basketball games, was to tag them on to the men's games, so students arriving early at G. Rollie

White Coliseum could be exposed to the Aggie Ladies and see the men play.

Lynn Hickey, A&M's Assistant Athletic Director for Women and Head Basketball Coach, was not at all pleased with the results of this strategy.

"By playing before the men's team," Hickey said, "we got more exposure as far as the students were concerned, but, because the games started so early, we lost a lot of local (Bryan-College Station) support."

"People simply couldn't get off work in time for the games." Next year, the early 5:30 p.m. tipoffs will change. Hickey has planned for the Aggie Ladies to play a separate schedule, not only to grab local support, but also to break off their ties to the men's team.

"We're in the process of building a following for the women's program

based on its own merits," Hickey said.

To build this following, some public relations problems will have to be solved.

Women's athletics is taking a bad rap because of the physical appearance of some of the more publicized pros and some of the spin-off stories," said Turbiville, going into his second year as the Aggies' SID.

"In many areas, the media dwells on the sideshow, rather than the good athletes who fit the social norms. But from my viewpoint, it causes no problems."

It doesn't cause any problems for Holly Hodges or Elizabeth Buffo, either. These two second generation Aggies are freshmen on Hickey's basketball team.

"Most people are impressed when they find out we're on the basketball team," Hodges said. "Nobody has

looked down on us because we're athletes."

Buffo agreed with Hodges, but added that although she doesn't condone the things the "big-name" athletes get bad press for, she thinks the media's coverage is blown out of proportion.

"Whenever an athlete does something bad, it's thrown all over the news," Buffo said. "Other people do the same kinds of things and don't get any bad publicity."

But not all the public image factors of women's athletics are bad.

With NCAA men's athletics progressively becoming more professional, women's sports may be the last true haven of amateur competition in the college spectrum.

"(In women's athletics), you have more of an opportunity to promote the student athlete, along with the team and the school concept," Turbiville said.

However, even if fans are being programmed to watch and enjoy women's collegiate sports, there may not be enough women coming out of high school to keep the movement going.

Jenny Adams, a former high school coach who is currently working toward her doctorate in exercise physiology at A&M, said that most high schools cannot provide adequate off-season or weight training programs for women.

"In most school districts, girls' coaches have to coach more than one sport," Adams said. "When the season ends, the coach really can't implement an off-season program because she has to move on to the next sport."

Although it seems as though women's athletics has a long way to go to gain mass acceptance, a winning program always makes things much easier.

In that regard, A&M is one up on most of the competition.

During the 1984-85 season, the women's golf team won the SWC championship, the Aggie softball and volleyball teams were ranked in the Top 20 nationally and the women's basketball team had a winning season in Hickey's first year as head coach.

If A&M women's athletic program can keep up the pace, Aggie fans starved for a winning tradition may start giving the Aggie women the attention they feel they deserve.

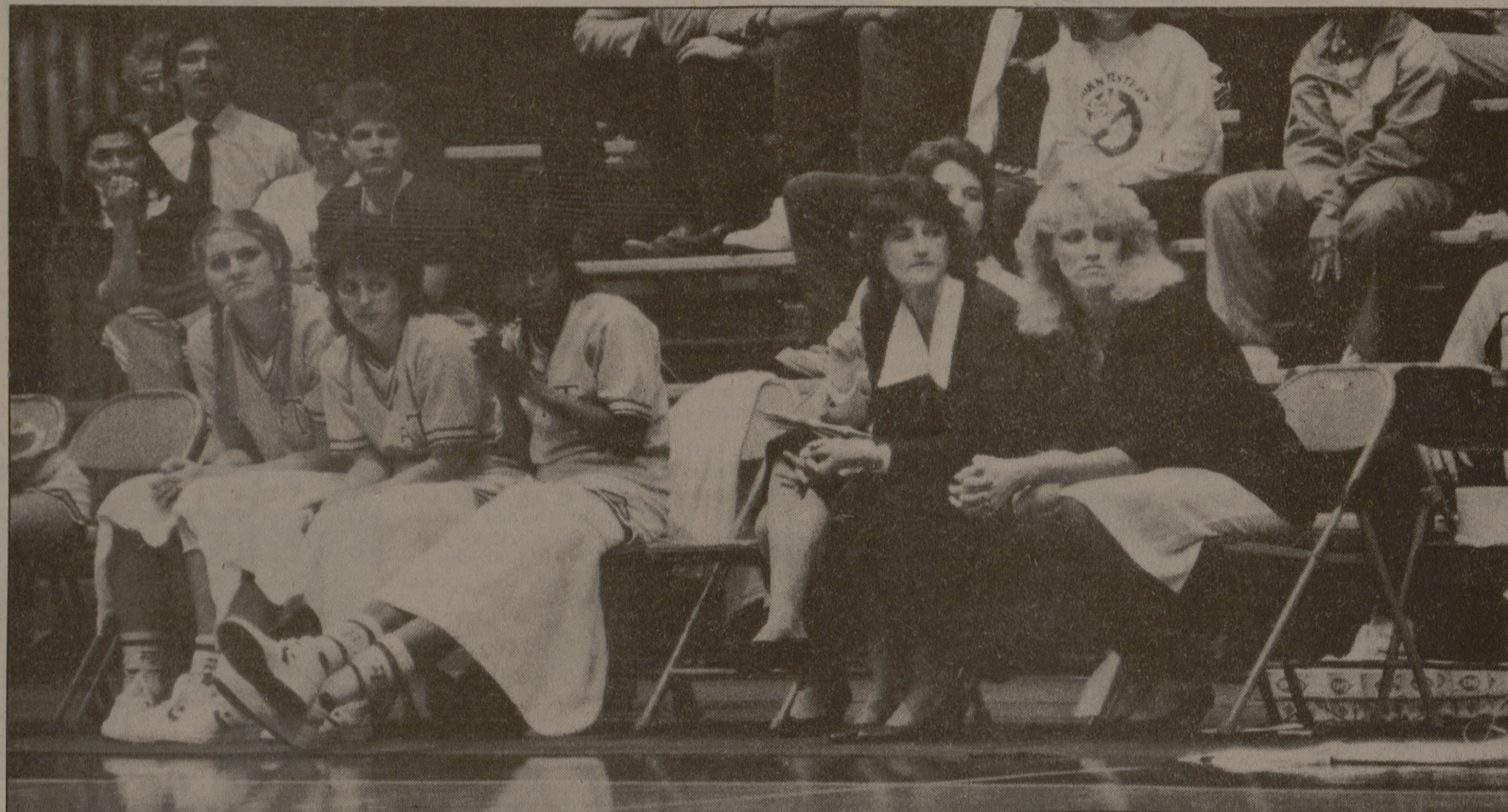


Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

Lynn Hickey (second from right on the bench), Texas A&M's Assistant Athletic Director for Women and Head Women's Basketball Coach, and the rest of her coaches and players

hope they'll see some larger crowds in G. Rollie White Coliseum next season for the Aggie Ladies' games. The women's team will play on different nights than the men next season.

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