

Sports

Rangers inherit AL West cellar one more time

By DENNE H. FREEMAN
AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON — A visit to Arlington Stadium takes a strong sense of perspective — not to mention a strong stomach — now that the Texas Rangers have once again floated belly up in the American League West.

You go out there wearing a nosepin hoping to sight any hope for the future involving perhaps the worst sports franchise in the United States.

For the record, the club has been in Arlington since 1972 and still no division flag has been claimed. The Rangers were legitimately in the race only for two seasons.

It's been another season of a fired manager, poor judgment of talent and arrogant players who think nothing of making an obscene gesture to the third base coach if they get a sign they don't like.

Doug Rader is history, fired and sent packing by owner Eddie Chiles. Of course, Rader, like many other former Ranger employees, still draws a nice stipend from an ownership with more cents than baseball sense.

Example: An ineffective Burt Hooton still has two more years to go at some \$500,000 per season. Why do the Rangers insist on getting themselves into financial binds like that?

Bobby Valentine has inherited quite a mess from Rader, the strong-willed "Red Rooster" whose judgment of playing talent didn't match his abilities when he was in the major leagues.

Valentine is bringing in the minor leaguers now. He's particularly hopeful that Jose Guzman will give some hope for a Ranger pitching staff that desperately needs some.

Look for a busy round of trades by the Rangers. No player will be safe except for first baseman Pete O'Brien and pitcher Charlie Hough.

After sitting through 11-2 and 12-1 defeats recently the Ranger needs are obvious: Arms.

Only Hough can be counted upon as having major league stuff. The other Ranger starters are strictly a hazard to third basemen and bleacher bums.

The Rangers have a team earned run average of 4.60 and it would be over the moon if it weren't for Hough's 3.30 ERA.

The team batting average has slipped to around .250. Infielder Wayne Tolleson was the only Ranger hitting over .300.

Rookie Oddibe McDowell was a bright spot, hitting around .250 with 16 homers.

Infielder Toby Harrah had over 100 walks and an excellent on-base percentage and hit .270 before Valentine started bringing in the minor leaguers.

But the often-injured Larry Parrish (.241), George Wright (.194), Steve Buechele (.213) and Duane Walker (.200) have been major disappointments.

The Buddy Bell trade to Cincinnati for Walker and Jeff Russell (8.16 ERA) is a typical example of the Rangers' getting blankets and beads while giving away gunpowder and gold.

General Manager Tom Grieve and Valentine will be wheeling and dealing well into March to try to barter the Rangers back to .500.

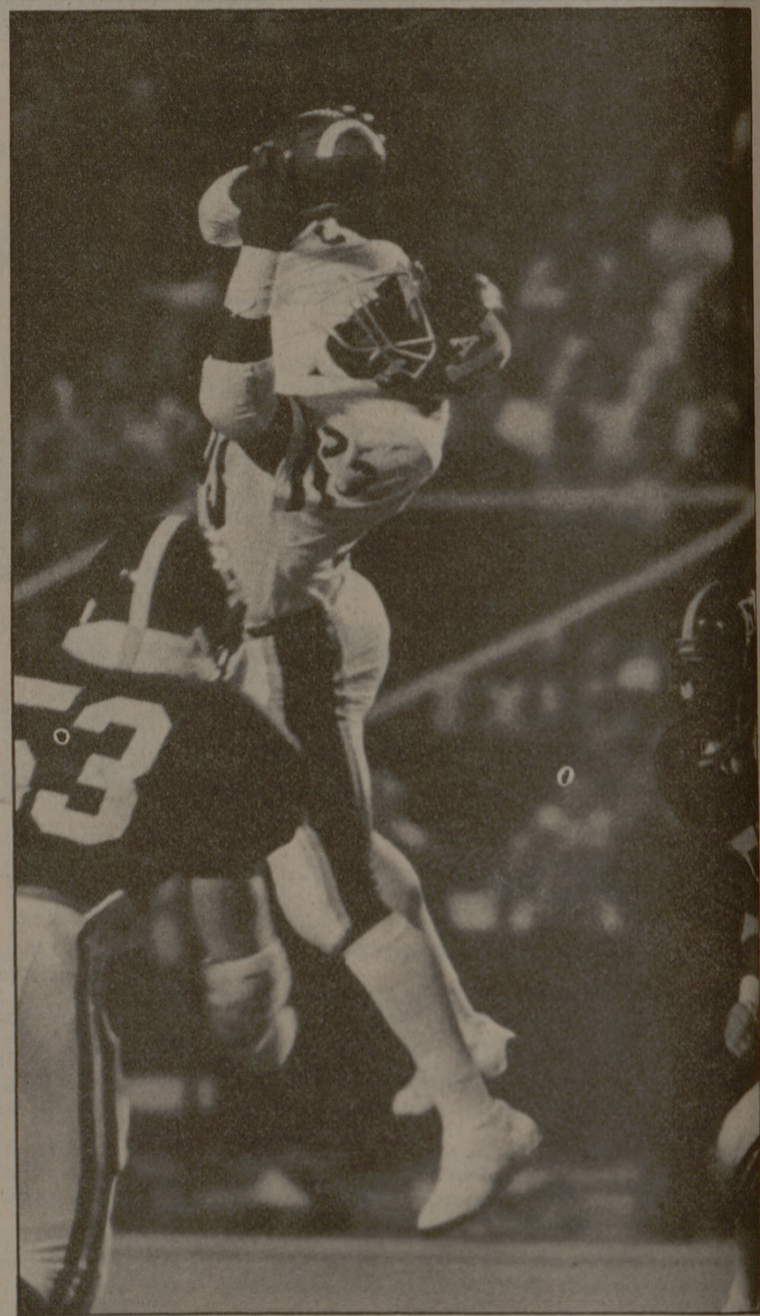


Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Might As Well Jump

Texas A&M tailback Keith Woodside snags a pass from quarterback Kevin Murray during the Ags' 23-10 loss to Alabama Saturday night.

No surprises for A&M spikers in Illinois

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

There were no upset losses over the weekend for the Texas A&M volleyball team in the Southern Illinois Tournament. The Aggies had learned their lesson in an upset loss to Sam Houston in their first game on Sept. 9.

Despite four obviously weaker opponents, the Ags have learned not to take anyone lightly. They did what they were supposed to do — win the tournament.

The Aggies swept through matches against Central Michigan, Minnesota and Kentucky before facing host Southern Illinois.

In the final match, the Aggies defeated SIU 15-7, 15-8, 15-10. A&M had 50 kills to SIU's 27.

A&M All-America middle blocker Sherri Brinkman was voted Most Valuable Player by the coaches. Brinkman had 51 kills in the tournament with an overall percentage of .438.

Also named to the All-Tournament team were setter Lesha Beakley and outside hitter Margaret Spence.

"Everyone played well," said A&M assistant Coach Mardi Alexan-



Sherri Brinkman

der. "No one would have argued if (A&M setter) Chris Zogata, (A&M outside hitter Stacey) Gildner, or (A&M middle blocker Stacey) Smith had been named to the All-Tournament team.

"Laura (Hoppe) played well in the backcourt for Stacey Smith. She did a good job defensively. Margaret played well defensively. She led the team in digs."

Alexander said the Aggies were physically and mentally ready to play.

"I think the Sam Houston game was a learning experience," Alexan-



Lesha Beakley

der said. "It was our season opener — and it showed. In this tournament, we had that one match already under our belts. The girls were more confident and so they played more like they had played last spring and fall.

"We've been pressing for months. We've been expecting big things and that first game didn't meet our expectations. We showed ourselves this weekend that we are the same team."

In their opening match Friday, the Aggies topped Central Michigan 15-9, 12-15, 15-7, 15-2.

Friday evening, A&M played its

best match thus far this season. The Aggies crushed Minnesota 15-1, 15-2, 15-6.

Against the Gophers, Brinkman had a high hitting percentage of .667. Gildner had her high of .600 and Spence hit .455.

And, in a Saturday match against Kentucky, the Aggies won 15-9, 15-6, 15-7.

"Although we played well," Alexander said, "there are lots of things we still need to work on. We can play even better than we did this weekend."

AGGIE VOLLEYBALL NOTES

The Aggies, who got back from Illinois at 6 p.m. Sunday, leave today at 2 p.m. for San Diego. Their first round tournament match is against host San Diego State. SDSU is 7-2 on the season after defeating Riverside, Santa Clara and Oregon last week. . . . UCLA, ranked No. 1 in the nation, defeated No. 9 Texas twice last weekend in Austin and San Antonio. The Bruins beat the Horns in three straight sets both nights before more than 6,000 fans. . . . The word around the A&M volleyball camp is that Aggie junior Stacey Gildner played some of her best volleyball ever in the Southern Illinois Tournament.

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