

Sports

Ags headed to Florida for NCAA regional

Solid pitching provides A&M SWC tourney championship

By Tom Tagliabue
Sports Writer

The 10th Southwest Conference Baseball Tournament crowned a new champion in its eighth year as a double-elimination event at Olsen Field this past week.

A&M regular season co-champion Texas A&M used strong pitching

Baseball

Dale Barry, Darryl Fry and Pat Wernig and great all-around play from tournament Most Valuable Player Ever Magallanes to win the postseason crown for the first time in school history.

The 12th-ranked Aggies, 44-21, topped past Arkansas 4-0 in the opening round and then swept Baylor 8-0 and 7-6 in the championship round to earn the title and gain berth in the NCAA regionals of the College World Series.

A&M will travel to the South II regional in Tallahassee, Fla. to take a seventh-ranked South Florida Thursday at 2 p.m. Central time. Florida State, No. 1-ranked and North Carolina State round out the four-team regional.

The winner advances to Omaha for the College World Series. Barry, 10-1, pitched a marvelous seven-hit shutout Friday to propel the Aggies to the win over the Hogs.

The key to the win, Barry said, was the fact that Arkansas' best hitters — Dave Patterson, Jeff King and Ralph Kraus, went 1-for-11 during the game.

"I didn't expect to shut them down tonight," Barry said. "I had good location and moved the ball in and out. Maury (Martin, A&M's pitcher) caught a great game tonight and called a good game. King swung the first pitch a couple of times and he hit a couple of bad pitches.

"The first two innings, I really struggled. I couldn't get the ball down. Later, I was doing a lot better."

Jeff King's error in the third gave A&M their first scoring opportunity

of the game. Martin reached on King's error and scored one out later on Jeff Schow's RBI triple to left field. Scott Livingstone, who began to pull out of a late-season slump last week, singled to score Schow.

Magallanes added an RBI on a fifth-inning double and a single in the seventh which chased starter Steve Parker, who had no-hit the Aggies in Fayetteville.

After A&M beat the Hogs and Baylor trounced No. 1-seeded Texas and mound ace Greg Swindell 13-5 Friday, gusty winds and torrential rain postponed the tournament until Sunday.

However, Texas and Arkansas decided to skip town and let the Ags and Bears battle it out for the NCAA slot. Texas Coach Cliff Gustafson and Arkansas' Norm DeBrynn believed the rain-soaked Olsen Field turf was not playable or safe for their teams. A&M Coach Mark Johnson and Stadium Supervisor Leo Goertz stressed that the field was in good playing condition.

Also at stake was the possibility of hosting the NCAA regional. Texas, had it lost the tourney, probably would not have hosted the regional.

A&M had a chance to win the host spot, but because the 'Horns pulled out, UT was awarded an at-large bid to the NCAAs and were named as host for the regional.

With the loser's bracket eliminated, it was decided A&M and Baylor would play a best 2-of-3 series to determine a winner.

It did not take the Aggies long to prove who was the best team this weekend.

A&M's Fry was just about perfect, giving up only two hits, four walks and striking out three batters to improve his season record to 11-4.

Fry threw no-hit ball until the fifth when a Shawn McAfee line drive nicked the glove of a left fielder Schow, who slipped on the play. Keith Shepard added a legitimate single in the eighth for Baylor's only other hit.

The Aggies banged out 15 hits off



Photo by Anthony S. Casper

A&M shortstop Ever Magallanes readies to complete a double play as the Baylor runner kicks up the dust around second base. Magal-

lanes was named the Southwest Conference tournament's Most Valuable Player as the Aggies upended the Bears to win the title.

five Baylor pitchers and tied SWC tournament records for most triples with three, while breaking the doubles record for a game with six.

Only in the eighth did a Bear baserunner reach farther than first base. The Aggie defense collected two double plays to help keep the Bears off the base paths.

Johnson said Fry, who threw a six-hitter against Baylor in Waco, was even better Sunday.

"(Fry) has had two outstanding ballgames against Baylor," Johnson said. "He did a good job especially under the pressure (of a possible no-hitter). We happened to play well tonight (Sunday) and Darryl really cut them down and we played excellent defense and put the ball in play."

Monday proved to be a lot tougher for the Aggies as they had to rally from a 6-1 deficit to claim the championship.

A&M starter Gary Geiger was battered early by the Bears, as they scored two runs in the first and two more in the second before Geiger headed for the showers.

But Pat Wernig, A&M's bullpen ace, came in and kept the Bears off-balance for 7 1/2 innings, except for a slider that Baylor left fielder Mike Malinak drove out of Olsen Field for a two-run home run in the fifth.

"I was just trying to keep us in the ball game and I did," Wernig said. "I wasn't trying to overpower them. We knew we could come back. We knew we could score."

Johnson said Wernig was tough against the Bears.

"The guys kept coming," Johnson said. "We kept putting the ball in play and when you put it in play, you always have a chance. Pat Wernig was hot and throwing well. If we could just get up there close, I thought we could win."

Baylor starter Blaine Beatty, who earned a complete game victory over Texas Friday, cruised through the first few innings, but began to lose his stuff in the fifth.

With the scored 4-1 in the fifth, Martin beat out an infield single, Schow walked and Magallanes picked up another clutch RBI with a double to right to score Martin. However, the Aggies left both Schow

and Magallanes stranded.

Beatty dodged trouble in the sixth as the Aggies again left two runners stranded, but it all went down hill from there as the Aggies rambled back into the game thanks to three big hits and more obviously, two enormous Baylor fielding miscues that allowed the Aggies to tie the game.

Schow led off the seventh with a home run to left. It was Schow's 11th homer of the year and his fifth homer to lead off an inning.

"The whole game Beatty had been leading off with fastballs," Schow said. "Every at-bat before that, I got started off with a fastball. I got it all.

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