

Sports

Aggie softball team set to shoot for title A&M boasts No. 2 ranking

By Hal L. Hammons
Sports Writer

February nears its close, and for Texas A&M Softball Coach Bob Brock and the Aggie softball team, that means the beginning of a new season.

The team, which is ranked No. 2 in the nation, will find it difficult to beat last year's results. A&M finished the season with a loss to Cal State Fullerton in the NCAA championship game.

But Brock and his players seem to think a win in this year's championship is well within their reach.

The Aggies started their season off strongly in the Houston Independent Team College Round-Robin Sunday, sweeping three exhibition games.

A&M blanked the Alvin Silver Streaks 22-0, the Alvin Challengers 9-0, and the Pasadena Illusions 6-0.

Shawn Andaya pitched a 14-strikeout no-hitter to beat the Challengers and teamed with Julie Carpenter to no-hit the Illusions.

"We were just really glad to get the chance to play and get some games behind us before we really start the season," Brock said.

Shortstop Liz Mizera led the Aggies on the offensive side with a pair of singles, two doubles and a triple.

Brock said this year's team is stronger than the previous team. The main difference between the two teams is a distinctly faster lineup this year.

Andaya said the extra speed will help A&M stretch a lot of ground balls into infield hits. She said that will help tremendously, as the Aggies do not have a lot of power in the lineup.

Mizera is expected to provide what power the Aggies need. She led the team with seven home runs last year, and has 25 in the past two seasons.

Mizera agreed that the Aggies were going to be a better team this year, and said they were hop-



Shawn Andaya

ing to contend for the national championship again.

"We're going to be good," Mizera said. "This is one of the best teams I've played on since I've been here."

Brock said he was a little worried about his team's lack of experience. The team only has two seniors and has four freshmen and four sophomores.

"We'll have to work around that at times," he said.

However, Brock said that probably would not be a real factor in the team's success or failure this year.

"If we can make the playoffs, we won't be that young," Brock said.

Brock classified this year's group as a "good practice team." He said the players always work hard, and he expects that to pay off in the end.

"As the old saying goes, 'practice makes perfect,'" he said. "If practice is any indication, we are on our way to a good season."

One big change from last season is the mound. Although the same pitchers will be back for the Aggies, they will be standing on a bigger mound. Andaya said they have adjusted to the change and it will not be a problem.

The Aggies open up the season Wednesday at the University of Texas at Arlington at 4 p.m.

Aggies, Bearkats tie after 10 innings

By Homer Jacobs
Sports Editor

The Texas A&M baseball team traveled to Hunstville Monday for a game with Sam Houston State University and failed to come away with a win.

The Aggies didn't come away with a loss either as A&M tied the Bearkats 14-14 in a game that was called after the 10th inning for darkness.

The contest was a wild one, featuring lead changes, 10-run rallies, home runs, multiple pitching changes, as well as a diving game-saving catch by A&M right fielder Don Wren.

Wren's catch came in a dramatic bottom of the ninth inning, in which the Bearkats' Kerry Brandl unloaded on a pitch from A&M's Russ Greene that backed up Wren to the right-field wall.

With the score tied, a home run would have given the Bearcats the win; but Wren held on to the ball despite crashing into the wall, thus preserving the tie.

The Aggies (8-1-1) looked as if they were going to breeze to their ninth win of the year, opening up a 13-4 lead in the top of the sixth.

But a tiring Darryl Fry then gave up five runs on four hits to the Bearkats in the bottom of the sixth to cut the A&M lead to 13-9.

A&M Coach Mark Johnson pulled Fry and replaced him with sophomore right-hander David Jones, who pitched the next 1 1/2 innings.

Jones gave up one hit and two runs in the bottom of the sixth and one run in the seventh making the score 13-12.

And after A&M failed to score in its half of the eighth, the bottom half of the inning featured a pitching change of Jones that proved disastrous for the Aggies.

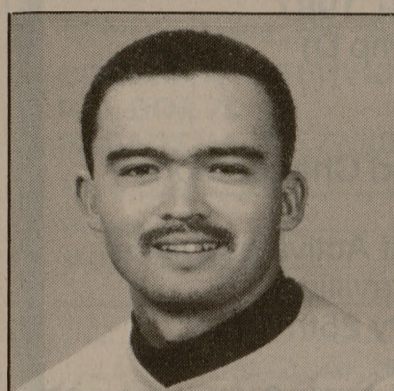
Jones was removed from the mound with two outs and a walked Bearkat on first base; Johnson brought in senior Ed Perez, who then gave up four consecutive runs, comprised of a double followed by two singles and another double.

The last double, hit by SHSU's Bryan McDonald, scored the tying and go-ahead runs to put the Bearkats on top at 14-13.

Johnson again went to the bullpen and replaced Perez in the bottom of the eighth with Greene, who got the final out of the inning for the Aggies.

The top of the ninth was A&M's turn at coming from behind as shortstop Ever Magallanes drove in the tying run, scoring pinch runner Andy Duke.

With the score 14-14, the Aggies



Don Wren

managed to get runners on first and second with one out, but left fielder Tim McWilliam grounded out, and second baseman Terry Taylor hit a line drive that was snared for the final out.

And the drama continued into the bottom of the ninth, as Greene got two easy outs on the Bearkats to force the pressure situation with Brandl and Wren.

The bottom of the 10th inning was just as tense as the ninth, with Greene and the Aggies on the brink of defeat.

Greene loaded the bases with two outs, forcing Johnson to make his

fifth pitching change. He brought in Gary Geiger to get the final out, and the senior did just that against a full-count situation.

The final batter drilled the ball back to Geiger, who threw to first for the final out of the game.

Aggie batters were once again red-hot as they amassed 21 hits, including seven doubles and two home runs.

Third baseman Scott Livingstone went 4-for-4 and had his third homer of the year in the third inning, and designated hitter John Byington recorded his fourth round-tripper of the year in the fifth.

Byington also had three RBI and went 3-for-6 on the day.

Magallanes went 3-for-6, and center fielder Chuck Knoblauch racked up four hits (three doubles) and had four RBI.

Johnson said the Aggies' pitching was not up to par.

"We're really hitting the ball well," Johnson said, "but I was disappointed in our pitching."

"One nice thing was our players being put under pressure on the road, and we responded."

The Aggies return to Olsen Field today for a double-header with Southwest Texas State University beginning at 1 p.m.

K.C.'s Howser says he's not ready to manage

FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP) — Although he had stoically maintained the helm of the Kansas City Royals after surgery for a malignant brain tumor, Manager Dick Howser decided Monday he just wasn't up to the task.

"Well, I found out yesterday I couldn't do it," Howser said during a noon news conference at Terry Park, site of the Royals' spring training camp. "I'm just not going to try to do it, that's all."

As he announced his decision to step down, Howser was flanked by his wife, Nancy, successor Billy Gardner and other Royals officials.

"I've been pushing and pushing since the first operation in Kansas City and the second operation in Los Angeles," he said, later adding, "It's just that I need more time to rest. I can't do it like this."

Howser donned his Royals uniform Saturday for the first time

since managing the American League team in the All-Star Game last year. It was the first day of spring training, and Howser appeared tired, his uniform loose on his 18-pound lighter frame.

In interviews, he insisted he was capable of managing the team but conceded he would step down if it became too much.

With temperatures in the low 80s Sunday, Howser missed a substantial part of the day's workout.

"I think that's what got me was the heat," he said later.

Howser said he already had decided to bow out when he went back to the park Monday. After sitting for an hour on a bullpen bench, he left the field for good.

Royals officials said Gardner, the former Minnesota Twins manager hired last fall as third-base coach, would take over.

"If he's ever better to come back

and manage, he can have it and step back in. That's how much I respect the guy," said Gardner.

"I'd like to thank (President) Joe Burke and (General Manager) John Schuerholz and everybody connected with the organization," Howser said. "I'd like to thank my wife. She's been behind me like you people wouldn't know."

Howser, 50, isn't leaving the Royals completely and plans to serve in some capacity, Burke said he and Howser will determine those duties later.

Howser led the Royals to the World Series title in 1985, coming from behind to beat the Toronto Blue Jays in the playoffs and the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series. In both, Kansas City rallied from 0-2 and 1-3 to win in seven games.

With the Series victory came the honor of managing the AL team in the 1986 All-Star Game. Players and

reporters noticed at the time that Howser seemed withdrawn and subdued as he led the league to a 3-2 victory.

Only days later, Howser was diagnosed as having a malignant brain tumor. He underwent surgery twice, in Kansas City on July 22 and in Los Angeles on Dec. 5. Scars from the surgery remained visible when he traveled to Florida, and he wore a cap as his hair continued to grow back from radiation treatments.

Howser, a Miami native, joined the Royals in 1981 after being fired as manager of the New York Yankees. The Yankees won 103 games under his leadership in 1980 but lost three straight to Kansas City in the playoffs.

Howser began his professional playing career in 1958 at Winona, Minn.

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