

Sports

Aluminum is fantastic for cans, dangerous for baseball players

Seeing blood gush from A&M quarterback John Roper's face after a sack in the LSU game was a frightening sight. But it couldn't compare with the horror of the sight of a motionless Darin Fernandez.



Anthony Wilson
Sports viewpoint

University of New Orleans pitcher, lying on the ground after having a line drive by A&M's Tom Carcione rocket off his leg.

broken a leg or shattered a kneecap. Fernandez stayed on the ground for five minutes as A&M's and UNO's trainers attended to him.

Fernandez finally got up and after a few practice tosses, finished the inning, a credit to his gutsiness.

Fernandez never had a chance to get out of the way of the horsehide projectile traveling at a speed of close to 200 mph. He was lucky. If the trajectory of ball had been slightly higher, it could have broken his ribs. The worst scenario, and a possible one, is that the ball could have hit him in the head or face and easily killed him.

The culprit of this possible dastardly deed? The aluminum bat — a potentially lethal weapon in the hands of any decent line drive hitter with quick wrists.

Imagine this hypothetical situation: Fastballer Roger Clemens is on the mound wielding a small leather sphere and a glove. Power hitter Darryl Strawberry is at the plate wielding a large piece of metal a.k.a. an aluminum bat. Clemens winds up and lets fly with a screamer right down the pipe. Strawberry winds up and lets fly with his windmill swing. Strawberry connects with the ball. The ball connects with Clemens, and a great talent and a human life is cut down in its prime.

The major leagues realizes the danger involved in letting great hitters use aluminum bats with a human being standing in a vulnerable position 60 1/2 feet away.

Aluminum bats would also give major leaguers an unfair advantage. If you think hitters are hitting too many home runs with the so-called livelier "rabbit ball," try to imagine how many more would be hit with aluminum bats.

Roger Maris' and Hank Aaron's home run records wouldn't stand a

chance. Singles would become obsolete in the Minnesota Twins' HomeDome. The art of bunting would fall by the wayside.

Collegiate teams using wooden bats also would give professional scouts a better perspective about how good a hitter really is and potentially could be in the majors.

Using aluminum bats does have its advantages. Trainers never have to worry about replacing chipped or broken bats. Hitters don't have to worry about breaking bats by hitting a ball on the label. Aluminum bats also take away some of the nuances of the game. When a baseball meets a wooden bat, the result is a hearty "CRACK!" that is music to any true baseball fan's ears. The sound of a hit with an aluminum bat sounds like a sickly synthesizer — "plink."

The solution — to replace aluminum bats with wooden ones — could be implemented in between seasons at a relatively cheap cost. Of course, any cost would be cheaper than that of a human's life.

Many factors caused downfall of US team

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Too little international experience and not enough help from the NHL were largely responsible for the demise of the U.S. Olympic hockey team, leaders of the squad claim.

Eliminated from the medal round with a 2-3 round-robin record, the Americans could not cope with the top veteran teams in the tournament — the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and West Germany.

"We played well and we played hard, but we didn't always play wisely," Coach Dave Peterson said in the wake of Sunday night's 4-1 loss to West Germany. "Give me this team for four years and we'd win a gold medal."

But Peterson only had about six months to put together the U.S. team. Even though the Americans played a 60-game exhibition schedule leading to the Olympics, they were criticized for their generally weak opposition.

against NHL clubs, the U.S. hockey team did not always face the best players the pro teams had to offer. And while the team played an eight-game series with the Soviet Selects, that opposition wasn't close to the quality of the Soviet national team.

A little more than one third of the schedule was devoted to games against much weaker college teams.

"That might have hurt us," goaltender Mike Richter said. "We really didn't get much competition from the college teams we played."

For General Manager Art Berglund, it apparently wasn't enough.

Had the team played a tough enough exhibition schedule, one as demanding as Canada's? "Probably not," Berglund said. "We probably wished we would have played more NHL teams. But you have to get them when you can."

Ag baseball team improves to 9-0 after 12-2 demolition of Bearkats

By Loyd Brumfield
Sports Editor

HUNTSVILLE — The Texas A&M baseball team continued to roll over its opponents, clubbing Sam Houston State 12-2 Monday afternoon.

A&M, 9-0 and ranked fourth in the nation, will play Lamar today in a doubleheader beginning at 1 p.m. at Olsen Field.

The Aggies toppled the Bearkats' upset hopes in a hurry, scor-

ing six times in the first inning to put SHSU away.

After Kirk Thompson's lead-off walk, Terry Taylor and Scott Livingstone both singled, and after John Byington struck out, five straight Aggies made it to base, highlighted by Tim McWilliam's two-run double.

A&M got some more runs in the second when Byington doubled, and he and shortstop Chuck Knoblauch scored on a Jim Neumann sacrifice fly.

Both teams went scoreless in

the third, but the Aggies picked up the tempo again in the fourth when a sacrifice fly by Tom Carcione brought Livingstone home.

The Bearkats scored twice in the seventh off A&M reliever Kerry Freudenberg, but the Aggies came back in the eighth to score six runs to finish the scoring.

Livingstone hit a two-run homer in the inning, and Byington followed with a double off the left field wall, and four more runs followed.

Blair leads US to second gold medal

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Bonnie Blair lifted Americans' morale and medals count in speed skating Monday, winning the women's 500-meter sprint in world-record time.

It was the first gold medal in speed skating by an American woman since Sheila Young won the 500 in 1976 and only the fourth ever.

It also was the fourth U.S. medal of this Olympics, the second in speed skating, and it provided a measure of revenge for her team.

Blair's time of 39.10 seconds nipped the world record set minutes earlier by her East German arch-ri-

val, Christa Rothenburger. In the men's 1,500 meters Saturday, American Eric Flaim saw his world record last only five minutes before East German Andre Hoffman beat it and took the gold.

"She looked to me and I gave her the thumbs up," said Flaim, who settled for silver. "She did a heck of a job."

Rothenburger took the silver behind Blair, while the bronze went to East Germany's Karen Kania, her sixth Olympic medal, in 39.24 seconds.

It was the third straight Olympics that Kania has won a medal in the

500. She won in 1980 and took the silver in 1984, when she had two golds and a silver in other events.

Rothenburger, the defending Olympic gold medalist in the 500, skated in the second pair and ripped off a 39.12 to break her former world record of 39.39 seconds set in Calgary last December.

Rothenburger's first 100 meters were clocked in 10.57 seconds, but when it was Blair's turn two pairs later, she got off the line even faster — in 10.55 seconds — and made a final lunge at the finish line to beat Rothenburger by .02 of a second to the cheers of a large crowd at the indoor Olympic Oval.

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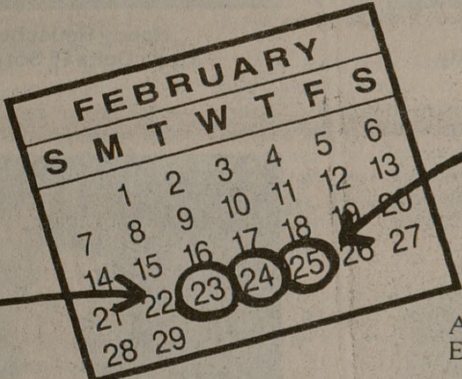
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Briefings and sign-ups for interviews: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., February 23, Room 701, Rudder Tower.

Interviews (by appointment): February 24 and 25 in the Annex.



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