Sports

Aggies blow perfect shot at UT

By Hal L. Hammons

d the jinx co unbelievers maining abo Texas A&M' ability to def the Universi ball before l week's Sout st Conferen ournament, ngs of skept

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Hal L. **Hammons**

deck was positively stacked in th ggies' favor. Texas' loss Thursda Baylor and Friday's game agains rkansas in the loser's bracket mea two important strikes against Tex One: A&M had two shots at UT, h only one win necessary for a to ament crown. Two: The Longho couldn't pitch either of their two - Eric Stone and Kirk Dressen

d the most important intangible s in A&M's favor as well. UT was viously indifferent to the idea of ning. And the Aggies wanted th

make matters positively ridiculou ractically everyone at George Col ield hated UT almost as much as M. Agreed, that would only be a nd 500 people — spread out over two days. But an edge is an edge. the bottom line is that everyone in vetteville wanted A&M to win. Th ggies for revenge. The fans for h ed. The UT players and coaches f in extra day's rest before regional petition. The media to get out of ansas a day early.

ell, almost everybody. Preston Wat and Brian Cisarik seemed to car

Aggie player told me Friday nigh atson would have to pitch the ga of his life to win. Shouldn't have ened your mouth, big guy. atson, he of the huge ERA and equ

sizeable inconsistency, completel affled the A&M batters for nine i nnings, giving the UT sluggers no le Ags seeded No. 1 in South as NCAA regionals begin

The Texas A&M baseball team will travel to Starkville, Miss. for the second straight year to compete in NCAA post-season play. But unlike last year when the Aggies were the underdogs of the regional competition who came within one win of the College World Series, A&M will be the favorite to advance to Omaha this

A&M earned the No. 1 seed in the South Regional after compiling a 50-13 record and being ranked fifth in the nation. The playoffs consist of eight double-

elimination regional tournaments and A&M was one of eight teams selected as a No. 1 seed in the 48team field.

The Aggies will face sixth-seeded Middle Tennessee State, 34-24-1, in the tournament's first round Thursday at 2 p.m. at host Mississippi State's Dudy Noble

No. 2 seed Mississippi State will play fifth-seeded Western Carofina in the second game Thursday night at 7:30. Third and fourth seeds Cal-Fullerton and Missouri square off Friday.

ad to make up — and giving the shell -shocked Texas pitching corps a muc h-needed breather

Cisarik was enough on the offensive side to win a game with two offensiv e squads, so his stick provided more t han enough to counter the fearsome two-hit Aggie attack. "More-than-en ough" meaning going 4-for-5 with fo ur RBI and a two-run homer.

The seven-run seventh broke open t he close game and turned it into a 10 the two innings had given the Ags a 4-0 lead. And they were looking for more with one out, a runner on, and relief coming out of the UT bullpen far earlier than the Horns would ha

And then the rain came.

I and the rest of the writers in the pr ess box were positive we had seen ou r last inning of baseball in Fayettevill e of the year. A day too late, granted,

-0 rout. It was thought it also would give the Aggies more incentive to win the final game Sunday.
After all, all the above reasons for A

&M to win still applied. And the pitc hing situation was considerably wors e; starter Ruben Grajeda had appear ed in a grand total of three games all season — for a total of five innings.

Not exactly what a team would look for in a championship game starter. It looked like appearences might not be deceiving after all as the second in ning developed. Two runs in each of

but acceptable, seeing we'd be out of the state by late afternoon.

The "30 minute maximum" delay ga ve way to a 15 minute extension. Th en they announced a "final decision" in 10 more.

What was the delay?" we wondered. Actually, two factors were involved. An eagerness by A&M Coach Mark Johnson to finish the game and capi talize on a rare opportunity was one of them. A sky that seemed to be cle aring at an alarming rate was the oth

UT Coach Cliff Gustafson was willin g to call the game, declare UT and A &M co-champions, and split town. B ut Johnson wanted to stay, the sun w anted to shine, and after 85 minutes worth of rain delay, the game was re

Face it, coach: You asked for it.

The Horns erupted for four runs in the bottom of the second to tie the g ame and give the Aggie supporters a n alarming premonition of pending

That expectation was not unwarrent

Five more runs in the next four inni ngs spawned a powerful feeling of d eja vu in the Aggie faithful. Blown o pportunities in the series in Austin al lowed Texas to squeak by with two cl ose wins that easily could have gone t

he other wa

It seemed A&M was ready to come b ack when they scored three runs in t he seventh. But UT bounced right b ack with three of their own.

But the Aggies weren't through quit e yet. They had another chance to bl ow. With two out in the bottom of th e ninth, A&M had the bases loaded with leading hitter Chuck Knoblauc h at the plate. To make it even more appealing, out of the bullpen strode Curry Hardin, A&M Consolidated e x and the Aggies' favorite punching

And Knoblauch crushed Hardin's se cond pitch into left field. A prettier line drive could not be asked for. Well, perhaps a line drive that wasn't right to an outfielder would be pretti

That, another example of the Aggies snatching defeat out of the jaws of vi ctory for UT's benefit, comes as clos

e as possible to proving the existence of an A&M mental block that strikes when the Aggies see orange. When I hit the booming metropolis of Starkville, Miss. tonight, I fully ex

pect to hear the Aggies say they want more than anything in the world to g o to the College World Series and fac e Texas in the championship game.

A chance to redeem themselves on n ational television with a win that wou ld make up for five earlier losses. But you've got to wonder.

Houston's success due to Astronomical' mound staff

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The con-pution by Houston's remarkable ching staff to the Astros' impres-e start has been . . . well, Astro-

Cy Young Award winner Mike ott, off to a 6-0 start that's the best his career, doesn't believe there is other starting staff in baseball to al Houston's, which has a comed 21-7 record and 2.47 earned

Bob Knepper, also 6-0, has a .089 Station earned run average — the best in the rned runs in 501/3 innings.

Nolan Ryan, at 41, is still throwing umming fastball. He is 4-2 with a 43 ERA and has already flirted th what would have been a record th no-hitter. Jim DeShaies is only 2, but his 1.69 ERA is the secondst in the National League to Knep-Danny Darwin is 2-3 with a

cott said pitching wins pennants, d the Astros have the kind of ching it takes to win the NL West ampionship. The Astros have a o-game lead over the Los Angeles

"Our pitching is the best I've ever en for five guys going out there ev-y day," Scott said. "There's notheven close. If it keeps up, we'll

Astros starters have produced

Blackout halts

tied 4th game

BOSTON (AP) — The fourth game of the Stanley Cup finals between the Edmonton Oilers

and the Boston Bruins was post-poned with the score tied 3-3 and

3:23 left in the second period when a power failure hit Boston

Garden Tuesday night. NHL President John Ziegler met with officials from both

teams for several minutes and de-

ided not to continue play even

when power was restored because

nost of the crowd had been evac-

uated for security reasons.

The game could not be re-

olayed in Boston Wednesday or

Thursday nights, when the Bos-

on Celtics will be at the Garden or the first two games of their

NBA Eastern Conference finals

against the Detroit Pistons.

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quality starts — at least six innings pitched, three or fewer earned runs

- in 35 of 41 games. Scott shut out the Pirates 3-0 on four hits in a rain-shortened 81/2-inning game Monday night for his sixth straight win, the longest streak

of his 10-year career. Scott said any one of the Astros' "Fantastic Five" would be the No. 1 starter on most major league staffs.

"And I mean on the best of teams," he said. "We're struggling with our hitting a little bit right now, jors. He has allowed only five but we're probably pitching as good

Or as good as anyone can.

"Our starting pitching has just been excellent," Astros manager Hal Lanier said. "I knew we were strong coming out of spring training, but no one could have known it would be like this. It's been a much deeper staff than I thought it would be.

When Lanier does have to go to his bullpen, he has one of baseball's best closers in the dependable Dave Smith, who is 1-2 with a 3.24 ERA and nine saves. Smith, 33, has 93 saves since the start of the 1985 sea-

Bobby Bonilla of the Pirates, one of the NL leaders in nearly every major offensive category, said one word describes the astounding As-

tros' pitching: awesome. again: "It's good for us to face the good good.

pitching, because you don't get any better unless you face the best," he said. "When you play Houston, you know you're going to face a lot of good pitching and you have to accept the challenge."

Scott has beaten the Pirates twice in the last week, allowing only two earned runs in 15 innings.

"I've been in a pretty good groove," said Scott, who was 18-10 when he won the Cy Young Award in 1986. "Really, I've been in a good groove since the end of spring training. I haven't had a bad day all sea-

Opposing hitters have had plenty of bad days and nights trying to hit Scott's trademark split-finger fastball, which was nearly unhittable Monday night.

"It was the best I've had all year," said Scott, who is 58-31 over four seasons since learning the split-fin-ger from San Francisco Giants man-

ager Roger Craig.
Pirates manager Jim Leyland said
he tells his young hitters when they
face the Astros to "just go out there and battle your butts off

"If a pitcher wins 20 games, he's probably going to lose 10 or 11, so I tell them to go out there and try to put one of those losses against them. You've got to stay mentally tough against them because they're

Thrown bat costs Guerrero 4 games

NEW YORK (AP) — Pedro Guerrero of the Los Angeles Dodgers was suspended for four days and fined a reported \$1,000 Tuesday by the National League for heaving his bat in the direction of New York Mets

pitcher David Cone Sunday.
The Dodgers said Guerrero won't appeal and they will continue to pay him during the suspension.

That means Guerrero, third in the NL with a .326 batting average, will miss three games in Philadelphia and one in Montreal.

"I think it's all right, but I'm con-cerned that the pitcher doesn't get (suspended or fined)," Guerrero said. "I'm being suspended four days and he's still pitching. The president of the league did the right thing, but he should have done

something about the pitcher. The loss was caused reportedly Mets second baseman Wally Backa failure in a Boston & Maine by a failure in a Boston & Maine Railroad power plant that supplies most of the Garden's power. man said the punishment was too lenient for the offense Guerrero com-

"Four days? If that's all he got, a lot of are going to be throwing their bats," Backman said Tuesday.

The bat-throwing occurred in the sixth inning of the Mets' 5-2 win over the Dodgers. After two inside fastballs, one of which was fouled off, Cone threw a curve which glanced off Guerrero's shoulder.

Guerrero glared at Cone, then threw his bat in the general direction of the mound, missing Cone by about 20 feet.

As he began to walk slowly toward Cone, he was grabbed by Mets catcher Barry Lyons and third base man Howard Johnson as both benches emptied and Cone shouted at him "It was a curve ball." No

punches were thrown.
"A bat can become a potentially lethal weapon, one against which another player really has no defense," National League president Bart Giamatti said in a statement announcing the suspension.

Pirates stump Houston 5-4

PITTSBURGH (AP) - Sid Bream hit a sacrifice fly in the bottom of the ninth inning after Bobby Bonilla tied the game with an RBI single as the Pittsburgh Pirates overcame two Alan Ashby homers to beat the Houston Astros 5-4 Tuesday night.

Ashby's fifth homer of the year, a solo shot in the top of the ninth off reliever Jim Gott, 2-1, gave Houston a 4-3 lead.

Barry Bonds opened the bottom of the ninth with a bunt single off Larry Anderson, 1-2. After Jose Lind struck out, Andy Van Slyke, who went 4-for-5, singled to move Bonds to second.

Bonilla then singled to right and Bream followed with a long

It was Pittsburgh first victory against Houston in five games this season and the Pirates' third win in 10 games. It was the Astros' second loss in the last eight. Houston took a 1-0 lead in the

first against Doug Drabek on a two-out RBI double by Glenn Davis, who went 3-for-4. Davis singled in the fourth and

Ashby followed with a homer over the right field wall to give the Astros a 3-0 lead.

R.J. Reynolds' fourth-inning

RBI single ended a 16% innings Pirates' scoreless streak against Houston and Van Slyke pulled Pittsburgh to 3-2 when he led off the sixth with his seventh homer of the season.

The Pirates tied it in the seventh on Bonilla's RBI single off Juan Agosto, who has allowed five of the seven runners he has inherited this year to score.

Hatcher wins NL honors

NEW YORK (AP) - Houston Astros left fielder Billy Hatcher, who hit .536 and scored six times last week, has been named the National League's Player of the Week and shortstop Kurt Stilwell of Kansas City won the American League

Hatcher's spree included going 11-for-15, a .733 average, in a weekend series with St. Louis. Two of his three runs batted in during the week were game-winners as the Astros won five of six to take over first place in the National League West.

Stilwell hit .391, scoring nine runs and driving in 10. He had a slugging percentage of .870 and an on-base average of .545.



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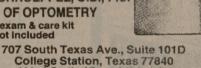
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