

Franklin sank '76 Bears 65-yard field goal shattered record

The skies weren't the only thing that was dark and dreary at Kyle Field on Oct. 16, 1976, because Coach Emory Bellard's Aggies were 0-2 in Southwest Conference play prior to taking the field against the Baylor Bears.

A&M had seen its 1976 title hopes go up in flames after only two conference games, losing to Houston 21-10 and getting outslugged 27-16 by Texas Tech at Kyle Field.

A few key players were injured, Bellard was starting a "new quarterback," junior David Walker and the kicking game hadn't been too effective all season.

Throw in the rain and cool weather, and it seemed like a tough day was in store for Texas A&M.

Who would ever have expected that not only would A&M win (24-0), but that place-kicker Tony Franklin would break the NCAA record for the longest field goal not once but twice?

Franklin, who had booted 12 of 29 field goal attempts in 1975, including a then-NCAA freshman record 59-yarder against Rice, had been out of synch most of the 1976 season.

He wasn't the place-kicker who had fueled A&M's comeback 33-14 win over Rice. Ignoring a sprained ankle, he kicked a 59 yard field goal into the wind to draw A&M to within one point of the Owls (14-13).

Assistant coach Chuck Moser had checked Franklin before telling Bellard that the youngster should do no more kicking that day.

"Our punter, Mark Stanley, fished out his kicking shoe and was getting ready for field goal duty when Franklin came running up and assured me he could make it," Bellard said with a chuckle following the game. "So I let him go ahead."

However, Franklin missed four field goals against Rice and came right back with a 2-of-6 performance when A&M beat Texas 20-10.

His 19-yard miss in the first quarter of A&M's loss to Arkansas blunted any Aggie offensive momentum, little of which had returned prior to the 1976 Baylor game.

Bellard knew that his squad was in for a battle against the Bears.

He said at the time, "They've got a lot

Tim Stanfield Flashback

of momentum going. Quarterback Mark Jackson keeps giving them big plays when they need them. He's the one who pulls the trigger."

Bear receiver Alcy Jackson figured to have a good day against an Aggie secondary that had been riddled by Texas Tech's Sammy Williams and a host of Cougar receivers.

But Robertson had made a change in the secondary, putting freshman Carl Grulich at strong safety alongside All-America free safety Lester Hayes.

That position change coupled with renewed intensity in the defensive line helped A&M hold Baylor to a paltry 184 yards total offense, less than half of what the Bears had averaged in their previous five games.

The swarming Aggie defenders put a clamp on the damp Bear offense, while their own offensive teammates put some points on the board.

Walker, who had taken over at quarterback in 1973 and maintained the job through 1974 before being red-shirted in 1975, settled the offense down and cut out the turnovers that had cost A&M potential victories over Houston and Tech.

Running back Curtis Dickey gained 143 yards on 33 carries, and fullback George Woodard bulled 62 yards on 18 carries and one touchdown even though Baylor started two noseguards and only three defensive backs.

But the catalyst for what turned out to be one of the most dominating stretches in A&M football history was the bare-foot boy himself.

Franklin's 24 yard field goal helped the Aggies take a 10-0 lead into the second quarter, but his next three-pointer set the maroon world on fire.

After the Aggie offense failed to get even one first down and faced a fourth down at the Baylor 47 yard line, snickers went through the drenched crowd when Bellard sent Franklin onto the field to try a "ridiculous" 64 yard field goal.

"Coach (Donnie) Wigginton asked me before the 64-yarder if I thought I could

make and I said yes," Franklin said. "He told me to tell Coach Bellard. Bellard told me to go ahead."

And so he did, smacking a low liner that carried farther and farther through the misty gloom until it barely cleared the cross bar. Once it had, the crowd of 52,241 went wild, as did Franklin's teammates.

Deep snapper Matt Freeman and holder David Shipman joined Franklin in a happy dance near midfield until the entire Aggie squad descended on them.

"The kids went berserk," Bellard said. "No, I wasn't surprised Tony did it because he had kicked a few from 65 yards out during pre-game warmups. When I saw that, I said, 'Tony, come on in. That's enough.'"

The Bears were stunned. Instead of getting the ball back after stopping the Aggies without a first down, they had suffered the indignity of watching the longest field goal in NCAA history.

And that was only the beginning of bad news for the visitors, because at 9:07 of the third quarter, Franklin kicked a shot through the uprights from 65 yards out.

Unlike the previous record-breaking field goal, there was no doubt that the second one was going to easily clear the cross bar. Ironically Baylor had declined an illegal procedure penalty preceding the second long field goal.

"On the 64-yarder I was tight," Franklin said. "I kicked the 65-yarder a lot better because there was no pressure. I think I could have made that one from 70 yards away."

The 64-yarder broke the SWC record of 61 that Arkansas' Steve Little had booted against Tulsa less than a month earlier.

But Franklin's moment at the top of the NCAA charts lasted only a few minutes, for Abilene Christian's Uve Johansson kicked a 69 yarder against East Texas State University later that day.

The Aggies proceeded to go on a rampage during the remainder of the 1976 season. For the first time in its history, A&M scored 30 or more points in four consecutive games.

A&M hammered Rice 57-34, setting team records for most points scored in a

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Dodgers beat Mets 6-0 for trip to World Series

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles Dodgers won the National League pennant Wednesday night by beating the favored New York Mets 6-0 in Game 7 behind Orel Hershiser's five-hitter, completing one of the greatest turnarounds in major league history.

The Dodgers will host Game 1 of the 85th World Series Saturday against Oakland in a rematch of the 1974 Series won by the Athletics in five games.

Hershiser, who finished the season with a record 59 consecutive scoreless innings, started Games 1 and 3 without getting a decision and saved Game 4. Of the 65 innings pitched by the Dodgers, Hershiser accounted for 24 2/3.

He broke the major league playoff mark of 22 2/3 innings, set in 1986 by Boston's Roger Clemens. The old NL playoff mark was 18 innings by Mike Scott of Houston, also in 1986.

It is the Dodgers' ninth pennant since moving to Los Angeles in 1958 and their first since 1981, when they went on to beat the New York Yankees in the World Series.

The Dodgers scored first in six of the seven games against the Mets and made things easy for Hershiser by scoring a run in the first off loser Ron Darling. Los Angeles then chased him with five runs in the second as New York made three sloppy fielding plays.

The Dodgers finished the regular season 94-67, a 43-game improvement over last year's 73-89 record. Only six times previously has an NL team finished 15 games or more below .500 one season, and rallied to finish 20 games or more above .500 the next.

Ironically, the Mets were 73-89 in 1968 and went on to win the World Series in five games against Baltimore a year later.

Steve Sax, 12-for-40 lifetime against Darling, got the Dodgers started with a single and moved to third on Mickey Hatcher's double down the left-field line. Kirk Gibson, hamstrung with a pulled left ham-

Oakland not ignoring practice before Series

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — One look at the dark, fiery eyes of Tony La Russa or a view of the Oakland Athletics' workout is enough to wipe out any notion the American League champs are settling into smugness before the World Series.

No team in 19 years of major league playoffs has had five days off before the start of the World Series — five days to get bloated with self-satisfaction and stale on the field.

The Athletics worked out for the second straight day Wednesday, determined to keep the edge that enabled them to win eight of 11 after they clinched the division title Sept. 19, then swept the Red Sox in four straight.

The team is relaxed and loose. No one is pressing or looking anxious. But there is no mistaking the determination to complete the goal La Russa and the players set early in the season: to win the World Series and not just the division or pennant.

Or, as La Russa describes it, to negotiate the final side of "the pyramid."

La Russa never let this team ease up, not when it won 14 straight and 18 of 19 early in the season and not when it was

breezing to the AL West championship. His players maintain the same focus on winning the World Series and proving they are the best in baseball.

The champagne party after the victory over Boston was brief and somewhat restrained. Jose Canseco had a few sips of bubbly and declined another round. Carney Lansford sat by his locker, utterly happy but holding back a little.

"I can remember winning a division title with the '79 (California) Angels," said Lansford. "We were so satisfied with that, we died in the playoffs (against the Baltimore Orioles)."

"This year, nobody has said anything about being satisfied. That includes right now. We still have a job to do."

"I think our confidence level has been extremely high, but we don't try to get so high to the point where we get arrogant or we come in and take everything for granted," Canseco said.

"We're going to work hard. We're going to come out here every day, running, taking batting practice, the whole works. We're not going to lay off just because we're in the World Series. There's still a lot of work to be done."

string, then hit a sacrifice fly to deep center field.

The Mets and Darling self-destructed in the Dodgers' big second inning.

Mike Scioscia and Jeff Hamilton led off with singles and Darling misjudged Alfredo Griffin's bunt, allowing it to fall in for a single to load the bases.

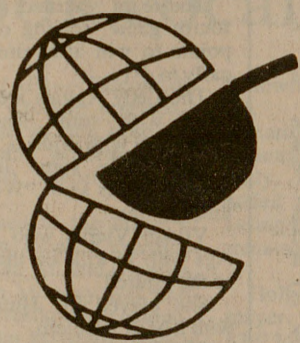
Hershiser hit a one-hopper to third that rookie Gregg Jefferies bobbled for an error, allowing Scioscia to score and reloading the bases. Sax followed with a two-run single to chase Darling and bring on Dwight Gooden, who started Game 4. It was

Gooden's first major league relief appearance.

After Hatcher advanced the runners with a groundout, the Mets walked Gibson to load the bases and set up a double play.

The strategy almost worked when Marshall hit a grounder to second. But Wally Backman's flip to shortstop Kevin Elster was wild allowing the fourth run of the inning to score. John Shelby capped the scoring with a sacrifice fly to left.

Darling pitched one-plus innings, allowing six runs, four earned, and six hits.



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Kick-off for:
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Beta Theta Pi

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XAVION
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Cold beverages and Gideon's Barbe-
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