

No.1-ranked Aggies get 'Sweet' 16th as pitching stops CMU

Duke's two-run double makes difference

By Doug Walker

SPORTS EDITOR

A strong pitching performance by starter Pat Sweet and a clutch relief appearance by Scott Centala earned the top-ranked Texas A&M baseball team its 16th consecutive win in a 3-2 verdict over 30th-ranked Central Michigan Friday afternoon at Olsen Field.

The Aggies tied a school record for consecutive wins and victories at the start of a season. The Chippewas, on a season-opening 11-game road trip, fell to 0-3 with the loss.

Sweet, whose longest previous outing lasted seven innings, worked eight and 1/3 innings in moving his record to 4-0 on the year. He allowed four hits and two runs (one earned) while striking out six. He showed excellent control as he didn't allow any Chippewa hitters to reach base via a base on balls.

Centala picked up his fourth save by stopping a Chippewa rally in the ninth.

Sweet had cruised through eight innings without much trouble. With one out, CMU shortstop Brian Vandermoere connected on a slider for a solo home run over the left-center field wall to draw CMU to within 3-2. Chippewa catcher Clark Hunley followed with a sharp single to left to chase Sweet from the mound.

Sweet didn't blame fatigue for his

ninth-inning lapse and said he made a costly mistake on the home run pitch.

"I didn't really get tired in the ninth," Sweet said. "I tried to come inside with a slider and got it out over the plate."

"I was pleased with my command of pitches. I was hitting my spots."

Centala got off to a shaky start by tossing a wild pitch on his first delivery to Chippewa designated hitter Rick Sellers. Centala eventually walked Sellers before getting Brett Hansen to line out to third baseman

Aggie Baseball

- **Score:** Texas A&M 3, Central Michigan 2.
- **Record:** 16-0.
- **Ranking:** First.
- **Next game:** Tuesday, double-header vs. Hardin Simmons.

John Byington, who threw to second to catch Hunley off the bag for the double play to end the game.

Tim Driscoll (0-1) took the loss for the visiting Chippewas of the Mid-American Conference. Driscoll worked five and 1/3 innings giving up six hits, three runs (all earned) and walked three while striking out three Aggie hitters.

The two teams were scheduled to play a doubleheader Saturday. How-

ever, bad weather caused the twinbill to be cancelled and the games will not be made up because the Chippewas had to travel to Edinburg for a tournament.

The game was the first real test the Aggies have had at home this year as Driscoll pitched well for the Chippewas and the Aggies stranded several baserunners in scoring position.

A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said the Aggies needed a tight game for the experience to help them later in the season.

"Coaches don't like it, but you need to get experience in tight situations like that," Johnson said. "From a fan's standpoint this was a great game. The pitchers did a great job, there were a couple of real good defensive plays and some clutch hitting."

Right fielder Andy Duke provided the clutch hitting for the Aggies with a two-run double in the fourth inning which was the difference in the game.

Duke slapped a ball off the left field wall to score John Byington and Eric Albright to give A&M a 3-0 lead. Duke said he got the pitch he wanted and put it in the right place.

"In that situation, with runners on base, I'm trying to put the ball in play," Duke said. "(Driscoll) got a fast ball up in the strike zone and I was fortunate to hit it in the alley."

Albright started the scoring in the

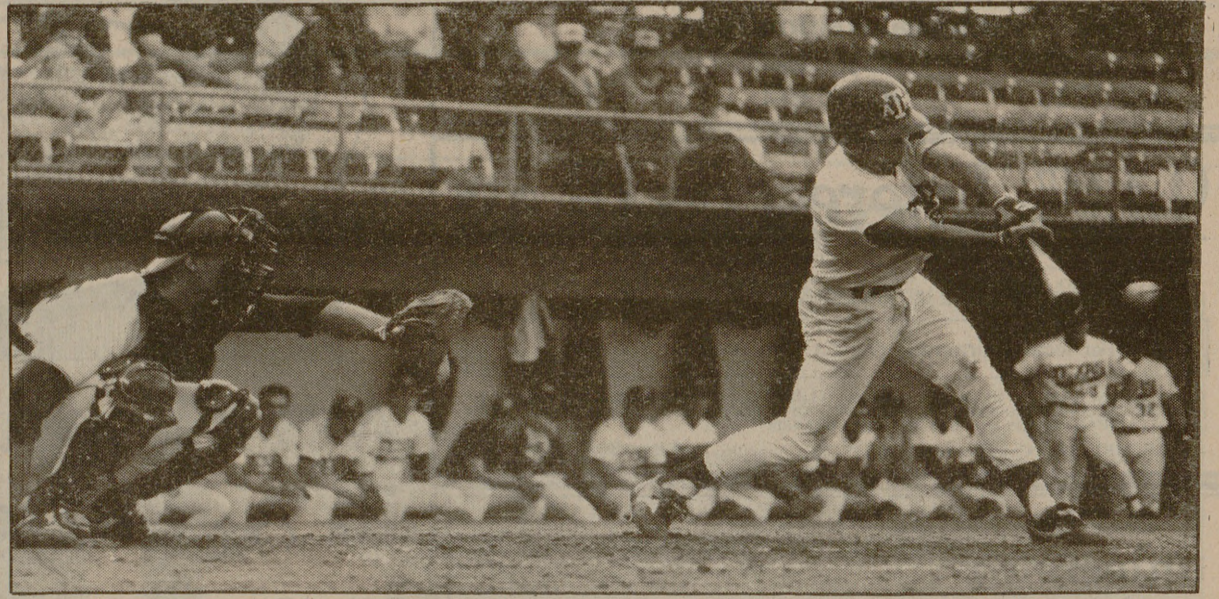


Photo by Jay Janner

A&M's John Byington connects with a pitch during the Aggies' 3-2 win over the Central Michigan Chippewas Friday. A&M tied a school record by recording its 16th straight win.

second inning with his third home run of the season, a solo shot to right field.

Sweet induced 16 ground-ball outs from the Chippewas as he had good control and kept his pitches low.

"He would have been tough for anybody to beat today," Johnson

said. "I don't know if we could ask him to be any better than he was today."

"When I'm doing good I just go out and keep the ball down," Sweet said. "I concentrate on that and let my defense do the rest. I got a lot of help from the defense today."

"Andy (Duke) and Chuck (Knoblauch) made a couple of great plays."

Byington's game-ending play along with a diving catch of a sinking liner by Duke in the fourth and a Knoblauch gem on a grounder up the middle in the eighth kept Sweet out of trouble.

Penders' traveling circus got what it deserved Saturday night

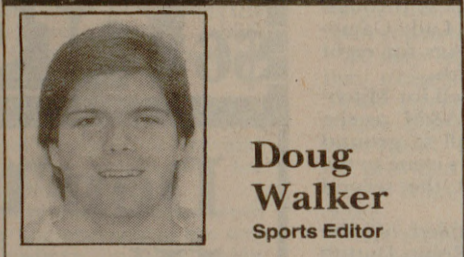
Saturday night the circus came to College Station.

The event featured Tom Penders and his self-proclaimed Runnin' Horns against the Texas Aggies. Penders and the Longhorns were planning on sewing up at least a tie for the Southwest Conference regular season title and solidifying their NCAA tournament hopes with a win. It was expected to be a run-and-gun circus.

However, the circus was of an entirely different type than what was predicted. In this circus the main stars were three Longhorn players who failed to live up to their Runnin' Horns moniker: forward Alvin Heggs, guard Lance Blanks and fellow backcourt man Travis Mays.

These three offensive machines resembled clowns as they led the blundering Longhorns to their most inept game of the season against a fired-up Aggie team.

Heggs (a.k.a. "The Amazing One-



Doug Walker Sports Editor

Dimensional Alvin Heggs") is a talented six-foot-eight post player whose only dimension as a basketball player appears to be scoring.

Alvin has this mysterious malady which affects him when he travels to the defensive end of the court. It seems that Alvin is suddenly stricken with paralysis of the legs when playing defense in the paint. Miraculously, Alvin regains his movement

when one of his teammates rebounds the ball.

Heggs had a whopping nine points at the half and 15 for the game. He teamed with Jose Nassar (another useless behemoth) to form a dynamic defensive duo against A&M's Donald Thompson. Thompson was so eager to get the ball with these guys on defense that he was practically running to the Aggie guards for it.

Blanks (a.k.a. Lance "How many layups can I miss in one game?" Blanks) lived up to his name by tossing several bricks on easy layups and losing his cool at the Aggie guards who defended him closely all night.

Blanks, a transfer from the University of Virginia, must have felt like he was back in the Atlantic Coast Conference as he was three of eleven from the field in the opening half on the way to giving a clinic on how not to shoot three pointers in a crucial game.

He teamed with Mays, who missed all

five of his first half shots, to be useless to the Longhorns when the game was still up for grabs.

Mays (whose motto seems to be: "I won't play defense but, gosh, isn't the arc on my shot pretty?") will get a lot of consideration for SWC most valuable player honors. However, he scored probably the quietest 21 points of his season.

The Aggies showed how vulnerable the Longhorns are defensively by attacking their traps and presses and getting plenty of layups and inside buckets all night.

Texas' only real chance to get back in the game came early in the second half when A&M lost forwards Ray Little and Thompson to foul trouble. Incredibly, the Aggies increased their lead to as high as 31 points before the Aggies let up.

"So," you're wondering, "why are you giving Texas such a hard time? They won 20 games this year."

Well, they got what they deserved

Saturday night.

Earlier this season Texas played and beat Rice at Austin by about 50 points. They led by about 30 at halftime and spent most of the second half boosting the scoring averages of the starters and humiliating Rice with showboat slam dunks and taunts.

The fans loved it, but the players didn't show any class. Texas isn't good enough to get away with that. A&M turned the tables on them Saturday night.

The Aggies have turned into a good team but not a powerhouse.

When Texas, if they get an NCAA tournament bid, plays a tough team and tries to play its usual up-tempo game they will probably be crushed the same way they were beaten by Vanderbilt and Oklahoma earlier this season.

The SWC isn't going to help its reputation by sending this team to Arkansas to the tournament. However, this is the best we can do for now.

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