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Fans and fun: new season goin' well for baseball

What goes "Step, step, step, scratch, squat, unh, uno, dos, trés?"

The fans at the Shack By The Track did when Jose Rubiera came to bat last weekend. Rubiera, the University of Texas-Arlington centerfielder, who played his high school baseball in the Bronx, was adopted by the fans at the Shack this weekend.

When he came to bat Saturday, the fans mimicked his every move. They chanted "step" when he walked to the plate, "scratch" and "squat" as he did each before stepping into the batter's box.

The crowd yelled "unh" when Rubiera hit the plate with his bat and counted each of his practice swings in Spanish.

Although the crowd probably started the chants to disrupt Rubiera, he said that he wasn't affected.

"They didn't disrupt me at all," Rubiera said. "In fact, I enjoyed it. They're a really nice crowd and I think they respected me."

Rubiera won over the crowd with his style during Saturday's second game. From then on, the crowd didn't seem to cheer against him as much as they did for him. In fact, when Rubiera singled in the eighth inning of the last game, half of the crowd gave him a short standing ovation.

The attentiveness of the crowd impressed him, he said.

"I've never seen such a crowd so much into a game," Rubiera said. "It's much different than New York."

"It really shows a lot about the team here, and how much they appreciate the team."

Rubiera said that he'd played in front of larger crowds, but none more impressive than the fans at the Shack.

"I've played in Farmington, New Mexico in front of a large crowd," he said. "But this was more exciting. Because these people were on me and the team (the whole game)."

"The way they did it was so nice, because they wanted to see me do good. Usually, (crowds) want to see you do bad, but it was the opposite. It was nice."

Fans enjoy Aggies, too

Chad Broussard was a hero in his first game as an Aggie.

Broussard, a junior transfer from San Jacinto Junior College, got the game-winning hit in the 10th inning of Friday's opener.

He said that his San Jacinto teams seldom played in front of crowds larger than 150 fans.

"It was incredible," Broussard said. "There were so many people out there cheering for us to win, and ragging the other team."

Panola Junior College transfer David Rollen, who hit a home run in the third game, also enjoyed his debut before the fans at Olsen Field.

"It felt great," Rollen said. "The fans were really behind us."

A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said that the fans are important.

"I hope the fans stay with us all season, because they'll make a difference in the outcome of some ballgames," Johnson said. "No question, when the fans are here, and they're hooked up like they were this weekend it'll make some difference."

"We appreciate them coming out, and on the whole I think they're really good fans. They know the game and they enjoy coming out."

The Shack: D.D.'s place

No doubt about it, A&M baseball is fun for Aggie fans. One reason is public address announcer D.D. Grubbs.

Grubbs keeps fans involved by playing a "theme song" for each Aggie hitter. He also livens up the game by providing a musical theme for foul balls and announcing "lucky numbers."

Saturday, Grubbs announced a lucky number to win a Valentine's cake from the A&M Food Services Bakery. The crowd hissed loudly, and Grubbs shot back, "Have you even tasted it yet? Then shut up!"

For fans and players alike, baseball is back at the Shack By The Track.

Ags sweep Mavs in opener



Photo by Jay Junner

First baseman Jeff Bernet is thrown out in an unsuccessful steal attempt Saturday. The Aggies won, 6-0.

By ALAN LEHMANN
Of The Battalion Staff

New team. Same results.

The Texas A&M baseball team opened the 1990 season just like they did last year: with a three game sweep at Olsen Field.

This season's first victims were the University of Texas-Arlington Mavericks. The Aggies beat them 3-2 in 10 innings Friday, in front of 3,948 fans.

A&M completed the sweep by taking both games Saturday, 5-3 and 6-0, in front of 3,471.

The Aggies didn't blow the Mavericks away, managing only five hits in the first game and three in the second. But A&M ran the bases well, and took advantage of nine UTA errors to squeeze out the first two wins.

The Aggies' defense also was shaky, committing six errors in the first two games.

But the third game was all A&M.

Finally, the Aggie bats came alive and A&M grabbed an early 5-0 lead en route to a nine-hit attack. The best pitching also was saved for last, as junior transfer Rich Robertson struck out 12 Mavericks and allowed only one hit in seven innings of work.

Coach Mark Johnson said he was pleased with the overall performance of his team, but saw some weak spots.

"For the first weekend, I'm not disappointed," Johnson said. "We didn't play real well today, but I thought Coach Lawler had the pitchers throwing really well."

"I didn't think we hit the ball real well. But, we did do some situational hitting." Key hitting saved the Aggies Friday. However, they didn't even need a hit to score the first run of the season.

In the second inning, Aggie third baseman Travis Williams drew a walk. He was balked to second by UTA starter Jeff Burrow, and scored on Jason Marshall's grounder one out later.

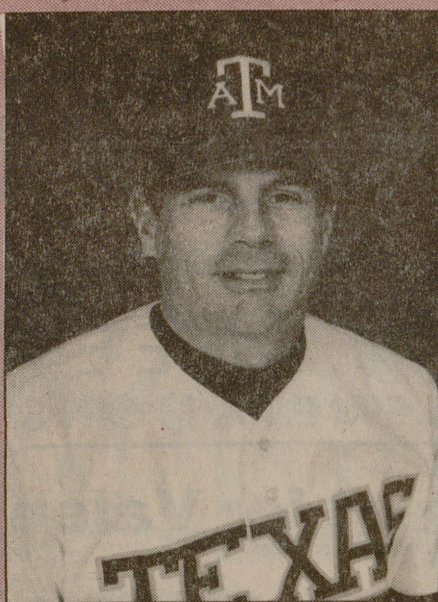
With one out in the third inning, Dan Robinson hit Burrow's first pitch over the left field fence for the Aggies' first home run of the season.

The score stayed 2-0 until the top of the seventh. With one out A&M starting pitcher Ronnie Allen gave up a double to UTA rightfielder Joe Guidry. Allen then bobbled a ground ball, and walked a batter to load the bases.

Junior pitcher Bo Siberz, a transfer from Westark Community College, came on in relief and gave up a two-run single to catcher Shayne Currin.

The score stayed knotted until the bottom of the 10th inning.

With one out, pinch hitter Jeff Bernet drew a walk. Cornelius Patterson came on to pinch run, and stole second base. A wild pitch by UTA reliever Kyle Smith



Mark Johnson

and intentional walks to Robinson and Blake Pyle loaded the bases.

Junior left fielder Chad Broussard, a San Jacinto Junior College transfer, worked the count full before lining the game-winning single past third baseman Clay Gould.

"It was a fastball right down the middle," Broussard said. "I was just trying to keep the ball out of the air and trying to get it through the infield somewhere for Cornelius to score."

Broussard said that his first game in front of the Olsen Field crowd was fun.

"It was incredible," he said. "There were so many people out there cheering for us to win, and ragging the other team."

Siberz picked up the win with 3.2 innings of scoreless relief. Allen was disappointed at not getting the win, but blamed only himself.

"It was my own fault," Allen said. "I missed the ground ball. If I'd have gotten that guy, I think I would have been out of the inning."

"I expected to pitch a little longer, but I think I ran out of juice a little there at the end from being hyped up all day."

Thanks to the work of more JUCO transfers, Saturday's games weren't as close.

In the opener, the Aggies again jumped out to an early lead. In the bottom of the first, leadoff hitter Dan Robinson walked, and advanced to third on a walk and a wild pitch. David Rollen, a Panola Junior College transfer, scored Robinson on a deep sacrifice fly.

The Aggies grabbed a 3-0 lead in the third when Robinson again walked. Witte doubled him to third, and they both scored on Rollen's double down the left field line.

UTA scored one run off A&M starter Pat Sweet in the fourth inning on an error and an infield hit. Sweet cruised until the seventh inning, giving up only four hits until first baseman Charlie Llewellyn's two-run home run.

Then, with the Aggies leading 5-3, Coach Johnson pulled Sweet in favor of junior Jason Bullard, another San Jacinto transfer. Bullard retired the last two hitters to earn his first save of the season.

Saturday's second game belonged to the transfers, too.

Robertson not only kept the Mavericks off the bases, but was overpowering, recording 12 strikeouts and allowing only one hit in seven innings. Rollen gave Robertson all the support he needed with a solo home run leading off the bottom of the second inning.

"It was a fastball outside," Rollen said. "I thought it was just a linedrive. I didn't know it was out until I got to first base."

The Aggies didn't let up there, they scored four more runs in the fourth inning.

Johnson took advantage of the blow-out to work in some substitutes. He also got a look at returning pitcher Steve Hughes, who worked the last two innings of the doubleheader. Hughes got into trouble in the ninth, but got of a no-outs, bases-loaded jam.

"I was having trouble from the wind-up," Robertson said. "My pitches were a little up. Once I got the lead, I tried to spot my pitches a little bit."

Johnson said he liked what he saw from his pitching staff.

"Rich Robertson was really impressive today for me," he said. "I thought all of our pitchers did a good job for a three-game series. I'm glad they did, because we're not hooked up real well offensively yet."

"We've got to make some adjustments, but that's typical of a new ballclub. I'm not disappointed that we're not hooked up offensively. We've just got a ways to go. I think there were some nervous people, some jitters and unanswered questions. But now we've got something to build on."

Lady Ags keep hot streak alive

A&M now 3-0 in second half of SWC play

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

DALLAS — The Lady Aggies' basketball team continued their winning streak through the weekend as they defeated Southern Methodist, 90-71, in Dallas on Saturday.

A&M hasn't lost a game since the start of the second half Southwest Conference schedule, which began Feb. 3.

The Lady Aggies downed the Baylor Bears, 94-55. Then A&M fought off Texas Christian in a grudge match, 84-70.

And with Saturday's victory over the Mustangs, the Lady Aggies increased their streak to 3-0.

A&M controlled the ball most of the first half by jumping out to a four-point lead in the opening 55 seconds.

However, both teams battled hard as they exchanged leads six times in the first 20 minutes.

SMU finally pushed through, taking a five-point advantage at the 9:37 mark.

The Aggies kept their poise by playing heads-up ball, and regained the lead. They extended their lead to nine points and led at the half, 41-32.

At the start of the second half the Lady Aggies exploded, never giving the Mustangs a chance to get back in the game.

A&M had the lead for the entire second

half of play, extending their overall lead to 23 points with 2:16 left in the game.

Lady Aggies sophomore guard LaTanya Irving and junior center, Louise Madison scored 14 and 12 points respectively in the second half to help give A&M their 90-71 win.

The Aggies had three players in double figures for the night.

Irving scored 22 points to lead all scorers, with Madison close behind, posting 20 points.

Sophomore guard Sheri Dillard had 14 to round out the top scorers.

With the win, A&M increased their lead to 7-4 in the SWC, and 15-7 over all.

Official's call gives A&M late win over SMU

By CLAY RASMUSSEN
Of The Battalion Staff

DALLAS — For Texas A&M men's basketball coach John Thornton, Holmes was where the heart was Saturday.

Southwest Conference referee Steve Holmes sent Thornton a valentine 10 days early, as he reversed a controversial call at the end of the game to give A&M a 58-57 victory over Southern Methodist.

With 35 seconds left in the game and trailing the Mustangs 57-55, the Aggies had final chance to set up a shot and try to tie the game into overtime. Senior guard Tom Milton, who was 2-of-17 from the free-throw line, took the inbound pass, drove into the key and missed the layup.

"The lane was wide open," Milton said. "I just missed the layup. That's the way it was all night."

SMU senior forward John Colbourne, who led the Mustangs with 25 points, came down with the rebound but fell over Aggie forward David Harris.

Holmes called Colbourne for traveling and the Aggies got a second chance.

"There's no question about that one," SMU Coach John Schumate said. "We saw it on the film after the game. He was really body slammed to the floor."

"But that's just the breaks."

With only four seconds left in the game, Thornton called a timeout and set up a play.

"We were in a dilemma because we knew they had fouls to give," Thornton said. "I knew we were not going to get good shots because they could foul us. We had a double pick down with (junior guard) Lisa Suber coming high."

"He caught the ball and thought his option was to drive in and try to draw a foul or get the layup."

Suber took the inbound pass from Milton, drove up the middle and missed the easy layup, all but signalling the end of the game.

However, Harris and freshman guard Brooks Thompson tipped the ball to the right corner baseline where Suber had ended up after his failed attempt.

Suber picked up the ball and lobbed

See Ags/Page 11

East All-Stars outshine West in 130-113 win

MIAMI (AP) — It was truly an All-Star show for the Eastern Conference on Saturday.

No one on the East had more than 17 points, but nine players had at least eight. A 130-113 victory over the West, which had strong performances from Magic Johnson and Tom Chambers but shot only 43.8 percent from the field.

It was the lowest total for a losing team in an All-Star game since the West lost 109 in 1976.

Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley led 17 each for the East. Isiah Thomas had 17 points and nine assists, Robert Parish had 12 points and Patrick Ewing 12 points and rebounds.

Johnson was the Most Valuable Player with 22 points, one more than his highest total in eight previous All-Star appearances. He also hit four 3-pointers, matching his career All-Star record of 11. Johnson, who had five 3-point attempts Sunday, now has five career All-Star 3-pointers.

Chambers added 21 points for the West. The East led by as many as 20 points in the first half and by 13 at halftime, and a breakaway dunk by Jordan with 7:12 left in the third quarter gave the East an 89-72 margin.

A dunk by Ewing, a jumper by Thomas and a 3-pointer by Joe Dumars gave the East, which shot 63.6 percent from the field in the third quarter, its largest lead, 91-72 with 4:05 left.

The West got as close as nine points in the fourth quarter as Pat Lever scored of his 16 points in the period.

A basket by Rolando Blackman made it 118-109 with 2:20 left, but consecutive baskets by Barkley, Jordan and Thomas sealed the outcome.

Parish scored 10 points in a span of more than five minutes late in the first quarter and early in the second, leading a 29-12 lead that expanded a 22-19 East lead to 51-19 with 9:16 left in the half.

West coach Pat Riley then inserted a center lineup of Akeem Olajuwon and David Robinson, and that seemed to settle the team as it rallied to close the gap to 55-45.

The East scored eight of the next 10 points, four by Barkley, to rebuild the margin to 17, but two 3-pointers by Johnson helped the West make it 65-52 at halftime.

The East missed four of its first 10 shots, three of them layups, and fell behind 7-2 before scoring 10 consecutive points to pull ahead to stay. Jordan had a 3-point Barkley a three-point play and Ewing straight points for a 12-7 East lead.

Later in the first period, the East put together streaks of six, seven and six points, ballooning the margin to 15 before Dominique Wilkins arched in a 30-footer with tenth of a second left, making it 40-23 at the end of the quarter.

The West made only nine of 24 field attempts in the period and made its situation worse with 4-for-10 shooting from the line. Johnson was 4-for-5 and Chambers for-2, and the rest of the West was 3-for-