

Aggies sluggers, not sluggish, in sweep of Owls

By ALAN LEHMANN
Of The Battalion Staff

Rice flew into Olsen Field in an unfamiliar way — as contenders for the Southwest Conference crown. But it was the Aggies who brought out the big guns this weekend as they swept the Owls 10-0, 13-5 and 10-7.

"I was worried that we might come out sluggish after the (two) losses to Baylor last weekend," Coach Mark Johnson said. "We made a statement with our bats today and swept them."

The Aggies looked more like sluggers than sluggish. A&M hitters smashed 35 hits off the highly-touted Rice pitching staff this weekend — 14 of them for extra bases.

Almost lost in the weekend of big hits was a hitting clinic by third baseman Travis Williams. The sophomore from Austin overcame a 0-for-4 outing in the first game to go 3-for-4 in the nightcap and 4-for-5 Sunday. In the series, Williams smashed three doubles, a home run and collected eight runs batted in.

"I hit some hard the first game, but they didn't drop," Williams said. "I was seeing the ball well and I was confident. It didn't matter where they threw the ball, I knew I would hit it."

The Aggies struck first Sunday with two runs in the first inning. After Brian Thomas drew a one-out walk, Williams blasted a two-run home run that hit the scoreboard in left field. The homer, Williams' seventh of the year, gave him the team lead.

The Owls answered with three runs in the third inning on a RBI single by catcher Jamie Cook and a two-run homer by first baseman Jason Ogden.

Williams tied the game at 3-3 in the third when he doubled home Thomas. A&M scored a pair in both the fourth and fifth innings.

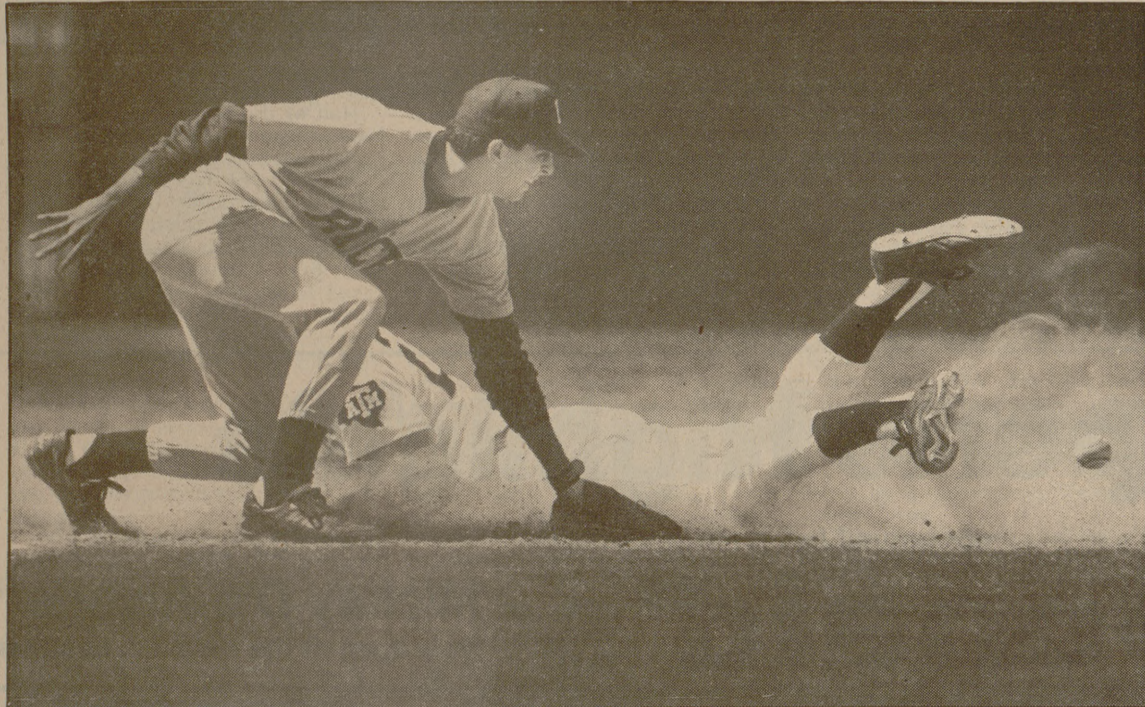
Chad Broussard doubled home Blake Pyle and Trey Witte with a smash that hit the chalk of the left field line.

In the fifth, Rollen clouted a two-run homer to build the lead to 7-3. Rollen's drive, his seventh of the season, was a majestic shot that easily cleared the fence in left-center field.

The Aggies scored three more in the sixth, as Holt, Thomas and Williams each had RBI singles.

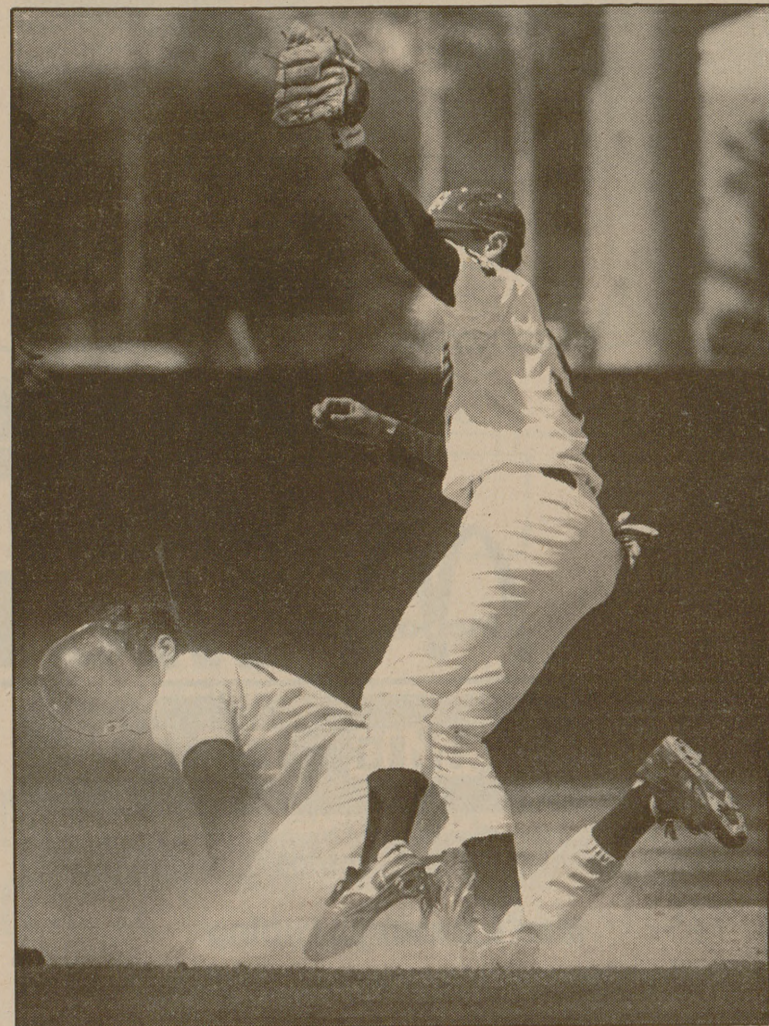
A&M starter Pat Sweet went five innings to pick up the win. Brent Gilbert pitched the sixth but gave up a run in the seventh and was relieved by Bo Siberz with only one out.

Rice victimized Siberz with a three-run outburst in the eighth that



A&M second baseman Trey Witte slides safely into third as Rice infielder Greg Duran bobbles the throw in the first inning of Saturday's 10-0 win. The Aggies swept the three-game series.

Photo by Scott D. Weaver



Shortstop Jason Marshall tags Rice's Chris Feris out at second base after an unsuccessful steal attempt in A&M's 10-0 victory.

Photo by Scott D. Weaver

cut the score to 10-7. Second baseman Taji Garcia's bases loaded double was the big blow.

Kerry Freudenberg pitched a scoreless ninth inning to earn his first save of the season.

The Aggies showed the Owls the ropes Saturday, or rather showed them the lines. A&M used six extra-base hits — five of which hit on or near the foul lines — to smash Rice 10-0.

Freshman Brian Thomas stroked three doubles and David Rollen ripped a two-run homer that almost hit the left field foul pole.

Ronnie Allen went the full seven innings for the Aggies to raise his record to 6-1. It was Allen's sixth complete game and third shutout of the season.

Allen was dominating, yet not overpowering. He allowed only three hits, but didn't strike out a single Owl batter. It was the first time this year that A&M pitching failed to record a strike out.

"I looked up in the fourth inning and didn't see any Ks (strike out markers) on the screen," Allen said. "I tried for a strike out later, but didn't get it."

The Aggies gave Allen all the support he needed in the third inning when they scored four runs to break

a scoreless tie.

Thomas lined a double down the left field line that landed squarely on the chalk. One out later, Rollen teed off on his sixth homer of the season. First baseman Pyle lined a single over the shortstop and moved to second on Trey Witte's infield hit.

One out later, Marshall blooped a double that scored Pyle. The ball dropped just inside the foul line and between two fielders. Witte took third on the play and scored when the rightfielder's throw was wild.

A&M added six more in the fourth on four hits and three Rice errors. Tim Holt led off with a solid single to left, and scored on Thomas' double into the left-center field gap.

Thomas moved to third on Williams' fly out. Rollen walked and Pyle followed with a double past the first baseman that scored Thomas. The throw to second got away from Garcia, allowing Rollen to score.

Witte followed with a walk and moved to third when Pyle scored on Broussard's single. With two outs, Witte scored when John Wood reached on an error. Broussard put the Aggies into double digits when he scored on a wild pitch.

It didn't take the Owls long to score in the second game.

They scored two runs in the first

inning on three hits, the key hit coming when pitcher Rich Robertson couldn't pick up Jamie Cook's bunt. A squeeze bunt and an RBI single gave Rice the 2-0 lead.

It was a short-lived lead, however, as A&M took a 3-2 lead in the bottom of the first.

Holt ripped a double to left field and scored one out later when Williams doubled to right field. Rollen grounded out to the shortstop, but Pyle reached second base on a throwing error by the first baseman that allowed Williams to score. Witte followed with a single that scored both runners.

After a scoreless second, the Owls got two runs for a 4-3 lead — their final lead of the day. First baseman Lee Kushner singled and moved to third on a double by Chris Feris. Kushner scored on a sacrifice fly by Merritt Robinson and Feris scored when Wood misplayed the throw to the plate.

The Aggies grabbed the lead for good in the third, when they sent 12 hitters to the plate and scored eight runs.

With one out, Witte started the rally with a walk. He moved to third on Broussard's single to right. Marshall followed with an RBI single, and Wood loaded the bases with a

single to left.

Holt continued the hitting string with a two-run single to make the score 6-4. Thomas walked to reload the bases, and Williams promptly cleared them with a single off the glove of the first baseman. Wood and Holt scored easily and Thomas scored when the throw from the right fielder sailed wide of the plate.

Rollen slammed a single to score Williams. One out later, Witte doubled in Rollen to cap the inning's scoring.

The eight-run monster was the

biggest Aggie inning this season, and the 13 runs were the most in a single game for A&M in 1990.

A&M scored its final two runs in the fourth on yet another Williams' double.

Robertson allowed the Owls another run in the fifth inning after the Aggies. Robertson gave up ten hits — the most he's given up this season. Still, it was good enough for Robertson's eighth win of the season.

Jason Bullard came on the to work the final two innings and held the Owls hitless.

Ag netters catch Owls, Cajuns

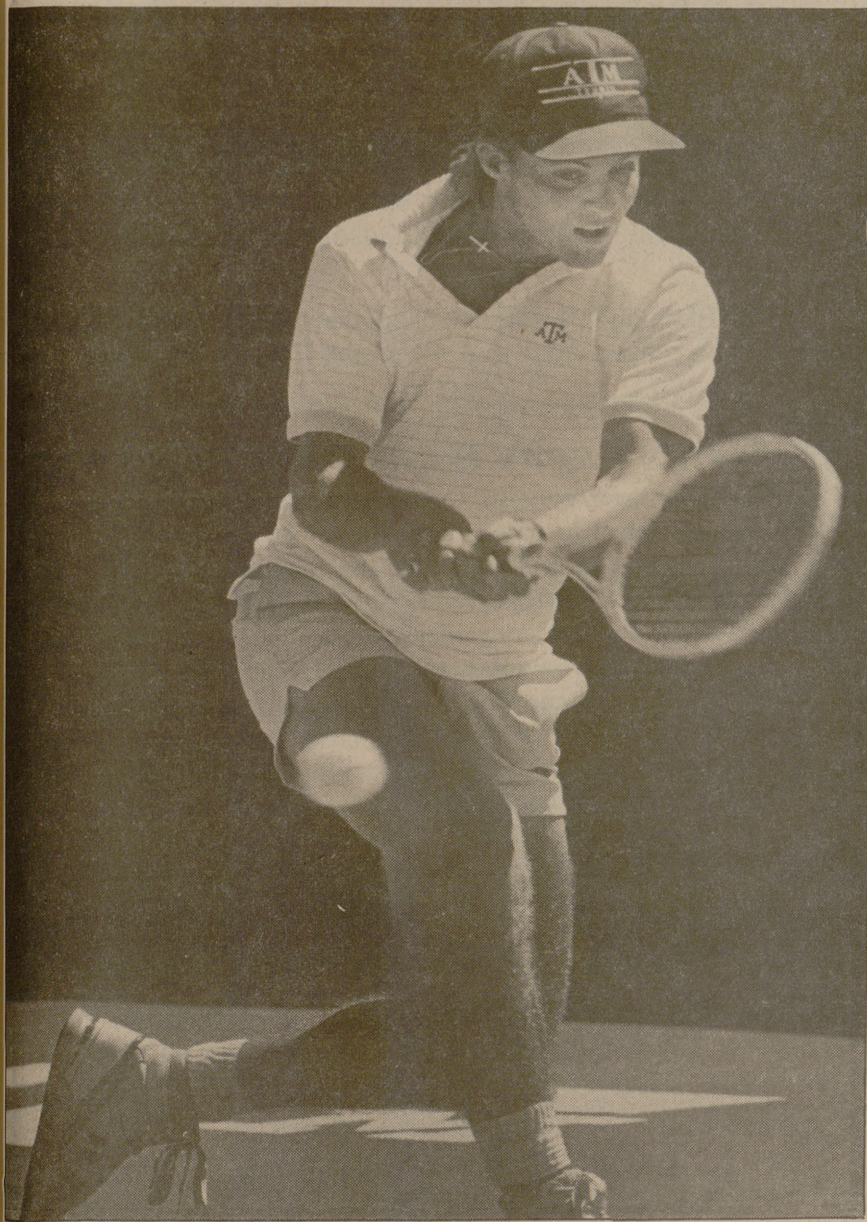


Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Senior Shaun O'Donovan, A&M's No. 1 singles player, hits a return against USL's Curtis Hollinger in Saturday's match at Omar Smith Tennis Center. The Aggies beat USL and Rice over the weekend to improve to 16-5 on the year.

From Staff and Wire Reports

The Texas A&M's men's tennis team proved that home court advantage is a major plus, winning both of their games Friday and Saturday.

The Aggies defeated Rice 6-3 in Southwest Conference play on Friday at the Omar Smith Tennis Center and went on to dominate Southwestern Louisiana 7-2 on Saturday.

With the two wins, A&M improves its overall record to 16-5, 3-3 in SWC play.

The Aggies' Shaun O'Donovan shined once again as he picked up his ninth win in 10 singles matches. He went three sets to claim his victory over Rice's Larry Pearl 6-4, 4-6, 6-4. O'Donovan is ranked 48th in the nation as a collegiate singles player.

"This is a big win for us," Coach David Kent said. "Shaun just never ceases to amaze me."

But in Saturday's game, O'Donovan came up short against USL's Curtis Hollinger, breaking his winning streak, 6-3, 2-6, 7-5.

Despite losing its opening match, the team rebounded and won the next six.

"This team has improved more than any team I've had here at A&M," Kent said. "We've had quite a turnaround this year, and things are looking good for the rest of the season."

Editors' Note

Several readers have called or written to comment that a column by a Battalion sportswriter in the Monday, April 2 Battalion was similar to a column by a different author in the Saturday, March 31 Houston Chronicle.

A review and comparison of the two columns concluded that the columns were indeed overly similar. The late, partial attribution does not allow a writer to take such liberties.

The Battalion sportswriter has been suspended without pay for two weeks. When he returns to The Battalion, he will be barred from writing columns.

The Battalion sincerely apologizes to our readers and to the Chronicle, and we thank those readers who took the time to bring this unfortunate situation to our attention.

Scot Walker, editor
Richard Tijerina, sports editor

Second time's a charm ... Faldo wins back-to-back Masters in sudden death

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Nick Faldo became only the second man to win consecutive Masters, beating Ray Floyd on the second hole of a sudden-death playoff Sunday.

Faldo, who beat Scott Hoch on the 11th hole of a playoff last year, duplicated that feat to join Jack Nicklaus as the only winner of successive Masters. He was helped greatly by Floyd, who missed a makeable birdie putt on the first playoff hole, then put his second shot into the water on No. 11.

The Englishman made par on the 11th, turned to shake Floyd's hand and then hugged his female caddy.

Faldo had to rally from a terrible start. He put his second shot in a bunker on the first hole, came out weakly and then three-putted for double bogey that dropped him five shots behind.

But he climbed back to get into the playoff with Floyd, who, at 47 was seeking to become the oldest player to win the Masters. Floyd was victorious here in 1976.

Nicklaus, now a 50-year-old grandfather but a still-dangerous Golden Bear, won the Masters in 1965-66.

To match those consecutive triumphs,

Faldo had to climb out of a tie with Nicklaus and then make up three strokes on Floyd on the last four holes.

All of that he accomplished. He came back from the potential devastation of the first-hole double bogey, climbed back into contention and caught the front-running Floyd on the 17th hole.

Both finished regulation play at 10-under-par 278. Floyd had a closing round of par 72. Faldo displayed enormous patience and perseverance in a comeback 69.

On the first playoff hole, the 10th at Augusta National, Faldo put his approach into a bunker on the right and Floyd threw his some 15 feet below the cup.

Faldo's excellent sand shot came out some three feet below the cup. When Floyd left his birdie putt short, Faldo calmly rapped in his shorter effort and they went on to the 11th.

From the fairway, Floyd aggressively attacked the flag, tucked on the left near a pond. He pulled it. Just a bit. Just enough.

Water splashed. In effect, it was over.

Faldo went through the formality of playing his second safely to the green. After Floyd dropped and pitched short, Faldo two-putted for the winning par.

Valvano leaves NC State, search for successor starts

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Jim Valvano cleaned his office Sunday, marking the end of his coaching tenure with North Carolina State and paving the way for the school to find a successor for the embattled basketball program.

Supporters and officials echoed the optimism Valvano displayed Saturday after he agreed to leave and not sue the school in exchange for \$238,000. Valvano also stands to be paid \$375,000 by the university's booster club, one of Valvano's attorneys said.

"It's just the passing of a baton," Charlie Bryant, executive director of the Wolfpack Club booster organization, said Sunday.

"Losing Jim is a big loss. However, we have a lot of tradition here. It might have a

temporary setback, but ... we will continue to have a tremendous program."

The school faces not only the task of hiring a new coach, but must first choose an athletic director — a position Valvano gave up in August after the program first came under fire.

"This is a very critical and difficult time for us," said William Burns Jr., co-vice chairman of the N.C. State Board of Trustees. "But I think the university is strong enough. I don't see any problem getting good people to fill these positions."

"I would hope that the new coach would be a man of high principle, one who believes in working with young men and encouraging their development, and at the same time winning some games."