Robinson

(Continued from page 10)

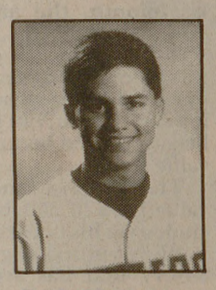
the sun, and I remember diving for it (on the play before). That's the last thing I remember. I don't remember getting up or getting ready for the next batter.

"I remember seeing Coach Johnson when I woke up, because he'd been there all the time, and I said, 'Coach, I don't think I can finish the game.' I didn't even know it was Monday — I had lost all those days."

Robinson's jaw was wired shut for five weeks to prevent him from opening his mouth. Of course, that also prevented him from eating anything this side of solid food.

For the next five weeks, Robinson was limited to drinking milkshakes and eating yogurt — anything that was smooth. It had to be strained because there wasn't any space for it to go through.

But after the wires were cut two weeks ago, Robinson, who had lost about 15 pounds from not eating, was given the green light to eat whole food.



Dan Robinson

"When they cut the wires, I started cramming food in," Robinson said. "I just cut it in little pieces and swallowed it whole because I couldn't chew it. Now I can chew a little bit. This has been the first week that I can barely chew. I'm eating anything and everything now."

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Dan Robinson remembers his recovery.

It wasn't easy going from the Aggies' team leader on offense to watching his team go on without him. But he said through it all — the pain, frustration and his doctors and coaches not allowing him to practice or even pick up a bat — his teammates and the community helped him with their support.

Cards poured into the Robinson home in the Woodlands, Texas, where he spent most of his recovery time. Children would visit him in the hospital and ask him to get well because they wanted to see him play.

"The team has been really supportive — they've been great," Robinson said. "They give me a hard time because of the stuff I've been eating. They've tried to blend everything for me at Cain Hall. I've had squash milkshakes and any kind of fruits — anything that would work.

"My teammates would always give me a hard time about it, but they're all happy for me. They say, 'We're glad to hear you talk again.'"

Johnson may be happy just to see him wield a bat again.

The Aggies' offense has been anemic at best over the last month. And with the team facing a crucial series against Houston last weekend, and Arkansas this weekend, Johnson said he's happy to have Robinson back in the lineup.

Battalion file photo by S. Weaver

Coach Mark Johnson (l) and trainers attend to Dan Robinson after he broke his jaw in a collision with Trey Witte in March.

"Dan's one of the guys who has a chance to open a game up with the long ball," Johnson said. "Some of the guys don't have that ability. With that in mind, we think maybe we can get something generated if he can get hold of some balls."

That may have played a part for last weekend's pinch-hitting appearance, Robinson said. Johnson had told Robinson before last Saturday's game to be ready in case he was needed.

His chance came in the seventh inning.

"I got chills and goosebumps all over my arms when my name was called," Robinson said. "It was just a great feeling to be back. When I walked up there, I asked (Johnson) if we were going to take a strike — because we usually take a strike when we're down a run.

"But he said, 'No, you swing away.' He was hoping, too. I guess he just had a feeling that I could do something, like I could get an extra base hit."

Robinson didn't. With his walk, the Aggies had the baserunner they needed to tie the game. Robinson stood on first base wearing the protective helmet the doctors make him wear. The lower half of his face is covered with a hard plastic shell, to protect him from any sudden movements.

Then came Weber's repeated pickoff attempts.

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Dan Robinson remembers standing on first base.

With pinch hitter Jeff Bernet at the plate, Weber threw to first base three times in hopes of picking Robinson off. But each time, Robinson dove safely back into the bag.

He said he wasn't thinking of a possible collision with Houston first baseman James Wambach, even though it might have caused him reinjury. Robinson was thinking only one thing — base hit.

"I wasn't nervous, I was anxious," Robinson said. "I was ready to run. On a double, I was going to score from first base. I already had it in my mind: 'If he hits a double, I'm scoring. I'm scoring.' I was really pumped up then, and I felt like I could outrun Carl Lewis or something —I was feeling that good."

And Robinson said he's feeling much better since being allowed to play again.

"The doctors didn't release me until the Houston series," he said. "I've been in the dugout for the last four weeks. It's kind of discouraging sitting there. When the team's doing well, it hurts because you want to be a part of it.

"When the team's not hitting, you say 'Maybe if I was there, I could have helped.' You never know. But I'm just happy to play again, to be a part of this team."

Robinson's back, even though it took a long road for him to get there. Doctors wanted to make sure bond between the jaw bones were secure before they gave him permission to play. Any sudden movement might have broken the bond, which could have disfigured Robinson's face.

He wasn't allowed to even pick up a bat for three-and-a-half weeks, but they did let him throw a baseball. In the fourth week, he started running again.

Johnson said Robinson has a good chance to play in Arkansas this weekend. The Aggies (42-15 overall, 10-8 in Southwest Conference play) are fighting the Rice Owls for the final spot in the SWC post-season tournament. A&M's magic number is two. Any combination of two A&M wins and Rice losses will give the Aggies the final playoff berth.

Rice finishes its season at home against Texas Tech on May 11-12.

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Dan Robinson remembers last weekend, watching A&M's chances at the SWC Tournament start to slip while the Aggies were being swept by the Cougars.

It was the first three-game series sweep of the Aggies at home since Arkansas did it in 1987. With Robinson at first base, Bernet struck out. Down to their last out, Pyle ended the game on a long fly ball to right field.

That extra base hit Robinson was hoping to try to score from first base on, never came.

"There wasn't much we could do," Robinson said. "The team did the best it could, and it just didn't happen. It's disappointing to lose, but we just didn't come together as a team and play as well as we should have."

Robinson said his biggest problem since coming back is regaining the timing on his swing. Johnson said that will come back in time. What may never come back is Robinson's memory of his collision. Right now, all he can do to remember the play is watch it on film. Even that doesn't help jog his memory.

But that may not be all that bad.

"I think it's good that I don't remember that, because I'm not scared to play now," Robinson said. "If I would have remembered it, I might be a little more hesitant toward everything, even getting close to somebody. But it doesn't bother me at all, so I'm glad for that."

The Aggies are happy too. Robinson's return won't bring the team victories. But it certainly won't hurt.

"I'm so anxious right now," Robinson said. "I haven't played in six weeks, and I want to come back and help the team. And I'm not going to do it by myself — everyone else is going to have to contribute like they've always done.

"That's what I've got to get in my mind, that I need to just stay back, stick to my game, try to get base hits and get on base. I feel good. I feel strong again."

Aggie fans may remember that for a long time.

Rains threaten golf tournament

IRVING (AP) — Continuing rains, which have flooded large portions of North Texas, threaten Thursday's start of the Byron Nelson Classic.

"I'm trying to figure out if we can play 36 holes on Sunday," Mike Shea, tournament director for the PGA Tour, said Wednesday.

About four inches of rain fell Wednesday on the TPC at Las Colinas in the Dallas suburbs.

The heavy rains followed storms last week which flooded large portions of North Texas, caused millions of dollars in damage, forced thousands from their homes and were blamed for the loss of seven lives.

Most of the area remained under a flash flood watch.

"The forecast is for more storms, more of the same, tonight. Maybe another 3-4 inches," Shea said. "We'll play when we can."

The pro-am was washed out for the second year in a row and gave the 156-man field a day off. For many of them, it was not completely welcome.

Leading money-winner Mark Calcavecchia and PGA champion Payne Stewart were among the group looking to the pro-am as their only practice round.

"I've played here so much, that's not really a problem," Stewart said.

"But it's the tournament and the local charity that's taking the beating, and all those people who bought the gold sponsorships and places in the pro-am," he said. "It's a shame."

It also caused some confusion for Calcavecchia, who has slumped after reeling off three consecutive runner-up finishes a month ago.

"The last couple of weeks I've playing terrible," he said. "I'd gone to a new set of clubs at the start of the year, but I'd played so bad lately I thought I'd go back to the old set just to make a change.

"But I didn't get a chance to practice with them. So now I don't know if I want to go with the old set or stay with the new or what.

"If it was any other tournament I'd probably just withdraw. But this stretch — Nelson, Memorial, Colonial — is probably my three favorite tournaments. It's a stretch I've been looking forward to all year."

Knicks keep playoff alive

NEW YORK (AP) — Patrick Ewing kept the New York Knicks in the playoffs Wednesday night with 33 points and 19 rebounds in a 102-99 victory over the Boston Celtics.

The fourth game will be Friday night at Madison Square Garden, with the Celtics up 2-1.

Ewing had 21 points and 16 rebounds at halftime, but he committed his fourth foul and sat out most of the third quarter.

Ewing returned to the game and scored the first five points of the fourth quarter, giving New York a seven-point advantage.

The Celtics closed to 100-99 on a free throw by Reggie Lewis with 29 seconds remaining.

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