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SPORTS

Thursday, February 14, 1991

The Battalion

Sports Editor

Alan Lehmann

845-2688

Arbitration breeds greed in pro baseball

There's just something about the start of baseball season every spring.

It's different from football season when the cold weather keeps fans inside, loading up on pizza and spirits.

Baseball season lets you go out on a warm, sunny day and play catch after watching the big-leaguers on television.

Baseball is also cherished by Americans because it has kept a sense of authenticity and nostalgia through the years. The playing surface of most pro baseball stadiums is just like it should be; open to the elements and played on grass.

And this season if you go out to one of those big league ballparks you'll smell the scents that make baseball unique.

You can catch the aroma of hot dogs as vendors walk through the stands, and the scent of popcorn and fresh peanuts is never far away. The smell of freshly cut grass after the infield is groomed is a favorite of mine.

But this season, fans will pick up a familiar odor from the outfield that is unfamiliarly strong.

The stench that threatens the game of baseball is arbitration.

Arbitration, simply put, is when a team's salary offer for a player is below what the player demands. The two agree to let an outside source decide what the player is worth.

A big problem with the system occurs when a ball club tries to convince the arbitrator, who isn't necessarily well-versed in baseball, that a player isn't worthy of a salary increase.

This can create friction between players and management.

Palmiero's case

Texas Ranger's first baseman Rafael Palmeiro settled with the Rangers for \$1.475 million yesterday, avoiding arbitration. But I would have loved to hear what the Rangers were going to say about Palmeiro if the case had gone to arbitration.

How can you say anything negative about a player who came in third in the American League with a .319 batting average last season?

Palmeiro was a bargain for the Rangers, playing for only \$300,000.

Palmeiro also led the league with hits (191) and road average (.350) and also averaged .346 against the league's top 14 pitchers.

How do we solve this problem? One way would be to start a salary cap. A salary cap would limit the amount of money teams could pay their players, thus discouraging sky-rocketing salaries. A figure of \$25 million per team would work.

Bonus checks, of say \$200,000, could be given to the players of teams who make it to the playoffs.

With a salary cap, players like Texas' Pete Incaviglia, will be given less leverage in arbitration. Incaviglia, who has significantly lower hitting statistics than Palmeiro, wants \$2.1 million a year.

The Palmeiro's of the league, who deserve the money, will get their fair share of a team's allotted salary because management will not be able to waste their \$25 million on questionable players.

Fiscal responsibility

With a salary cap, major league management will have to move from being unconscious to budget conscious.

Also, a major problem in professional baseball is that players in small markets, who may be just as productive as players in larger markets, want salaries equivalent to players like Boston's Roger Clemens, who will earn close to \$5.5 million this season.

But it doesn't make sense for a player like the Pittsburgh Pirate's Doug Drabek, who's 1990 stats are comparable to Clemens', to demand even close to \$5 million a year.

Markets like Pittsburgh, Seattle and Kansas City have signed players to big contracts the past few years, but they won't be able to keep it up for long.

The smaller markets just can't generate the T.V. revenues and ticket sales that larger ones can.

Take the Boston Red Sox for example. Their 1991 season payroll of \$40 million doubles the Seattle Mariners' 1990 net income. Teams in smaller markets are at a disadvantage without a salary cap.

Does this mean the league's best players will only want to play in markets that can pay them big salaries?

Maybe, and if it's not already a trend it's sure to become one.

A salary cap, which would keep teams from trying to outbid each other for talent, would bring parity and sensibility back to a sport that needs it.

Ags fall apart in second half, lose 68-62

A&M Solidifies hold on last place

By Scott Wudel
The Battalion

The Aggies ran out of luck Wednesday night.

Texas A&M basketball team didn't have enough fresh legs to defeat Southern Methodist University, losing their second straight game, 68-62.

The Aggies stumble to a 1-11 Southwest Conference record, 6-17 overall. The Mustangs trot to 6-6 in the conference, 11-12 for the season.

A&M remains cellar-bound in the conference. The Aggies play their next game Feb. 20 in Waco against Baylor. The Bears broke a five-game losing streak Wednesday night to increase their SWC margin to two games over A&M.

The Aggies exploded out of the gate in the first half, taking an unusual 14-point lead with 7:27 left in the opening stanza, and then headed into the locker room with a 38-28 lead at intermission.

SMU went on an 18-6 run to take the lead midway through the second half. The Aggies struggled with fatigue, leading to a mess of missed shots and a lack of rebounding strength.

A&M coach Kermit Davis Jr. said the Aggies couldn't find their first half enthusiasm.

"In the second half (SMU) just kept tipping," Davis said about the Mustangs second shot opportunities. "It was guards, it was forwards — nobody on our team would get a body on people."

"All of a sudden the dam just broke and we couldn't fight back."

Lynn Suber said the second half was the story of the ball game.

"What it boils down to is they wanted it more than we did," Suber said. "They just took us out of our game."

Suber tried to explain the Aggies' 32.1 percent shooting woes in the second half.

"We would shoot the ball and it would go halfway in," he said. "It seemed as if someone had put a lid on the basket."

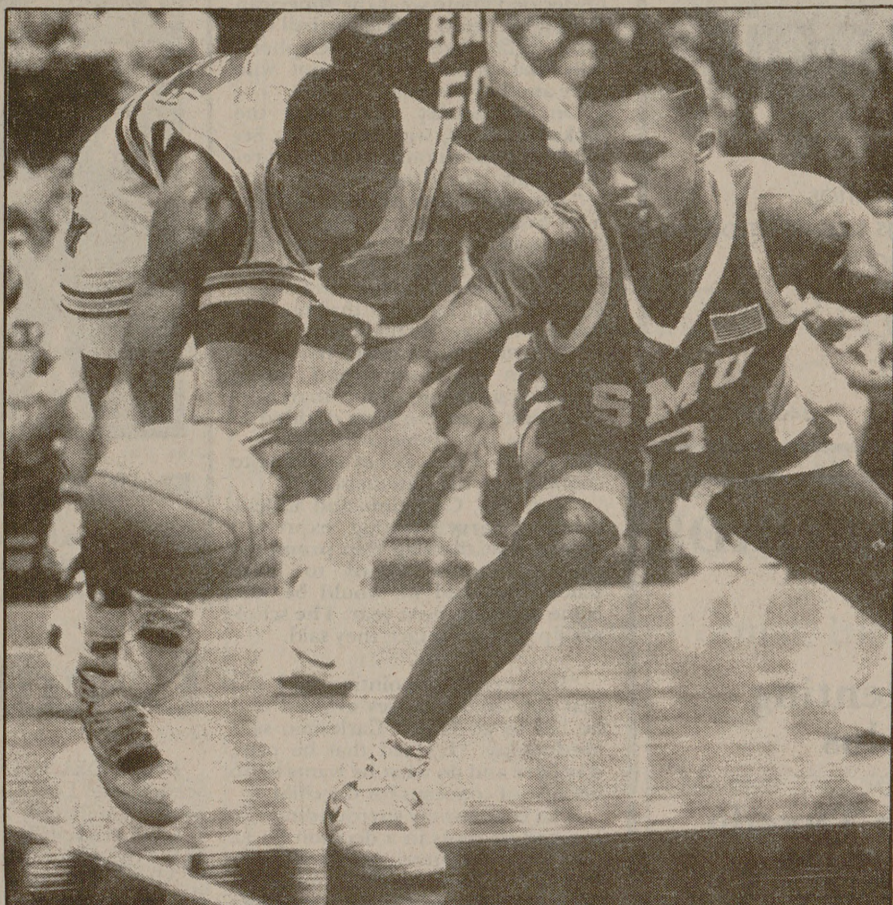
SMU coach John Shumate said the Mustangs played their ugliest game of the year. He said his young players were able to reach in and pull out their reserve energy.

"We struggled and our concentration level wasn't there in the first half," Shumate said. "With a young team, it's a jekyll and hyde situation and that's why you need depth."

The tired Aggies, who have struggled because of a lack of depth all season, were without one more body Wednesday night.

Davis announced earlier in the day that transfer player Isaac Brown had been dismissed from the team for the remainder of the season. The coach said after the game that Brown had trouble meeting his on and off-the-court responsibilities.

"Isaac had been struggling with some of the things we were doing," Davis said. "I think he's a talented person, he just had a problem with an academic situation — miss-



Texas A&M guard Lynn Suber and SMU guard Mike Wilson (3) reach for a loose ball during Wednesday's 68-62 Aggie loss at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

ing a study hall and we disciplined him for it.

"It just didn't work out for both parties, I think it's best for Isaac and Texas A&M."

Davis said Brown will stay in school for the remainder of the semester.

Brown said Wednesday night that he plans to return to Mississippi next year to attend school. The junior transfer averaged 12 points while starting in 17 games for A&M this season.

Brooks Thompson lead A&M scorers for the fourth straight game. The sophomore guard scored 16 points, but was held to only three points in the second half.

Anthony Ware had a season-high 14 points for the Aggies, while shooting 7-9 from the field.

But the Aggies needed rebounds to stop the Mustangs. SMU outrebounded the home team 31-19 after halftime.

SMU's Mike Wilson was a thorn in the Aggies' side the whole game. Wilson connected on 11 of 17 shots and finished the

night with 26 points.

The Mustangs' Tim Mason lead all rebounders with 13 boards.

The Aggies scored the first basket of the second half but then let SMU run off 12 straight points, tying the game on a layup with 16:12 remaining.

The Mustangs took their first lead at of the game, 46-44, when Troy Valentino hit a jumper from inside the free throw line.

A&M fought back from a 12-point deficit but could only close the gap to six as time expired.

The Aggies held onto a 14-point lead in the closing minutes of the first half when Thompson stole an SMU pass and found Suber open for a layup.

A&M used aggressive defense to keep the Mustangs off-balance in the opening minutes.

The Aggies shot better than 57 percent from the field in the first half.

Aggies blank out matched Crusaders 6-0

By Craig Wilson
The Battalion

Texas A&M reserve rightfielder Brett Weinberger had grounded out and dropped a fly ball. Then he got angry.

Weinberger's subsequent three-hit afternoon highlighted a 6-0 Texas A&M (4-2) shutout of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (0-4) Wednesday at Olsen Field.

The junior transfer from Glendale (Arizona) Junior College made the most of his first start with a two-run homer off Crusader starting pitcher Neil Ling in the third inning.

Aggie head coach Mark Johnson had nothing but fond words for the upstart Weinberger.

"Brett had a great day," Johnson said. "That was his first day out across the line for us and he really had an outing."

"He got three hits and he hit the ball hard all three times, and he picked up our RBIs real well, so I was very pleased with his performance."

Weinberger, who was not projected as a top player this season by the coaching staff, said he was delighted with his performance.

"I was glad to get in the lineup today," Weinberger said. "I was real excited. I've been waiting for my chance and I was just glad that I was able to get in there."

Weinberger said he was not sure he had gotten enough bat on the ball when his opposite-field round-tripper crossed the right field fence.

"I didn't think I hit it that hard," he said. "But I kept running and I guessed it carried out."

Weinberger also hit to the right side on his fifth inning, two-run triple and seventh-inning single.

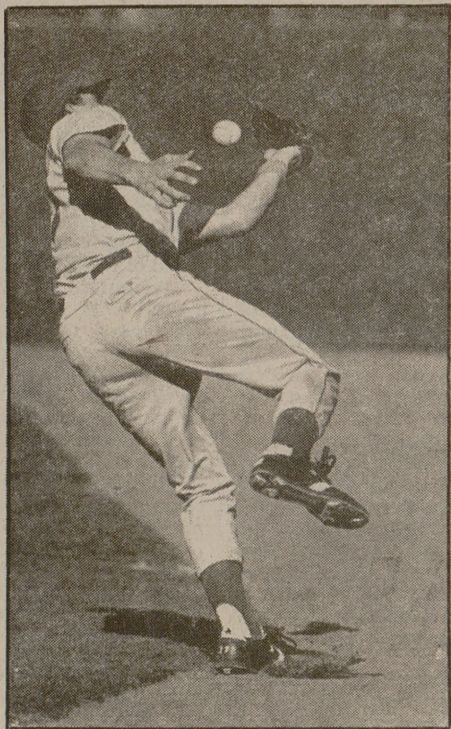
"They were throwing me outside all day, so all I could do was try to hit the ball," he said.

Aggie freshman Kelly Wunsch started on the mound and scattered three hits while striking out five Crusaders in four innings.

After a short relief stint from junior Brian Harrison, who struck out two batters in two innings, the finishing touches were put on by freshman Jeff Granger, who pitched the final three frames.

Granger's heat produced four strikeouts and helped the youngster gain plenty of confidence.

"I finally got to get on the hill," Granger said, "and it's been a long time since I've been in the action. It felt great to be out there."



Mary Hardin Baylor first baseman Phillip Schulze drops a foul pop.

"I was throwing everything high and Coach Lawler's been working with me to keep my pitches down and I'm just trying hard to go out there and pitch strikes. Everything will come if you keep the ball in the zone."

Despite his success, Granger admitted having a case of the jitters.

"The first inning I was real nervous," he said. "There were more fans than pretty much are my whole home town."

"It took me a while to get settled in, and once I did it felt good to have the fans behind me. It's exciting to get out there and be able to pitch in front of them."

Junior first baseman Conrad Colby had an eighth-inning double to push A&M's lead to 5-0.

He then scored when second baseman



A&M shortstop Jason Marshall sets for a throw to first base to complete a double play in A&M's 6-0 win over Mary Hardin Baylor Wednesday.

Ron Johnson grounded into a fielder's choice.

Coach Johnson said he jumbled his lineup to get a feel for his players and attempt to find a winning combination.

"We're still feeling around," Johnson said. "We've got some good guys sitting on the bench. We just want to feel who our players are and give everybody a chance."

Flying daredevils entertain crowd

By Douglas Pils
The Battalion

The Bud Light Daredevils flip-flopped into G. Rollie White Wednesday night and in the process stole the show from the Texas A&M basketball team.

Before the Aggies' second half swan dive to the depths of the Southwest Conference cellar with a 68-62 loss to Southern Methodist, the Daredevils dazzled the 2,289 in attendance at halftime.

For 10 years the Daredevils have delighted fans in basketball arenas around the world with their routine consisting of aerial acrobatics and spectacular dunks with the assistance of small trampolines. Ty Cobb, who originated the idea 10 years ago while as a cheerleader at the University of Mississippi, led a group of four power-packed dynamoes through a eight minute exercise in excitement.

This year the Daredevils started a second team in order to spread their magical performance to a wider audience. The two teams put on about 140 shows a year, and team member Gary Hedrick said the rigors of each show can get tough, but that each member psyches up to please the crowds.

"Each guy has his own idiosyncrasies about getting ready," Hedrick said. "Some just sit around and think things over and go over the moves in the routine, and others just listen to walkmans."

Cobb and Hedrick are the elder statesman of the foursome, none of which measures over six feet tall. Cobb, who comes from a cheerleading background, acts as the group manager and Hedrick, who started as a gymnast, is the team captain.

Adam Hardy, the youngest of the group, and Keith Rooks round out the team. Hardy was also a cheerleader and Rooks was an NCAA All-American gymnast.

Cobb returned this year, after a two-year absence, to form the second team, but he said he's not going to stay around after this year.

"It's always great being in front of the crowds," Cobb said. "But after all these years, this will be my last. It's time to settle down and get on with the life."

After touring for the better part of eight years, Cobb will tie the knot at the end of the Daredevils' current tour when he weds Becky Glass. Cobb credits Glass with his decision for hanging up his sneakers, which he will do for good this time.

"I'm not really sure what I'll do after we get married," he said, "I'm just planning on being a husband and a family man for a while."

Cobb, who said his mom wanted to name her first son Ty before she ever met his father, will be missed his teammates said. But after 10 years of success and millions of enthralled fans, they all agreed the show will definitely live on for many years.