

Ranger bats wide awake; make team a contender

Tim Schnettler
Sports Writer

Although the Texas Rangers have lost six of their last seven games, they find themselves in a position which they are not too familiar with. After a fourteen game win streak during the month of May, the Rangers are currently in second place in the American League's Western Division, trailing only the Oakland A's.

To many fans and sports writers this comes as a surprise, since preseason picks had the Rangers finishing sixth in the seven team division.

What has been the key to the resurgence of the Rangers?

The answer comes as a big surprise to some, but for people who follow the game, it is not much of a shock.

The key to the Rangers' resurgence has been the awakening of their sleeping bats.

The Rangers, as a team, are hitting .289. This average not only leads the American League, but also leads the entire major leagues. The next best team is hitting a full 17 points less than the Rangers.

Besides leading the major league in hitting as a team, the boys from Arlington also boast three of the top ten hitters in the American League.

Leading the way for the rest of the team is Ruben Sierra. Sierra is currently in the middle of a thirteen game hitting streak, and is leading the league with an impressive .353 average. During the month of May, Sierra hit an astounding .386 and had 21 RBIs.

The two other hot bats instrumental in the success of the Rangers, were those of Brian Downing and Juan Gonzalez.

Downing — who was considering retirement at the start of the season — is hitting a blistering .344. During the Rangers' 14 game winning streak, Downing hit two homers in a game against the Seattle Mariners. The second blast tied the game and sent it into extra innings.

Gonzalez is currently eighth in the American League with a .336 average. He led the league in runs batted in with 28 during the month of May.

If the Rangers continue their torrid hitting pace, and their pitching staff gets as hot as their bats have been, look for them to challenge the A's for the American League's Western division crown.

Stallings remembers A&M

Once an Aggie, always an Aggie

Editor's note: This is the first in an ongoing weekly series that will profile former athletic coaches at Texas A&M.

By David Leahy
The Battalion

When Gene Stallings left the University of Alabama in 1965 to become head football coach at Texas A&M University, he took over a program that was in disarray.

Twenty-two years later, Stallings is perhaps one of the most fondly remembered A&M coaches. He received All-Southwest Conference honors at Texas A&M under legendary coach Paul "Bear" Bryant. He graduated from A&M in 1957, and was inducted into A&M's Athletic Hall of Fame in 1982.

As a player and assistant coach for Bryant, Stallings displayed a strong work ethic, and dedicated himself to the revival of Aggie football. In his third season, he led A&M to its first Cotton Bowl berth since 1940, but a 27-45-1 record over seven seasons eventually led to Stallings' dismissal as coach.

Despite the losing record, A&M enjoyed tremendous victories during his tenure.

Presently the head football coach at the University of Alabama, Stallings readily reminisces about his coaching days at A&M.

"I have very warm feelings toward A&M," he said. "I miss the relationship and the closeness I had with the A&M people."

His first year at Texas A&M produced a 3-7 record, but included in one of those three victories was a shocking upset of nationally ranked Georgia Tech, 14-10 in Atlanta. Texas A&M was down 10-0 late in the fourth quarter, but rallied for two touchdowns in three and a half minutes.

It was only Stallings' second game as head coach, but one that he will always remember.

"We started the season off by getting shutout by LSU, but came back and earned a great victory against a very talented team."

The Aggies finished 4-5-1 the following year, but in 1967 Coach Stallings got his team playing the way he wanted. After losing their first four games of the year, the Aggies won seven in a row that included a 10-7 victory over the University of Texas, and a Cotton Bowl victory over Alabama, 20-16.

The Cotton Bowl victory was especially sweet for Stallings, since Alabama was coached at the time by his mentor, Bryant.



Gene Stallings is congratulated by Paul "Bear" Bryant with a lift after Stallings' Texas Aggies defeated Bryant's Alabama Crimson Tide in the 1968 Cotton Bowl.

"I thought it was a privilege and a pleasure for the players to play against Coach Bryant, but I wanted them to just go out and have fun," he said. "The victory over Texas is what got us there."

Even though his victory over Bryant is his most famous win, Stallings admits another, earlier victory stands out for him.

"When we beat Texas 10-7 to go to the Cotton Bowl, that was the best," he said. "It stands out because of what it meant — winning the (SWC) championship and going to the Cotton Bowl."

"I truly enjoyed the 1967 season. Starting off slowly and finishing strong is what I enjoyed the most," Stallings said. "To lose our first four games of the year and end up winning the Cotton Bowl was great."

After the 1967 season, the Aggies had four straight losing years and Stallings left to join Tom Landry and the Dallas Cowboys in 1972. He remained on the Cowboys' coaching staff for fourteen seasons before being named head coach of the St. Louis (Phoenix) Cardinals in 1986.

Stallings coached the Cardinals for three seasons, compiling a 23-34-1 record. He was out of football for one year before being named head coach of the University of Alabama in 1990.

Stallings' frustration toward the Cardinals is what took him back to collegiate coaching.

There were six games left in the 1988 season when speculation began about the renewal of my contract," he said. "I think the fans wanted me back, but the management didn't seem to care either way. I was more concerned with winning the championship than with my contract."

Despite the pressures he face in the NFL, he said collegiate coaching is more demanding.

"I feel there is additional responsibility in collegiate coaching," Stallings said. "Your players are working on their education and trying to get their degree."

"Because of the education factor, there's more pressure coaching in college than in the pros."

Before his death, Bryant said A&M was the toughest place in the world to coach, and Bryant's successors have said the same about Alabama. Stallings, however has few regrets about his rough road.

"Overall, my years of coaching at A&M were a little frustrating," he said. "We didn't win as many games as I wanted to, but we did have an outstanding caliber of individuals."

Coming from a military school during the Vietnam War was tough, but I enjoyed my seven years at A&M."

Bowls meet; plan alliance

DALLAS (AP) — Representatives from three New Year's Day bowls, the Big East Conference, the Atlantic Coast Conference, and Notre Dame were scheduled to meet again Friday to discuss a possible alliance that would make them big power brokers in deciding the collegiate national football title each January.

"In my judgment there's too many things not settled for us to have a package put together for this year," said Jim Brock, executive vice-president of the Cotton Bowl. "But I really believe this thing has as chance to fly. It's hard to go wrong when you've got Notre Dame involved."

The plan would have the highest-ranking teams from either the Big East, ACC, and Notre Dame playing the highest ranking conference champions from the Southeastern Conference in the Sugar Bowl, the Big Eight Conference in the Orange Bowl, and the Southwest Conference in the Cotton Bowl.

The SEC is tied to the Sugar Bowl, the Big Eight to the Orange and the SWC to the Cotton Bowl as traditional host teams.

A fourth bowl, either the Fiesta or Citrus, could be a part of the mix, hosting two at-large teams to cover all possibilities for a national championship game.

The idea was first developed in March by the ACC. With the basic framework in place, the alliance must decide on a fourth bowl, how to select the two at-large teams, and which poll will be used for the rankings.

Also to be discussed will be a vote on an SWC request that its champion be allowed to get away from the Cotton Bowl to play in the Orange or Sugar Bowls if a national title is at stake. The plan drew little enthusiasm from alliance members.

The meeting was scheduled for 9 a.m. at the Dallas-Fort Worth airport.

"It will be interesting to see how this thing shakes out," Brock said. "Times are changing."

NIT preseason announced

NEW YORK (AP) — Four teams that finished last season ranked in the Top 25, led by Kentucky and Oklahoma State, are among 16 teams who will compete in the preseason NIT in November.

Kentucky, ranked No. 9, will open the tournament at home against West Virginia Nov. 20. Oklahoma State, No. 14, also will open at home against Evansville Nov. 21.

Other Nov. 20 games will have Monmouth at No. 18 Princeton, Washington at No. 23 Texas, Colorado State at Boise State, James Madison at Georgia Tech, and Manhattan at Pittsburgh. In the other Nov. 21 game, Ball State will be at Purdue.

Second-round games will be played Nov. 22 and 23 at sites to be determined. The semifinals will be Nov. 27 and the final Nov. 29, all at Madison Square Garden.

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



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