

Aggies prepare for SWC stretch run against Mavs

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won an extra inning game. We knew when we put them on the schedule they were a legitimate team."

After today's matchup with the Mavericks, the Aggies will start the second half of their conference schedule this weekend by traveling to Lubbock to take on Texas Tech.

Johnson said today's game is a chance to get his club back on a roll before getting into the heat of the conference race.

"We're about to be on the road quite a bit, so we're going to have to do some things on the road if we want to win the conference. Tuesday games like this one are always good for us because we get to get some work for the pitchers who didn't work during the weekend. This is a chance for us to get hot and keep the momentum going for the rest of the season," he said.

Johnson said he felt his team was in a pretty good position in the standings entering the second half of play, considering the injuries to key players like second baseman Mike Hickey and right fielder Scott Smith.

"We're not playing bad right now, we just need to get some people healthy so we can do some things with our lineup," he said.

"When you look at the fact that in four of six conference series we have played without two of our leading hitters, to be in second place right now is not bad, and it should just get better."

"Being in second place, we still have a shot to control a little bit of the outcome of the race, so I don't think anything is out of reach."

The Aggies will get a break as they prepare for the stretch run of the season. Johnson expects Smith to return this week. He said Smith could even see action in today's game.

"We need to get Hickey and Smith back in the lineup," Johnson said. "We're getting real close with Scott. We may even try to use him as a DH against UTA. He got the boot (cast) off last week, so we're looking for him to be ready to play for sure this weekend."

The weekend series with Tech will be the second meeting between the Aggies and Red Raiders this season.

Johnson's squad swept a three-game series from Tech in College Station earlier this month. The matchup with Tech will also be A&M's last tuneup before next weekend's rematch with the University of Texas.

Texas is currently leading the conference race with a 14-4 record, and the Longhorns defeated the Aggies two games to one in Austin two weeks ago.

Nets extend Spurs' losing streak to five

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Terry Mills came off the bench late in the third quarter and keyed a game-breaking 10-0 run Monday night as the New Jersey Nets defeated San Antonio 117-109, the Spurs' fifth straight loss.

The five straight defeats tied the Spurs' season high, but four of those have been without All-Star center David Robinson, who underwent surgery Saturday to repair a torn ligament in his left hand. He is expected to miss six weeks.

The Spurs missed him in losing to New Jersey for the first time since Jan. 17, 1989, a string of six games.

Drazen Petrovic and Derrick Coleman had 20 points apiece,

while Mookie Blaylock had 18, Chris Dudley 16 and Mills 14 for New Jersey, which pulled 11 1/2 games behind Miami in the race for the last Eastern Conference playoff spot. Coleman and Dudley each had 14 rebounds while Blaylock had his second straight 13-assist game.

Terry Cummings had 32 points and 15 rebounds for San Antonio. Sean Elliott added 24, one more than Antoine Carr.

San Antonio, which was out-rebounded 61-46, managed to stay close for 32 minutes. When Mills entered the game in the third quarter, he made an immediate impact, hitting five of his first six shots while chipping in with a couple of assists and rebounds.

Cummings gave San Antonio its final lead by putting in a rebound for a 78-77 lead.

Blaylock put New Jersey ahead with a layup before Mills scored on a fastbreak layup and 3-point basket for an 84-78 lead. Dudley capped the quarter with a three-point play, completing the 10-0 run.

San Antonio made one run at the Nets, who blew a nine-point lead in the final 62 seconds against Golden State on Saturday. It came early in the fourth quarter with a 7-2 run that Carr capped with a three-point play, bringing the Spurs to 89-87.

However, Mills hit his second 3-pointer to ignite an 13-6 burst, giving the Nets a 102-93 edge that was not threatened.

Rangers keep up winning ways, defeat Red Sox

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. (AP) — Rookie Monty Fariss knocked three runs on four hits, including a solo home run, and the Texas Rangers beat the Boston Red Sox 7-1 in an exhibition game Monday.

Fariss collected all his RBIs, losing Mike Gardiner (1-2), who gave up six runs on seven hits with four strikeouts in 3 2/3 innings. His homer sparked a three-run third inning, including a run home by Juan Gonzalez, who also singled in the seventh. Fariss added a two-run double in the fourth inning, bringing in Dan Darwin to retire the side.

Jeff Robinson (2-1) worked five innings for Texas, giving up one run on two hits, one of them by Brunansky's fifth-inning home with three strikeouts.

The Rangers other run came the seventh on a double by Iván Rodriguez off rookie Pat Quantrill.

Brunansky also had a single in the game, and Wade Boggs went 3 for 4 for Boston.

Gary Pettis struckout four times for Texas.

Coaches try to fill big holes as practice opens

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an inside linebacker to replace Quentin Coryatt and the presence the senior had on the field. Davie has three candidates to fill one position. Redshirt freshmen Reggie Graham and Larry Jackson are vying for the spot along with Jessie Cox, who returns to the Aggies after leaving the team last season to correct academic problems. Davie said Graham is the No. 1 candidate to replace Coryatt as spring practice begins.

"All three have paid their dues in different ways," Davie said. "It's time now for them to be players."

"Quentin was so good. I don't know if having three guys to replace that guy will be enough."

Davie must also fill Smith's spot along with the strong safety position vacated by Chris Crooms. That won't be an easy task, either, because a handful of secondary reserves from the 1991 season also were lost to graduation.

Redshirt freshmen Steve Kenney and Junior White, along with

freshman Mike Hendricks appear to be the leading candidates to join junior Derrick Frazier and sophomore Patrick Bates in the Aggies' secondary. Freshman running back/wide receiver Wilbert Biggens is also being tried in the defensive backfield.

Spring practice is held Monday through Thursday at Kyle Field. Practice begins at 4:50 p.m. each day and will last four weeks. A&M students and alumni are allowed to attend with passes issued by A&M Recruiting Coordinator Tim Cassidy.

Fielder's HR stifles Astros

LAKELAND, Fla. (AP) — Curt Fielder hit a pair of two-run home runs Monday night as the Detroit Tigers downed the Houston Astros 4-0.

Fielder, who shared the major league lead with 44 homers last season and was tops with 12 RBIs, has five home runs and 12 RBIs this spring to lead the Tigers.

"When he hits them, I don't even have to look anymore," Tigers manager Sparky Anderson said. "I know they're gone the instant they leave his bat. Cecil has an excellent spring. He looks better than ever."

Fielder's first homer, a towering drive over the left-field wall, came in the fourth inning off Houston starter Darryl Kile. His second home run, to right field, came in the sixth inning against Curt Schilling.



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