

Aggies split doubleheader with UTA, 5-4, 6-5

By CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

It was a strange day for baseball at Olsen Field as the seventh-ranked Texas A&M Baseball team (5-2) split a doubleheader with the University of Texas-Arlington Mavericks (2-4) Tuesday afternoon. The Aggies lost the first game 5-4 but picked up the second, 6-5.

Both games were decided under unusual circumstances — in the last inning. "There were some weird things that happened," A&M senior first baseman Jason Stephens said.

In the second game, A&M pinch runner William Gray advanced to third base when UTA pitcher Brad Maxwell threw a wild pitch while trying to intentionally walk A&M senior right-fielder Johnny Hunter.

With runners on the corners and the

game tied at 6-6 in the bottom of the seventh inning, UTA pitcher Ronny Carroll was called for a balk while faking a pick-off move to first base. The balk allowed A&M pinch runner William Gray to score from third base and give the Aggies the 6-5 victory.

"I don't think I've ever seen one end that way," Stephens said. "I've seen it with a base runner on third but not on a pick-off attempt at first. I've never seen it before; it was kind of weird."

The unusual Game 2 ending followed another unlikely finish in Game 1 of the twin bill.

After the Aggies rallied to send the game into extra innings, UTA junior outfielder Michael Kopecky singled in the top of the eighth inning and then scored on the third off A&M reliever Jamie Smith's three wild pitches to give the Mavericks a 5-4 win.

Another similarity between the two games was that UTA built up big leads in both and then watched the Aggies clawed their way back.

Stephens hit a pair of two-run homers to spark comebacks in each of the day's games.

"It (the two home runs) would have been a little sweeter [with a sweep]," Stephens said. "I'm just glad that I could give our team a lift in those certain spots and tie the ballgame up with one. It felt good."

UTA went into the bottom of the seventh inning with a 4-1 lead. The Aggies took advantage of a Maverick pitching change and rallied to score three runs in the inning, to send the game into the extra frame.

With one out, senior shortstop Rich Petru singled to set up the first of Stephens' shots, this one to left center field. Later in the inning, Gray, pinch running for Hunter, tied the game on a fielder's choice by freshman third baseman Steve Scarborough.

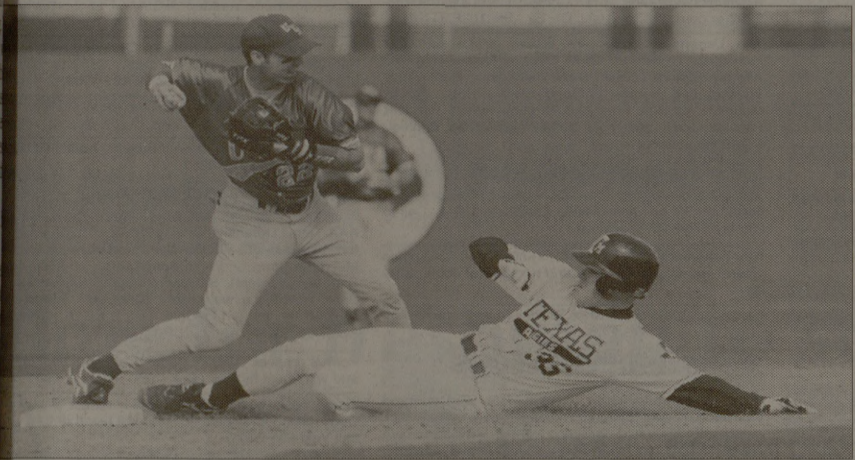
The Aggie comeback would not be in vain in Game 2. After the Mavericks built a 5-1 lead going into the bottom of the fifth inning and looked primed to complete the sweep, A&M posted another impressive rally.

The Aggies scored four runs in the bottom half of the fifth inning to climb back into the game.

Freshman third baseman Sean Heaney led off with a single and advanced to third on a base hit by All-American Jason Tyner, who was 5 for 9 on the day. Heaney scored on a base hit by junior second baseman Brian Benefield and Tyner scored on a sacrifice fly by Petru. Stephens followed with his second home run, just clearing the right field wall.



Sophomore outfielder Jason Tyner is caught in a rundown between third base and home plate Tuesday afternoon in the first game of the doubleheader against UT-Arlington. Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

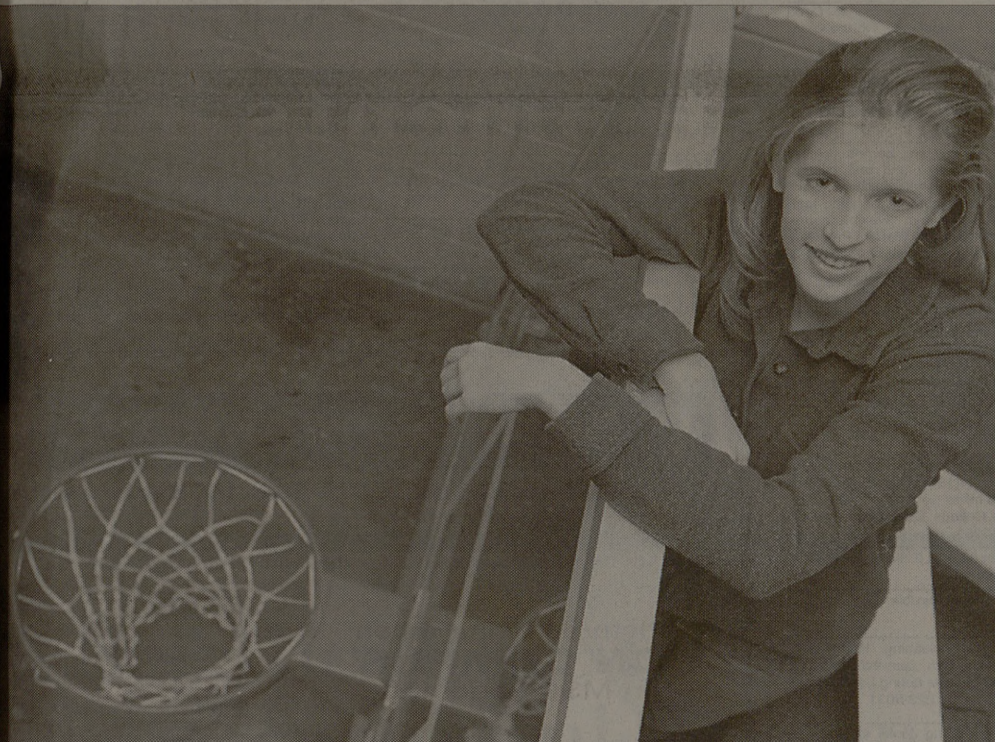


Sophomore designated hitter Steve Leonard is caught in a double play in yesterday's game against the University of Texas-Arlington. Dave House, THE BATTALION

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Natalie Tucker carries on family legacy in A&M basketball

By LARA L. ZUEHLKE
THE BATTALION



Freshman guard Natalie Tucker is averaging 12.1 minutes and 3.3 points per game. Tucker scored a career-high 13 points against the University of Oklahoma Feb. 5. Rony Angkriwan, THE BATTALION

The Tucker family name and Texas A&M Women's Basketball go hand in hand. Freshman guard Natalie Tucker is carrying on the Tucker legacy her older sister, senior guard Lana Tucker, started four years ago.

The younger Tucker has established a place for herself on the Lady Aggie squad, seeing action in 20 games this season. She got her first career start against the University of Oklahoma, where she scored a career-high 13 points.

Tucker is averaging 12.1 minutes, and 3.3 points per game and has dished out 31 assists for the Lady Aggies.

The Georgetown (Texas) High School superstar decorated the school's history books, setting career records in points (1,753), assists (610) and three-point field goals (192). Tucker came to A&M after a stellar senior year, averaging 19.2 points, 5.8 assists, 4.3 steals and 6.3 rebounds.

A&M Assistant Coach Lisa Jordan said Tucker's diehard work ethic has challenged the other players.

"Natalie has a very positive attitude and aura about her," Jordan said. "She is a hard worker, like Lana, in that she will show you how hard she will work and expect you to work just as hard."

Tucker said the transition from high school to college raised several challenges.

"It (college) is much more physical, but mostly it's a mental game," Tucker said. "You have to learn how to be tough and to fight through the ups and downs you face when you're a freshman."

Tucker began playing basketball in the second grade, soon after Lana began playing.

Although she is the younger of the Tuckers, Natalie said she does not feel like she has to prove herself to anyone.

"I've never really felt like I've been in her (Lana's) shadow," Tucker said. "I think because I am several years younger, people don't expect me to be quite up to her level. We don't play the same position, so it's not like we really compete for playing time."

In high school, Tucker was recruited by several schools, including Baylor University, San Diego State University and New Mexico University. But she chose A&M so she could play alongside Lana.

She was also impressed with the camaraderie between the team members and coaches.

"I wanted to come here partly so I could play with Lana, because I thought it would be fun to play with my sister," Tucker said. "I also really like that the coaches care about us so much. It's like

we're a family, because everyone is close and cares about each other."

Tucker's playing time with her sister unexpectedly has been cut short by a knee injury Lana suffered during the game against the University of Colorado, ending her collegiate career.

Tucker said she is disappointed Lana cannot finish out her senior year, but she expects the team to work past losing their team leader and co-captain.

"I just feel so bad for her because I know how badly she wanted to finish her senior season," Tucker said. "I really think this team is going to take it (Lana's absence) all right because we've already been through so much this year."

Senior forward Melissa Rollerson said Natalie's play has stepped up a notch throughout the season, and she expects Tucker to continue improving.

"Natalie has matured and is more physical, because she knows at this level you have to be physical and can't allow for any lapses," Rollerson said. "She is the point guard, so she has to run the show. She is really quiet and hasn't learned how to be real vocal yet, but I'm sure that will come with time."

As for now, Tucker plans to continue building on her game, knowing that if she follows her older sister's footsteps, she will not go wrong.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

The Women In Science and Engineering (WISE), an organization of women graduate students, staff and faculty will host its fifth annual all-day professional and career development conference.

The conference "Adapting to a Changing World" which will take place on Saturday, February 22, 1997, at the MSC on the Texas A&M campus, will focus on giving participants the skills and insights needed to succeed in the scientific and technological workplace of the year 2000 and beyond.

Participants will select from topics such as:

- A Room of Your Own: At the Top,
- How to Get Your Research Funded,
- Sex Differences and Evolution,
- Conflict Resolution, and others.

This year's keynote speaker will be the former Chief Scientist for NASA and current Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Dr. France Cordova.

Contact Nancy Magnussen at (409) 845-5587 or via e-mail at nancy@isc.tamu.edu for registration information. Free child care will be provided on site. Registration deadline is February 19.

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