

Bobcats snap Aggies' streak, 10-4

By CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

Welcome home Jeremy Fikac. Fikac, a junior pitcher for the Southwest Texas State University Bobcats (24-16) and a Somerville native, celebrated his birthday by going 6-1/3 innings for the win. The right hander surrendered three runs on seven hits, as the Bobcats defeated the Texas A&M Baseball Team (27-15) 10-4 Tuesday night at Olsen Field.

Southwest Texas took advantage of a four-run third inning as they got to A&M pitchers early and often to pick up the victory.

A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said Fikac was impressive.

"The kid (Fikac) goes out there, and he hadn't been throwing," Johnson said. "He started out in the top four (in the pitching rotation) and they had to move him to third base. (SWT Head Coach) Howard (Bushong) told me, before the game, they had to get him back in there because they're going into tournaments and stuff and he certainly earned his way back there. He had command of the breaking pitch."

Fikac had not pitched since the Bobcats third game of the season, when he lost to Texas Pan-American in February.

Johnson said freshman pitcher Chris Fulbright pitched well for the Aggies, but SWT rose to the challenge.

"It was a tough outing for him," Johnson said. "I thought Courtney Weller threw well and they came in and faced their seven-eight-nine

[batters] with nobody on and did fine. Other than that we struggled a bit.

"We struggled at the plate and let them get some momentum. It's easy to go out and pitch when you've got a five-run lead, a six-run lead, and we allowed them to do that."

The Aggies were held hitless for the first 2-2/3 innings and the Bobcats exploded for six in the first three innings.

Johnson said while the Aggies did not play up to their potential, Southwest Texas played well enough to win.

"I think we were a little flat, but I don't want to take anything away from them. I think they're a good ball club," Johnson said. "It shows in the record, it shows in what they're doing in conference. I know we've been a little emotionally strung out on these conference weekend games but I was disappointed we didn't do better."

"They've beat a lot of people. They beat Rice and Texas. They're a pretty good ball club. It wasn't like we just gave them the game. They controlled part of it."

The Aggies were finally able to get their bats going in the sixth inning, however it was too little, too late. Freshman third baseman Sean Heaney led off the inning with a solo home run over the left field wall. Junior second baseman Brian Benefield followed with a solo shot of his own.

The one-run home run parade continued in the next inning when senior right fielder Johnny Hunter hit his 14th home run of the season. Hunter ended the evening 2-for-4 with two RBIs and a run scored.

"I'd rather have a win than have a good night from the plate," Hunter said. "We've been on a role and maybe this was an eye opener. We can't take things for granted, we have to go out and play each game like it is our last. We just came out flat and we didn't play well."



Senior shortstop **Rich Petru** slides into second base as SWT's shortstop **Jack Wickersham** (#2) and **Rey Arredondo** (#16) try to tag him out last night.

Mountain man

The freshman pitcher has adjusted to A&M and Southern living

By CHRIS FERRELL
THE BATTALION

To the average Texan, Missoula, Mont., hardly seems like a hot bed for top-notch baseball prospects.

When Montana is mentioned, there are images of mountains and little log cabins with smokestack chimneys. A small creek, which flows home to fish as big as the average man's arm, tucked away in the wilderness seems more likely to be found than a baseball diamond.

These images were similar to what freshman pitcher Courtney Weller expected when his family moved from Virginia to Missoula before his freshman year of high school.

However, it was not like that at all. "I had the regular questions, 'Do they have running water?', that kind of thing," Weller said. "I don't know what most Texans think about Montana,

maybe that it's just a mountainous kind of country. It's not at all like that. It's here, but they don't have big Houston-type towns. It's like College Station. It has a little University there, about 20,000 people."

One thing Missoula did not have was a high school baseball program. Unlike Texas, most of the kids in Montana play for American Legion teams.

"American Legion baseball in Montana is very comparable to high school baseball here — it's big," A&M Head Coach Mark Johnson said. "They hire coaches and it's a big deal. Obviously they don't have the high school programs."

Weller set the league on fire, leading his team, the Missoula Mustangs, to state championships in 1994 and 1995. He was named the state's Most Valuable Player both years.

American Legion was an experience Weller found to be rewarding.

"It was really actually a good program," Weller said. "We played Washington high school teams and Idaho teams. It's a real underrated program. I think it offered me a real good background although it may not be viewed like that from a Texan. I was pleasantly surprised that they had a decent program."

The main difference between baseball in Montana and Texas is the window of opportunity to play. While baseball in Texas is almost a year-round sport, the Montana weather limits it to a summer game.

"We wait until it's warm in Montana," Weller said. "We start right about now. It's getting warm and you pitch in good weather. The summer months in Montana are just awesome. That's about what it's like here in the fall and the spring. It gets hot, just not as often. That's (Texas temperatures) a definite advantage. We would have to play indoor some."

Johnson said while most northern-based players might be at a disadvantage because of the shorter season, Weller's tournament success made up for it.

"They miss a season actually because our guys play the high school season and then they play Connie Mack or something," Johnson said. "So he really is playing only one season. But, he was a key guy and they went to advanced tournaments, so he's played probably as much baseball as anyone in that area. I think he's adjusted well and is getting better every time out."

The move to Montana actually opened the door for Weller to come to A&M. Pitching Coach

Jim Lawler found out about Weller through Weller's American Legion coach, Brent Hathaway, — whom Lawler coached earlier in his career.

"I came to a pitcher catcher camp and did pretty well and my coach played for Coach Lawler, so I had a little connection there," Weller said. "I had a good year each of the years in Montana and luckily, I got recruited to come play."

"He (Hathaway) played at Idaho and then Lawler went to UTEP and brought Hathaway down there. He had a real great arm, but he hurt his arm and it never panned out for him. It (coming to A&M) was definitely the right choice as far as an engineering school and the climate is definitely superior in the school months."

Once Weller arrived in Aggeland, he had a tough time finding his groove. A&M made the decision to redshirt him for the 1996 season.

"When I got here, they were working on hitting spots," Weller said. "And I got away from power pitching. My velocity went down. This year, I've been throwing hard and I've retained some of the spotting ability. It's worked out good."

Johnson said the problem is common among many of the pitchers A&M recruits.

"He got so concerned, and a lot of our pitchers do because they don't get to play if they don't throw strikes," Johnson said. "They know that, so a lot of them back off and they don't throw the ball as hard as they can, so they throw strikes."

"The quality of a good pitcher is that he can throw with his maximum velocity and throw strikes. We've got his velocity back up. He's going to be respectable. He was throwing very low velocity for us last year — for our league."

Weller was able to use the time off to regain his velocity and gain confidence in other some of his other pitches.

"He knew his curve ball was his pitch and didn't have a lot of confidence that his fastball was going to get people out," Johnson said. "Now he realizes that he can set up his curve ball and get away with his fastball because he has his velocity back up."

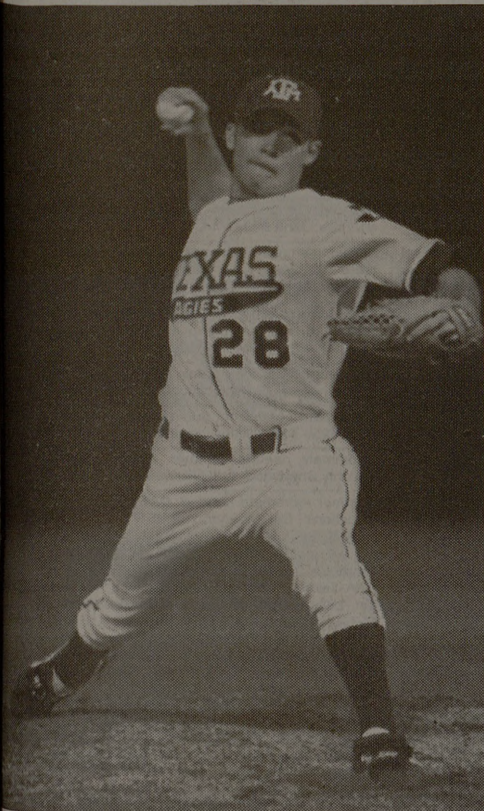
Aside from regaining velocity, Weller said his redshirt season was productive because it gave him an extra year of eligibility.

"We had so many good pitchers," Weller said. "I think we had 18. Just like any year goes, you just do what you can and it didn't work out for me. But it gave me another four years to play. It turned out well."

The folks back in Missoula would agree.

"The quality of a good pitcher is that he can throw with his maximum velocity and throw strikes."

Mark Johnson
A&M head coach



Derek Demere, THE BATTALION

Freshman **Courtney Weller** pitches against Iowa State at Olsen Field.

Lady Ags defeat Baylor Bears, 6-3

By COURTNEY LYONS
THE BATTALION

On a breezy, overcast afternoon, the Texas A&M Women's Tennis Team overcame an opening loss in the singles matches to take out Baylor University, 6-3, and hold on to their tie with the University of Texas, for first place in the Big 12 Conference.

The Lady Aggies came into the match ranked 23rd in the nation and turned up the heat on the Lady Bears, frying them in five straight sets to head into the doubles matches, 5-1.

"Baylor is a good team," Head Coach Bobby Kleinecke said. "But we played very well and took care of business."

Kleinecke said the play of the team in the No. 3 and 4 singles positions was the key to A&M's resounding victory, setting the tone for the entire match. Lady Aggie sophomore Monica San Miguel took out Baylor's Vanessa Able in the No. 4 match 6-1, 6-0.

San Miguel said she was ready for the match because she was well-prepared.

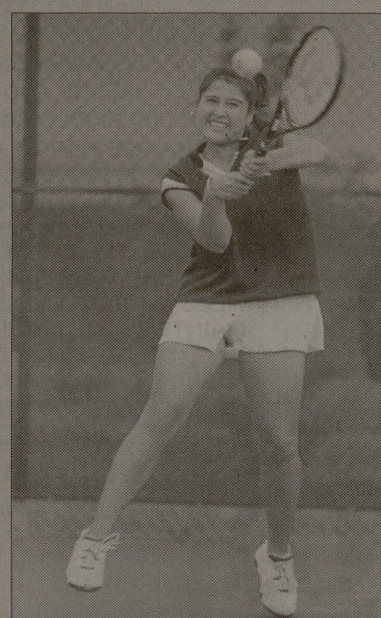
"I was very focused today and I concentrated well," San Miguel said. "I was being aggressive and coming up to the net more. By the second set, she (Able) was not pressing as hard. I had a good day — the match went very smooth, with no ups or downs."

San Miguel said the Baylor team, ranked 35th in the nation, put up a hard fight, and the Aggies could not relax while playing them.

In match No. 6, Lady Aggie senior Julie Beahm struggled in the first set, losing to Baylor's Sophie Goldschmidt. In the second set, Beahm managed to overcome those errors and go on to win the match in three sets.

"Julie's key was to keep fighting and take care of the errors she was making," Kleinecke said.

Although the doubles matches had to be temporarily postponed because of the weather, the match-



Derek Demere, THE BATTALION

Junior **Monica Rebolledo** shows off her backhand against Baylor Tuesday at Omar Smith Tennis Center.

es resumed and the Lady Aggies lost two out of three.

Kleinecke said the team was glad to get the match in, despite the rainy day. They are preparing for a tough schedule next week, and will face the Lady Longhorns in Austin on Tuesday.

Kleinecke also said the girls played well during the match against Baylor, as they have done all year long, and they will be ready to face next week's challenges.

"The wins in the singles relieved the stress for us heading into the doubles (as the Lady Aggies had already won by that point)," Kleinecke said. "That made it much easier on me."

The 14-2 Lady Aggies have one more home dual-meet Friday with the University of Oklahoma, before heading to the University of Texas and then to Kansas University.

THE BATTALION

Applications for Section Editors for the summer and fall semesters are now available in Room 013 Reed McDonald Building.

Applications are due Friday, April 11, in Room 013 Reed McDonald by 5 p.m.

All majors welcome. Experience not required. For more information, call 845-3313.

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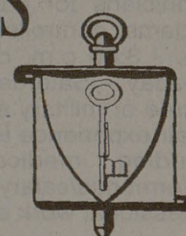
For more information, come to an orientation meeting Wednesday at 7 pm in Zachry 127B or call the APO office at 862-2525

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