

Bears, Aggies play for keeps

Texas A&M and Baylor head into three-game series knowing Big 12 regular season championship will likely go to winner



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Speedy centerfielder Jason Tyner will need to leg out some extra bases against the hot-hitting Baylor Bears in a pivotal three-game Big 12 Conference series this weekend.

By TRAVIS HARSCH
Staff writer

They don't get much bigger than this. The Texas A&M Baseball Team will begin its biggest conference series of the year Friday night against the Baylor Bears at Olsen Field.

The series heads north to Waco for the Saturday and Sunday games, with the winner of the series almost assured the Big 12 regular season title.

A&M third baseman Craig Kuzmic said he thought the Aggies would be ready for the series.

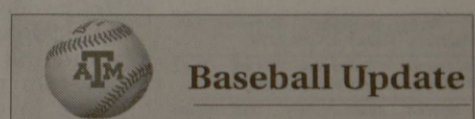
"I think this Friday is going to be really exciting," Kuzmic said. "I think we're going to come out and play some good ball."

The Big 12 trophy will go to the series winner unless Oklahoma State can win all six of its remaining conference games. That is excellent motivation for the Aggies, but there is a secondary goal that comes with A&M winning two of the three games, Kuzmic said.

"It's getting down to the end of the year and we know we're starting to play for something," Kuzmic said. "We're trying to get to our 40 wins and everyone's getting excited about that and playing hard."

Baylor has been struggling lately, dropping six of their last 11 and five of their last

nine in Big 12 play, but beat Houston Tuesday night while the Aggies were pounding Sam Houston State. The Aggies won the game 13-5 to win their fourth straight and



Record: 38-15, 19-8 Big 12
Next Game: vs. Baylor
Time: 7 p.m.
Scheduled Starters:
Ryan Rupe (8-4, 3.07 ERA) vs. Brett Bergman (7-5, 4.91 ERA)

nine of their last eleven.
Coach Mark Johnson said the hitting performance against the Bearkats would be a positive for the Aggies.

"Whether or not we can carry those hot bats into this series, I don't know," Johnson said. "But when guys start feeling good about themselves they have a better chance. I do think we're going to see better pitching this weekend than what we've seen recently."

The matchup pits the top-ranked hitting club in the conference with the best pitch-

ing club in the league, as Baylor has a .327 batting average of .327, while A&M's has posted a 4.09 ERA on the year.

Baylor has adopted an interesting tactic for this weekend's games. Most teams start their ace on Friday, their second best starter on Sunday, and the third on Saturday.

Baylor has opted to reverse this traditional order and will throw Brett Bergman (7-5, 4.91 ERA) on Friday, Ryan Rupe (8-4, 3.07 ERA) on Saturday and Ryan Rupe (8-4, 3.07 ERA) on Sunday.

Rupe has 100 strikeouts this year and 17 walks. He said the Bears are in the category of schools from the Sooner state.

"I'm going to treat it like every other game this year," Rupe said. "I think going to be equivalent to an Oklahoma State or an Oklahoma, they're going to hit the ball well, they've got a potent offense."

Casey Fossum and Jason Jennings will be the hill in Waco on Saturday. Fossum (9-2, 3.67 ERA) on the campaign and 97 strikeouts. Jennings (10-2), who also DH's for the Aggies, has a .330 batting average and 16 homers. Sunday matchup will have Baylor throwing Kip Wells, who has put up a staff-low ERA of 4.05 and 112 strikeouts while compiling a 4 record, versus Matt Ward (7-2).

AGGIE SPORTS BRIEF

from staff and wire reports

Track team heads for New Orleans

New Orleans will host the Texas A&M Men's and Women's Track Teams as they compete in the U.S. Collegiate Track and Field Series.

Field events will be held at City Park while the meet will be held at Tad Gormley Stadium.

The meet could provide momentum for the teams with the Big 12 Championships just around the corner.

The women's team has qualified nine team members for the NCAA Championships. The women's team is currently ranked 11th in the nation.

Senior Rose Jolivet, junior Detrich Claret, senior Adrien Sawyer, sophomore Chimika Carter, junior Kelli Schrader, freshman Esther Eisenlauer and freshman Meshell Trotter qualified for the women.

The men have qualified three individuals in two events.

Senior Larry Wade automatically qualified for the 110-meter hurdles and sophomore Chad Meyer and junior Kendall Madden have both provisionally qualified in the decathlon.

The four-team field includes A&M, Louisiana State University, Tulane University and Abilene Christian University.

The meet will be scored with the field events set to start at 10 a.m. and the running events slated to begin about 3 p.m.

On May 7, The Aggies will host the annual A&M All-Comers Meet at the Anderson Track and Field Complex. It will be the last competition for A&M before they head to Columbia, Mo., for the second Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships that will be held May 15-17.

Carter declares NBA eligibility

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP) — Vince Carter will become the second North Carolina player in a week to leave the Tar Heels for the NBA, two sources close to the basketball program told The Associated Press.

The 6-foot-7 forward scheduled a news conference for this afternoon to announce whether he will leave school a year early. National player of the year Antawn Jamison announced Monday he would forgo his senior season.

Carter, who averaged 15.6 points last season while shooting 59 percent, has an unlisted telephone number. Messages left for coach Bill Guthridge, former coach Dean Smith and Charles Brinkerhoff, Carter's high school

coach, seeking confirmation of Carter's decision were not returned Wednesday.

It would be the second time in four years that North Carolina advanced to the Final Four then lost two underclassmen to the NBA draft. Jerry Stackhouse and Rasheed Wallace entered the draft after their sophomore seasons in 1995.

Michelle Robinson, Carter's mother who lives in Ormond Beach, Fla., said her son met with Guthridge and Smith on Friday and made his decision shortly after that meeting.

Robinson said her son told her, "I'm coming out."

"I kind of figured that's what he would do. It was a win-win decision either way," Robinson told The

News Journal in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Robinson, in an interview with The Charlotte Observer and The News & Observer of Raleigh, said Carter would continue taking classes and graduate.

"We fully intend for Vince to get his college degree. We wanted to get a plan (from the coaches) as to how to work that out," she said.

Carter's family also conducted research independent of the North Carolina coaching staff.

Robinson said her son spoke with NBA players Nick Anderson and Tim Thomas and that the family spoke with Grant Hill's mom and assorted NBA personnel, including Rod Thorn, the league's senior vice president.

Texas A&M travels to bayou for NCAAs; Rooks, Dingwall receive Big 12 honors



The Big 12 Tournament has come and gone, with the Aggies finishing off with a 5-0 loss to the Longhorns.

This loss came after a big 5-3 win over Baylor, a team Texas A&M had fallen to earlier in the season. The Baylor win advanced the Aggies to the semifinals, where they played the No. 5 ranked Longhorns.

Coming on Strong

The Aggies started out the Big 12 tourney with the 12th seeded Missouri team. The Aggies defeated Missouri during season play 9-0 and whipped up on them again in the tournament, handing them a 7-0 loss.

The Aggie win advanced them to the match with the Baylor Bears.

Double Trouble

The doubles pairing of senior Vanessa Rooks and sophomore Lisa Dingwall cleaned up this season, going 11-9 overall and 4-3 in Big 12 play, usually at the No. 1 doubles spot.

Their success landed them Big 12 honors for this season, along with three members of the Texas A&M Men's Tennis team and Men's Coach Tim Cass.

It's all regional from here on out...

Next up for the lady Ags is the NCAA Southwest Regional Tournament, which will be held in Baton Rouge La., May 15-17.

With their 16-9 overall record, and their 8-2 record against the Southwest Region, the Aggies should be seeded close to the top.

The team is still waiting for an official announcement from the NCAA.

Looks Good, Looks Real Good

The Aggies will have a strong team next year, due to the return of most of their players.

The Aggies lose seniors Monica Rebollo and Vanessa Rooks, but have strong players in the back-ground ready to step up.

Freshman standout Eva Marcial and sophomore Lisa Dingwall return to next year's team, along with Kathryn Scott, Monica San Miguel, Monica de la Torre and Danielle Lee.

The Aggies will begin a new era in their new tennis complex and should only get better with time.



San Miguel

— Katie Mish is a senior journalism major.

Confidence helps Astro to fast 1998 start on mound

HOUSTON (AP) — Mike Hampton's last start this season was a good example of how far the Houston Astros starting lefty has come since a horrible start last season.

Hampton wasn't sharp in his last start (Monday) against the New York Mets but he gave the Astros seven innings allowing three runs and 10 hits before the Astros rallied for a 4-3 victory.

Hampton didn't get the decision but his 4-0 record remained intact. "It's all related to confidence," manager Larry Dierker said. "If he had gone out there (early last season) with the kind of stuff he had Monday and the control he had, they probably would have blown him out."

Confidence helped Hampton turn last season's 3-7 start into a 15-10 season and 3.83 ERA. He was 11-3 after the All-Star break with a 2.53 ERA.

"He managed to keep us in striking range," Dierker said. "He had to make a couple of pitches to do that and he was a little lucky at times. If your starters are doing that, you will win a lot of games and also keep a healthy bullpen."

Hampton's 4-0 start this season gives him a 15-3 record since last year's All-Star break.

"If you have confidence there's a good chance that you will succeed," Hampton said. "Right now, I've got a lot of confidence and the reason is not only myself. My teammates are

playing hard behind me and doing all they can to win. That helps you on the mound."

Hampton is among the league leaders in record, 43 innings pitched 30 strikeouts and he has one shutout on April 21 against the Mets.

There was no dramatic event that turned Hampton into one of the most effective pitchers in the league over the second half last season.

"It got to the point early in the year that so many things were going bad that ... I figured it couldn't get any worse," Hampton said.

Dierker and general manager Gerry Hunsicker were close, sending Hampton to the mound but Hampton slowly started to turnaround.

"I got out of a jam here or there and it helped my confidence little by little," Hampton said. "By the end of the season, every time I went out there I expected to win."

Despite his four victories Hampton has struggled at times this season but the confidence remains.

"I don't take for granted the things that have happened," Hampton said. "The first game of the season I probably should have lots, giving up six runs but things are going right for me now so you don't question them. You just go pitch and hope the keep happening."

Detroit halts Rangers' winning streak at five in strong game by Brian Moehler

DETROIT (AP) — Brian Moehler pitched a six-hitter and Damion Easley drove in four runs as the Detroit Tigers beat Texas 7-2 Thursday, stopping the Rangers' five-game winning streak.

Moehler (2-2) struck out six and walked two in his third career complete game in 39 starts.

Five of the hits came in the second, when Will Clark hit a solo homer, his fourth. It was Detroit's

first complete game since Scott Sanders pitched a one-hitter against Texas last Sept. 9.

The Rangers, who set a team record Wednesday with their 18 April win, established a major league record for runs in April with 180.

Bobby Witt (3-1) failed to last 11 innings for the first time this season, allowing seven runs and 11 hits in four-plus innings.

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