

The Big Parade

HOUSTON (AP) — Thousands of Houstonians lined a steamy downtown street Thursday to cheer on the back-to-back WNBA champion Houston Comets, who were feted with a parade and City Hall rally.

Avid fans and curious downtown workers alike lined Smith Street to cheer on the Comets, who wrapped up a 2-1 finals victory over the Phoenix Mercury on Tuesday with an 80-71 win.

"Houston has supported us in a very big way right from the beginning last year in the inaugural season," said two-time league MVP Cynthia Cooper, who rode atop fire trucks with her teammates, coaches and local dignitaries.

Marching bands, cheerleaders and a giant, inflatable orange-and-white WNBA basketball preceded the Comets, exalted both by backers who made a special trip downtown and business-attired workers sweating out their lunch hour.

Houston police declined to estimate the crowds along the parade route and at Hermann Square, the rally site adjacent to City Hall. Spokesman Jay Evans said it was impossible to distinguish between parade-

goers and normal midday foot traffic.

After missing last year's championship celebration, Comets star Sheryl Swoopes said she was happy to take part this time.

"I saw one girl crying and getting emotional, and I'm starting to do that myself," said Swoopes, who cradled her son, Jordan, while riding high atop one of five fire trucks.

Mayor Lee Brown revealed in the Comets' repeat titles in the 2-year-old league.

"I think we've added another word to describe our city, and that's dynasty," Brown said. "That's what we have developing here."

It was the fourth title celebration for Comets owner Les Alexander, whose Houston Rockets won NBA titles in 1994 and 1995. Alexander told the crowd he hopes the two teams can "make it six" next summer.

Two-time coach of the year Van Chancellor was emotional as the throngs showed their gratitude. After 19 years of coaching women's basketball at Ole Miss, he was touched to see the masses so excited about the sport.

"I never thought I'd live long enough to see such support for women's basketball," Chancellor said.



More home runs, more fan appeal

(AP) — The banner Ted Kaczmarik unfurled at a recent Florida Marlins game against the St. Louis Cardinals carried a simple message: "Go Big Mac, for the love of the game."

A players' strike three years ago hurt major league baseball, said the 33-year-old resident of Margate, Fla. But the assault by Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa on Roger Maris' single-season home run record "has brought the fun back into it."

Plenty of others share his sentiments about the game, according to an Associated Press poll.

Nearly half of all Americans are paying more attention to baseball because of the home run race, the poll indicated.

Even non-fans are coming down with home run fever. More than 60 percent of those polled said they usually do not pay much attention to baseball, but nearly one-third of them are following the bid to surpass the 61 home runs that Maris hit for the New York Yankees in 1961.

Among women, 37 percent said their interest in the game has increased because of the record chase.

Sosa, of the Chicago Cubs, hit his 56th home run on Wednesday. McGwire hit two home runs for the Cardinals that day, boosting him to

59 for the season. Only Maris and Babe Ruth (60) have hit more.

The telephone survey of 1,006 adults, conducted Aug. 26-30 by ICR of Media, Pa., has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

"The state of baseball is excellent," said Tim Van Lier, manager of a plumbing store in Northbrook, Ill., who was at Wrigley Field Tuesday night with more than 38,000 others to watch Sosa chase the homer record and the Cubs battle for a playoff spot.

"I haven't had this much fun watching baseball since I was 10 years old," added Ted Paducas, also from Northbrook.

Baseball commissioner Bud Selig said in an interview that the accomplishments of McGwire and Sosa "have just riveted the nation."

He added that the home run race is "a very dramatic part" of the game's recovery from the strike, which resulted in cancellation of the 1994 World Series and delayed the start of the 1995 season. To continue regaining the support of former fans, he said, "the most important thing to do is what we have the last year or two, which is keep the focus on the field."

The AP poll indicated that two-thirds of Americans are as interested in baseball as they were before the players' strike, while 24 percent

were less enthusiastic. Last spring, almost half said their interest in going to see a game was lower because of the strike.

Through Sunday's games, average attendance in 1998 was 29,226. That is up more than 3 percent over last year, but still about 7.5 percent lower than the 1994 pre-strike average of 31,612 per game.

In the long run, the poll suggested team owners may have a hard time drawing new fans to games.

While 37 percent of those polled said they followed baseball, only 11 percent chose baseball as they sport they enjoy following the most. Nearly 40 percent chose pro football, while about 20 percent chose pro basketball and another 20 percent selected figure skating. About 6 percent chose pro hockey.

Another ominous sign was that young adults were three times as likely as older adults to complain about the length of baseball games. They were drawn to more fast-paced games like pro basketball.

"People are not patient enough to watch nine innings of baseball," said 34-year-old Christy Jones of San Francisco, attending an Atlanta Braves game.

Selig said baseball officials were continuing their efforts to speed up play.

Youth is served

Two starters return from Sweet Sixteen

BY ROBERT HOLLIER
The Battalion

The 1998 season begins today for the No. 19 Texas A&M Volleyball Team and Coach Laurie Corbelli will have an early opportunity to evaluate her young team and see where they need to improve the most.

The Aggies had their most successful season in team history last year, finishing the year with a 26-8 record, a No. 13 ranking and they advancing to the Sweet Sixteen.

Unfortunately for the Aggies, the 1997 season marked the end of four college careers for starting seniors: All-American Kristie Smedsrud, Cindy Lothspeich, Farah Mensik and Jennifer Wells.

The Aggies will be playing in one of the toughest conferences in the country with Nebraska ranked fifth, Texas ranked ninth and Colorado ranked 12th.

Replacing four starting seniors with younger inexperienced players could mean a rough season for the Aggies.

However, Corbelli and the team know the only way to gain experience is by doing it.

A&M will get an excellent opportunity to do just that when they travel to Stockton, Calif., to compete in the Pacific Tournament this weekend.

"I look at it as a refreshing challenge," Corbelli said. "We have so many young players who are so eager and hungry to learn more and get on the court. Although there is a lot of youth, there is also enough experience and talent that it will be exciting to see how the players bring out their best qualities and make it all come together."



ROBERT MCKAY/THE BATTALION

"Because we are so physical and

our speed is there going to be a fine. Our legs are strong get lower and we ball. We will be

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Off Campus Aggies

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When: September 8th at 8:30 pm

Where: MSC 201

Dues: \$15 for the Fall
or \$28 for Fall and Spring

For more info, call the OCA Office at 845-0688
or visit our website at <http://oca.tamu.edu>

The ladies of Alpha Chi Omega

would like to say "Congratulations" to our new members!

Courtney Ashlock	Katherine Keller
Tiffany Baker	Ashley Kelly
Melissa Ballard	Melissa Maines
Elizabeth Bass	Amanda Manster
Elisa Blankenship	Holly McCoy
Krista Boothe	Kristen McNeill
Meredith Boyd	Erin Merritt
Joanie Brier	Tara Michael
Jennifer Bullard	Alisha Muggler
April Burks	Sara O'Neal
Summer Bybee	Catherine Owens
Natalie Cervantez	Andrea Peterson
Kimberly Cervenka	Alisha Piotrowski
Kristen Chalupa	Molly Piskun
Elizabeth Clymer	Melissa Roberts
Kiffin Collins	Amy Roundtree
Jennifer Davenport	Catherine Sarant
Jessica Davis	Deborah Saunders
Julie Davis	Sundie Savage
Amanda deTurck	Stephanie Schaefer
Keri Fielder	Stacy Shaver
Jeannie Fox	Mikal Sieger
Leight Ann Furlow	Courtney Smith
Angela Gast	Kathryn Stemmmer
Julia Glendening	Mary Lynn Steves
Allisaon Gunn	Lauren Strube
Trisha Havener	Stephanie Tanner
Allison Haynes	Melissa Telotte
Beth Hearn	Amy Throgmorton
Christina Herbig	Jennifer Trogolo
Heather Hollenshead	Kimberly Twigg
Rosemary Holmes	Jessica Watkins
Jane Hoskins	Amber Weaver
Jennifer Howard	Brooke Woodson
Lindsey Huffman	Katy Yaklin
Jennifer Jose	Sunny Yochim

Alpha Phi

Come visit the women of Alpha Phi!

INFORMAL RUSH SCHEDULE

September 7: Open House
September 8: Skit Day
September 9: Philanthropy Day
September 10: *Preference Day

Time
7:00 p.m.
(Each evening)

Location
Alpha Phi Lodge
915 Harvey (Behind Subway)

For more information please contact:
Lori Saldivar: 695-6995

*Invitation Only

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