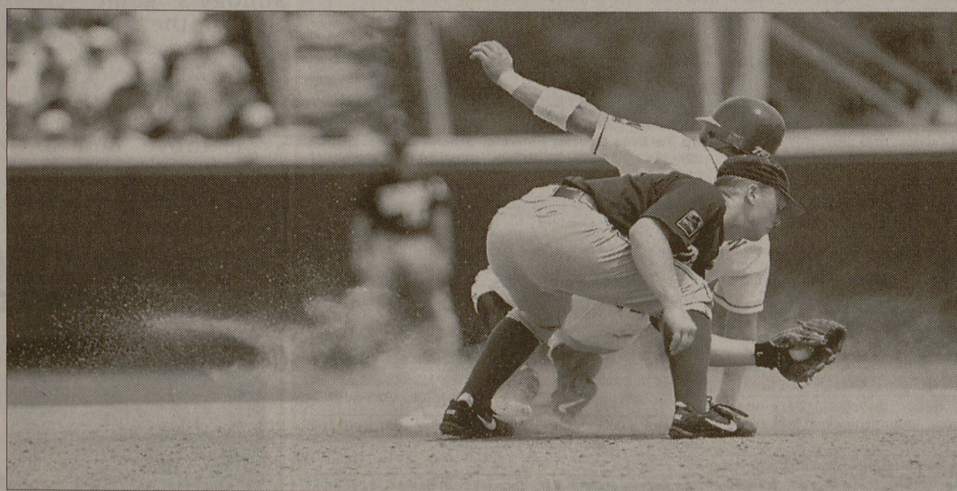
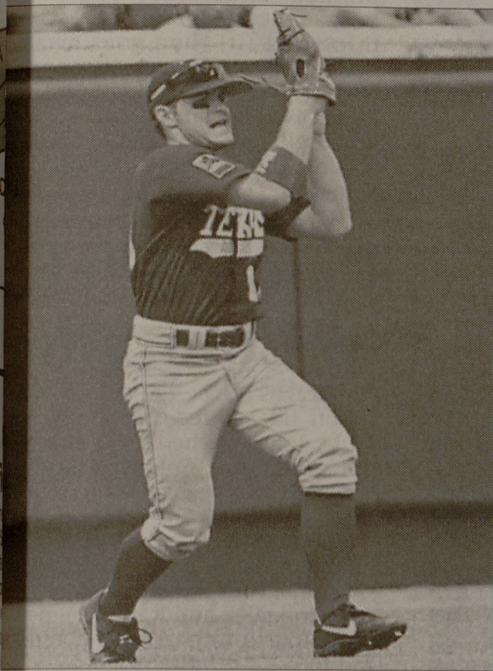


Wasted opportunities doom Aggies



PHOTOS BY SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

LEFT: Junior outfielder **Chad Hudson** prepares to throw following a catch in Saturday's game against Florida State University.
TOP: A&M junior second baseman **Sean Heaney** attempts the tag against the Seminoles Saturday in Omaha, Neb.
RIGHT: Aggie sophomore pitcher **Chris Russ** appeared in relief of starter **Casey Fossum** Saturday.



A&M to face Cal-State Fullerton today

BY DOUG SHILLING
The Battalion

OMAHA, Neb.— In what has been a record-setting season for the Texas A&M Baseball Team offensively, the Aggies could not muster the offense when it really needed it in their 7-3 loss to the Florida State Seminoles Saturday. When A&M found itself in a bases-loaded, no-outs situation in the fifth inning, it was the beginning of the end.

Despite being out, Florida State shut down the A&M offense — the Aggies could not get the hits when it mattered.

"It was a typical college ball game," A&M baseball coach Mark Johnson said. "I thought both teams were ready to play. This was no surprise to us. Florida State has one of the best ERAs in the nation, and we certainly saw two good pitchers."

On a day when he became the Aggies' all-time strikeout leader with 404, passing Jeff Granger's old mark of 401, junior pitcher Casey Fossum was uncharacteristically wild. Fossum walked a season-high eight batters.

"I was trying to be a little too fine with my pitches," Fossum said. "They were well-disciplined at the plate. They weren't swinging at very many bad pitches. They were doing a good job of making me throw strikes."

The Seminoles capitalized on Fossum's wildness in the bottom of the first inning as he walked three, including one with the bases loaded, to take a 1-0 lead.

The Aggies bounced right back in the top of the second as freshman designated hitter Greg Porter singled home junior centerfielder Steven Truitt to tie the game. But Florida State continued to take ad-

vantage of Fossum's mistakes as Seminole first baseman Ryan Barthelemy and right fielder Matt Diaz each hit homeruns to increase the lead to 4-1.

The Aggies scored runs in the third and fourth innings, including a homerun by senior catcher Shawn Schumacher, to cut the Seminoles' lead to 4-3.

Things were looking up for the Aggies in the fifth as Seminole starter Nick Stocks walked sophomore rightfielder Daylan Holt, senior first baseman John Scheschuk and Truitt to load the bases with no outs.

Florida State baseball coach Mike Martin then replaced Stocks with senior pitcher Chris Chavez.

With the bases loaded and no outs, the Aggies seemed primed to take the lead and break the game wide open.

However, it was not meant to be as Chavez got junior second baseman Sean Heaney to strike out looking, Porter to strike out swinging and junior third baseman Dell Lindsey to strike out on a check swing on 14 pitches to end the Aggie rally with no runs scored.

Martin said Chavez' relief appearance was the momentum shift the Seminoles needed.

"In all honesty, it was a game in which Chavez came in and took control of it," Martin said. "Stocks was not sharp. Chris came in and took control of the ballgame, and that was undoubtedly the momentum that we needed."

Chavez said he could sense the Aggies were demoralized after not scoring with the bases loaded.

"It's a big momentum switch," Chavez said. "Coming in and getting three outs without them scoring a run with the bases loaded just took the wind out of their sails."

If all the wind was not out of the Aggies sails after the top of the fifth, it almost certainly was after the bottom of the inning.

The Seminoles scored two runs, including Diaz's second home run of the day, pushing the lead to 6-3 and all but burying the Aggies hopes.

Johnson said when the Seminoles came out and scored after shutting the Aggies down, it crushed the team.

"It was really big," Johnson said. "We were discouraged. If you load the bases with no outs, you're feeling good about yourself. But to not score any runs then allow two runs to score, it was discouraging."

Chavez then shut down the Aggies the rest of the way only allowing one hit in his five innings of work baffling the Aggie hitters, sending them to the losers' bracket and putting them in a position of having to win four games in five days just to make it to the Championship game next Saturday.

Schumacher said that despite the loss, the Aggies are in a familiar position and do not plan to go without a fight.

"We've had our backs against the wall several times this year," Schumacher said. "We showed in the Big 12 Championships, Regionals and Super Regionals that we don't give up. We keep fighting, and that's what we're going to do starting Monday."

The Aggies now face the Cal-State Fullerton Titans Monday night at 6:30 in Omaha in an elimination game. The Titans were defeated by the Stanford Cardinals Saturday night, 9-2.

A&M holds a 2-1 all-time record against Fullerton with the loss coming in 1988 in the Regional Final. The winner will face the loser of the Florida State-Stanford game Tuesday in Omaha.

Underdog Knicks prepare to face Spurs

Frontcourt woes add to Van Gundy's troubles

PURCHASE, N.Y. (AP) — The franchise on "How To Beat The Spurs" is not a voluminous one, which is what Knicks coach Jeff Van Gundy learned when he started researching his next assignment.

"I asked our video coordinator: Pull up all their losses. I want to see the teams that beat them in the last three months. And he gives me this little stack of tapes," Van Gundy said. "Baaaaa sign."

"I was looking for a nugget," he added. "And what there was were no nuggets."

Another daunting task awaited them Sunday as the New York Knicks had their first practice in preparation for the NBA Finals, which begin Wednesday night at San Antonio's Alamodome.

How does a New York team missing two frontline starters, Patrick Ewing and Larry Johnson, stand a chance of beating a San Antonio team with two 7-footers, David Robinson and Tim Duncan, who have confounded even the healthiest of teams?

"Other guys are going to have to do that old cliché — step up," Van Gundy said. "Do a little more in a lot of different areas. We still have enough guys to play."

But exactly how many guys they will have, at least in Game 1, remains uncertain. Johnson, who sprained his knee in the clinching Game 6

against Indiana, said he plans to play sometime in the series even if he can not go in Game 1.

"Not good," he said of his knee, which was bothering him so much at 6 a.m. Sunday that he called trainer Mike Saunders to request immediate treatment. "Not good, but I'm going to be better. I'm going to get out there regardless."

In San Antonio, the Spurs had a day off Sunday as the players enjoyed the downtime they earned by disposing of the Portland Trail Blazers in a four-game sweep.

San Antonio, which also swept the Los Angeles Lakers in the second round, has not lost since Game 2 of the first round against Minnesota.

"Teams that are inconsistent, or not as good, you can exploit because they have weaknesses," Van Gundy said of the Spurs. "But this team really has no weaknesses, which is why they've won 10 playoff games in a row, which is unheard of."

If Johnson cannot play in Game 1, the Knicks are expected to use a starting lineup of Chris Dudley at center, Kurt Thomas and Latrell Sprewell at the forwards and Allan Houston and Charlie Ward in the backcourt.

That would leave Marcus Camby and Herb Williams as the only big men coming off the bench.

That size predicament had Van Gundy and his staff wondering whether to double-team Duncan and Robinson when they have the ball, as most teams do, or take their chances with single coverage on the Twin

Towers and tight defense on the other three players.

"That's what's going to be great to watch," Van Gundy said. "It's going to be a great, great decision for us."

The Spurs, meanwhile, are hoping rest does not lead to rust after their long layoff.

They will also have to overcome the inclination of taking the Knicks lightly because of their injury woes.

"I think it hurts them," forward Sean Elliott said. "I think in spurts sometimes they're better without Patrick, but I couldn't see it for 48 minutes. They've played well, but I think against us they need some people who match up inside."

The Spurs and Knicks did not play each other during the regular season because of the shortened schedule, so there will be a greater degree of unfamiliarity in this series than there ever has been in an NBA Finals.

San Antonio swept the two-game season series in 1997-98, but those Knicks were nothing like the current squad — an uptempo, athletic mix who were at their best playing like greyhounds against the Pacers.

"It's going to be tougher in transition against San Antonio because those guys run real well," Camby, who provided the Knicks with a huge lift of the bench in the Indiana series, said.

Dudley said: "It definitely will be more difficult without Larry. He's been a huge part of our success and he's integral to our team, but we'll move forward if he can't play."

Finals showing may bring new arena to San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The Spurs have brought the NBA Finals to San Antonio, only to have the basketball championship series played in a football stadium.

Home for the Spurs is the Alamodome.

At least for the moment.

It is a cavernous place where seats are plentiful and tickets are cheap by NBA standards. The Spurs would like to move into another more profitable facility as soon as possible.

Winning the NBA Finals over the New York Knicks could ultimately help the franchise — the only major league sports team in town — gain public support for a new taxpayer-funded arena.

That could prevent the Spurs from leaving town, something team owners insist they do not plan to do but a reality in the big-money world of sports that cannot be ignored.

"We want to stay in San Antonio," Spurs chair Peter Holt said. "We're going to do everything we can to make that happen."

Hardly a glamour team cheered on by celebrities, the San Antonio Spurs are an unconventional squad struggling to survive in a blue-collar city. They are a

team searching for national identity and local respect. Nothing underscores that more than the Spurs' arena predicament.

After playing in the old HemisFair Arena, built in the late 1960s, the Spurs of the former American Basketball Association moved into the new Alamodome in 1993 with the idea it would be a temporary arrangement.

Moving out has not been easy.

In the Alamodome, a giant indoor stadium which can seat up to 65,000 for football, the basketball court is located at one end of the facility with a massive blue curtain blocking off the rest of the building.

Team executives have floated ideas for using tax money to help build a smaller arena built for basketball and equipped with lucrative luxury suites, something the Spurs contend they need to profit in the NBA and to pay the big contract second-year star Tim Duncan will soon require.

It is widely believed in San Antonio that a new arena plan will emerge after the NBA Finals. Holt and others connected with the team have indicated the Spurs need to get a proposition before the voters by January.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Former assistant named UTA coach

A former graduate assistant baseball coach at Texas A&M University was named the new coach for the University of Texas-Arlington baseball program.

UTA Athletic Director Pete Carlson announced Friday that Clay Gould, a former UTA baseball player, will become the fourth coach in the 31-year history of UTA's program.

Gould, the 1993 Southland Conference co-Player of the Year and the only player in UTA team history to appear on the ballot of the Golden Spikes Award, takes over the reins after serving for the past three years as an assistant.

He returned to UTA and completed his B.A. degree in exercise and sport studies in 1995. In 1997 he earned his Master's degree from A&M in sports management.

BU's Jennings wins '99 Howser Award

Jason Jennings, a pitcher and designated hitter for the Baylor University Baseball Team, has been named as the recipient of the 1999 Dick Howser Award as collegiate baseball's top player.

Jennings also has received national player of the year honors from Collegiate Baseball magazine and Baseball America.

Jennings led the Big 12 Conference this season with 13 victories and 172 strikeouts while carrying a 2.58 ERA.

At the plate, he batted .386 with 17 home runs and 68 RBIs.