

The Aggie dugout reacts after freshman pinch hitter Kasen Wells scored a run to tie the game in the top of the 9th inning during Texas A&M's game against Texas Tech at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas, on Sunday, March 5, 2023. Photo by Robert O'Brien



Tech gets wrecked

A&M outlasts Texas Tech 4-2 in 16-inning battle

Story by Luke White

With "Courage" displayed on the back of several of the team's Corps of Cadets-themed jerseys, No. 15 Texas A&M baseball never backed down from a fight as it outlasted No. 24 Texas Tech 4-2 in a 16-inning, 5.5 hour affair that began on Sunday, March 5, and ended on Monday, March 6, at Minute Maid Park in Houston.

The Aggies entered the ninth inning trailing the Red Raiders 2-1 after the red and black overtook the maroon and white with a pair of runs in the sixth. With the bases loaded and down to the final out, junior third baseman Trevor Werner drew a four-pitch walk that scored the tying run and elicited a passionate "Ball 5" chant from those that made the hour-and-a-half drive from College Station.

What followed were seven extra innings that included terrific performances out of both team's bullpens. For A&M, sophomore RHP Brad Rudis and junior LHP Evan Aschenbeck combined for six scoreless frames, 4.2 of which came off the arm of the latter. Aschenbeck, credited with the win, retired all 14 batters he faced, including eight strikeouts.

"I just sat in the [bull]pen, waiting for my name to be called," the Blinn College transfer said. "I got it called, and I came out here, threw strikes and competed."

Not to mention junior reliever Will Johnston, who entered

in the seventh and logged 2.2 scoreless innings with five punchouts. In the other bullpen, sophomore RHP Kyle Robinson pitched six scoreless innings with just one hit, three walks and six strikeouts.

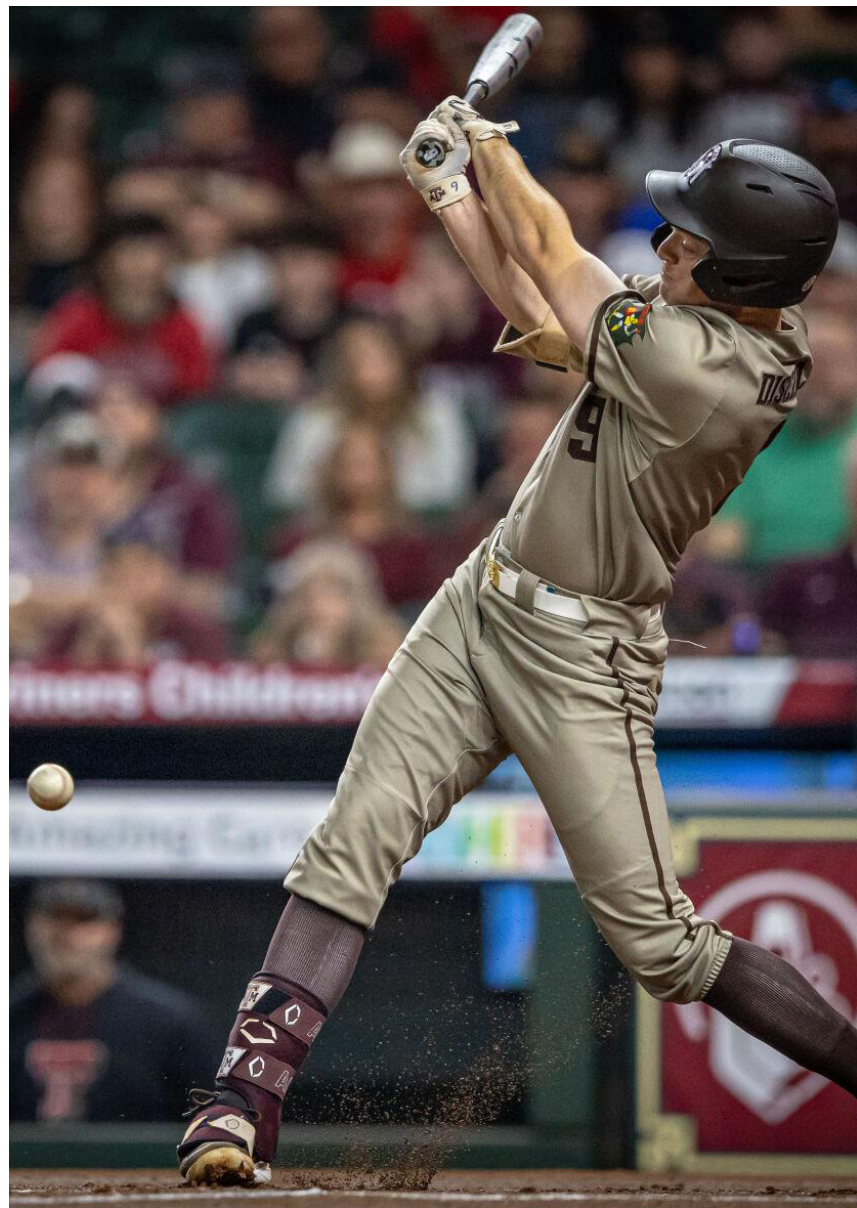
The Aggies got a productive outing from sophomore starter Chris Cortez as well, who threw 5.1 frames of one-run ball on three hits and four walks while fanning four batters.

"Cortez was awesome ... against a good lineup, or at least against a team that's been scoring a lot of runs," coach Jim Schlossnagle said. "I thought Cortez did a really good job against them."

Schlossnagle caught a case of déjà vu that night and morning, as, nearly six years ago to the day on March 4, 2017, his TCU squad won their own war of attrition against the Aggies at the home of the Astros. The Horned Frogs scored five runs in the ninth inning to send the game to extras, where they got a brilliant five scoreless, hitless frames from then-sophomore RHP Sean Wymer. It wasn't until the 15th inning that an RBI double gave TCU the victory.

Wymer moved to the starting rotation the following season, something Schlossnagle said could be a possibility for Aschenbeck going forward.

"He's never thrown 92 mph in an intersquad game, and he's



Sophomore LHP Troy Wansing pitches from the mound during Texas A&M's game against Rice at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas, on Saturday, March 4, 2023. Photo by Robert O'Brien Junior INF Travis Chestnut is dunked into junior 2B Ryan Targac before the start of Texas A&M's game against Texas Tech at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas, on Sunday, March 5, 2023. Photo by Robert O'Brien Junior 1B Jack Moss hits a foul ball into the dirt during Texas A&M's game against Texas Tech at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas, on Sunday, March 5, 2023. Photo by Robert O'Brien

done that three or four times now," Schlossnagle said. "Now he's throwing three or four different pitches, and he's gonna get in the discussion to pitch in our rotation in some form."

The contest was a pitchers' duel from the start as it remained scoreless through four innings. In the fifth, senior designated hitter Austin Bost singled through the left side to score junior catcher JD Gregson, but himself and junior shortstop Hunter Haas were stranded in scoring position to close the frame. When things were all said and done, each team left 17 runners on base.

The Red Raiders responded in the bottom of the sixth with two runs to take the lead, as junior center fielder Dillon Carter hit a sharp grounder to left field that scored two runners, the latter of which scored when Gregson couldn't field the throw home.

Johnston inherited a situation with two runners on in the seventh inning, but struck out two batters swinging to get out of trouble. The left-hander found himself in another jam in the bottom of the ninth, loading the bases with one out, but calmly struck out senior designated hitter and former Aggie Ty Coleman before inducing a flyout from sophomore first baseman and Texas transfer Gavin Kash.

Texas Tech threatened once again in the tenth, loading the

bases before Rudis forced a fielder's choice.

"Guys [in the dugout] are trying to keep each other positive," Schlossnagle said. "It's so hard to win these games as the visiting team because you're just one pitch away from losing."

That positivity paid off in the top of the 16th as A&M struck paydirt. Junior catcher Hank Bard led off with a bloop single to shallow left field before advancing to second on a wild pitch by freshman RHP Jacob Rogers. Haas then grounded to freshman shortstop Tracer Lopez, who couldn't field the ball cleanly. With runners on the corners, Lopez's fielding woes continued as junior first baseman Jack Moss hit a grounder directly beneath his glove, allowing Bard to cross the plate.

Three batters later, Werner added an insurance RBI with a sacrifice fly to shallow right field. Sophomore catcher Hudson White couldn't handle the throw home just before Moss collided with him, touching the plate safely.

Freshman closer Justin Lamkin earned the save with two punchouts in a 1-2-3 16th, sealing the A&M triumph and earning applause from the few loyal fans that remained of the 9,534 in attendance.

"Maybe this is the tipping point that gives us some confidence to keep moving forward," Schlossnagle said.