

## **Texas State Softball Champs**

### **Robson Ranch 65AA**

#### **Magical**

I will tell you right now, not just magical but also epic. Six games over 3 days. So, settle down for the rundown, or wait for Killer to get the results out in the Pioneer Press. No whining.

Robson (we like to say Robison) has been in Tournament Softball for about 7 years thanks to pioneers like Jerry Killingsworth and Paul Dorwaldt who navigated a bunch of Robson rookies through the first few years. Understand, we are the only program in the nation, that we know of, that has a softball tournament program (65AA, 70 AA and 75 AA) made up of players from the same neighborhood. Even so, RR has already won some big tournaments and even a couple of Texas State Championships. But, we are AA teams who usually must play higher rated teams (AAA, Majors and Super Majors). When we play in tournaments we are usually pitted against a variety of ages and skill levels (such as: 65 AA; 65AAA; 70AA and 70AAA). This year, for the first time in Robson history, the Robson 65AA Tournament Team was pitted against 3 other 65AA teams: The Austin Wizards; Tripe Deuce (from the DFW area) and the Electrifiers, from Lubbock, who were last year's Texas 65AA State Champions.

Jim Hupp, a veteran, and core player got RR off to a fast start in the first game and ended strong with a 7 for 10 run later in the bracket/elimination games. Coach Louis Berthold called Robson's defense 'second to none', saying, "the number of double plays turned by our infield had to be record setting; led by Steve Courtney in the bucket; Jim Hupp at SS and Mike Flatt as the human vacuum cleaner at 1B." By the way, Coach Berthold dipped his toes into the action a couple of times and came away with a single.

Tom Neagli was also big on opening day going 3 for 4 with a double and 2 RBI's. David Pryde hit 2 for 3 in that first game, Joe LeCroy came out of the gate 3 for 3 and Robson Ranch spanked 65AA Triple Deuce, 15 – 2.

Game two of pool play was a different story as LeCroy got his baptism into State Tournament pitching and our Boyz faced the 65AAA Texas Arkansas Legends. Joe helped his own cause with a triple. Kenny Kamrath kept us in the game going 3 for 3 with 2 RBIs and even with Courtney, Matthiessen and Schwertner pounding the ball, RR lost 14 – 22.

Day two, game 3 of the pool play, we played the 65AAA Texas Legends. I don't know why they all think they are some kind of

Legends. Hey, we ended up winning the State Title, but we did get our butts beat by these Legends (in somebody's mind), 13 - 18. Brad Killingsworth pitched this game for RR and did a nice job of holding the AAA team to a reasonable run count.

Schwertner continued his batting streak in this game going 2 for 2 with a double and batting .824 for the entire tournament.

Wow!

With a 1 -2 record in pool play, RR was seeded 3<sup>rd</sup> going into a 4-team bracket against 3 other 65AA teams. That is a historical first for RR and it turned out to make this the most rewarding tournament this author has played in. We won a competitive State Championship against 3 teams of the same caliber and rating as Robson. It was Magical. But I get ahead of myself.

At the end of day two we went into bracket play, seeded third and going against Triple Deuce. Schwertner got shoved into the lead off role and responded with a 3 for 4 game with a double, triple and 3 RBIs. Matthiessen and Kamrath were perfect at the plate and in the outfield. Stu White and Dale Hill leaned in with 2 hits and pitcher, Gary King, managed a hard fought 15 – 11 victory and it was off to the finals of the winners' bracket against the top seed and last year's champion, the Electrifiers from Lubbock.

Joe LeCroy took the mound and helped himself with 2 hits and the bats exploded for Robson. Randy Matthiessen led the barrage going 4 for 4 with a home run. Rookie Hal Wasson fought through a muscle pull and still went 3 for 4 with a double. Mike Lorenc (3 for 4 in the game) had some quick twitch catches that had other teams asking Coach Isbell what major league team did Lorenc play for. Johnny B hit his stride with a 3 for 3 game and some solid play at second as he teamed with Steve Courtney to outwit the Electrifiers top hitter. Stu White tracked down everything in right field and went 3 for 4 as did Kamrath and Hupp. Robson turned a lot of heads walking away with a 20 – 10 victory in the finals of the winners' bracket.

The Electrifiers fought their way back for a second shot at RR. They would have to beat us twice. Gary King did the honors pitching and threw a marvelous game and Courtney (3 for 3, Dbl) and Lorenc had the hot bats with the score 6 – 6 going into the buffet inning. Then the unthinkable happened. Third base coach, Dave Riddle, waved home 12 runs in the buffet. TWELVE, and 16 batters came to the plate. It was nuts! You could clearly see the Electrifiers drop their heads after the first six runs, they had a long drive to Lubbock ahead of them. Sure enough, Gary King finished them in the bottom half of the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, 4 up, 3 down and Robson Ranch came home with the Texas State Championship.

RR65 AA regulars were Jim Hupp, Randy Matthiessen, Hal Wasson, Gary King, Mike Lorenc, Kenny Kamrath, Mike Flatt, Steve Courtney, Joe LeCroy, David Pryde and Tom Neagli. Coaches included Louis Berthold, Dave Riddle, Stan Isbell and a couple of cameo appearances from Paul 'Big Dog' Dorwaldt.

Special thanks to the Robson Ranch 70+ Tournament Team who stood down for this tournament and sent 5 players down to the 65+ team and several up to the 75+ team so that Robson could field two full rosters and be competitive. The strategy worked to perfection as The Robson brought home two Texas State Championships. You could almost accuse Robson Tournament Ball of starting to figure out a few things.

At an after tournament gathering Coach Berthold congratulated the team and announced the All-Tournament selections: Randy Matthiessen; Dale Hill; Mike Lorenc; Gary King and Tournament MVP – the .800 hitting Ron Schwertner.

Isn't it great. Johnny B