

## **Waco Aggieland Classic**

**6/2 – 3/'23**

### **>70AA Robson Ranch Texans**

The RR >70 Tournament Team placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Waco Heart of Texas Softball Tournament last week. Per tradition, almost the entire team & a few wives showed up in Kelly Petre's Rm 226 for pre-dinner whiskey and drinks & it was off to John Lillie's Steakhouse. Hunker down, cuz this will be a recap of 5 games that were played in two days.

Thursday, we had the early morning off and showed up to watch our RR >65AA Brothers in their first outing before getting ready for our first game against 65AA Triple Deuce, a team from predominately the DFW area and our >70's won 12 – 11 behind the pitching of Carl Caruso and George Wendt (9/12, .583). Gary Warrick (9/14, .643) was on deck to pitch for the buffet inning before the game was cut short at 6 innings, but nothing phased Gary and he was on fire for both games on Thursday going for a combined 5 hits for 5 at bats. Wow! Btw, the statistics listed inside the () are stats for the entire tournament. Rookie Bill Smiley went 2 for 2, batting 1.000 for this game, but strained some already aggravated injuries and had to sit out the rest of the tournament, but what a start. Another rookie, Robert Cox, went 2 for 2 in the first game, and ended a fine tournament batting a healthy 8 for 14, or .571.

Also understand that Coach Laffey kept his own books and no stinking errors, fielder's choices or base on balls would be considered a hit. The

way Coach 'Hard Ass' Laffey looked at it, if you're upset about not seeing those cushy batting averages that you get back at The Robson, then go back to the Ranch.

Next up were the eventual champions of the >65 AA Bracket, our own RR>65AA's. Warrick was again perfect at the plate, going 2 for 2. Tim Hughes (8/13, .615, Triple), who coach Laffey describes as a "beast on defense," was a rock, taming some ferocious shots to left field. Not for the last time, Squire Kelly Petre (8/14, .571) was also perfect at the plate. Oh, did I say that the 65's won, 19 – 15?

After a quick, let's say a traditional 'hot wash', back in Rm 226, it was off to George's and Bubba's. George's couldn't handle this whole lot.

Friday was **Showtime** and it started with back-to-back games against the other two >70 teams, both at the AAA level, the Texas Rattlers and San Antonio Relentless. Our >70 AAers had never beaten the Texas Rattlers in more than a few attempts. Before the game, we were all treated to one of the best Knute Rockne speeches ever. John Gauthier (10/17, .588, Trip) grabbed everyone by the \_\_\_\_\_, no I mean throats and we all said in unison, "Not today." The Robison were not going to be denied this game. Johnny G, described by Coach Laffey as "Iron Man", seemed to will the neighborhood Boyz to their first victory over the Rattlers. George W started on the mound with Carl Caruso closing the deal with a 13-12 victory.

There is a lot of strategy in deploying your team in these tournaments. Our >70 AA warriors were blessed to have Greg Laffey at the helm and Dave Riddle coaching 3<sup>rd</sup> base and holding down the chaos. It worked and then some – until we lost Dave, at least. Thanks Greg & Dave, you're the best.

Next up was Relentless. If our RR >70 warriors could beat >70AAA Relentless, The Robson would be top seed going into the single elimination final round and get the only bye. It seemed like a huge game that we needed to win in order to preserve bodies and get some rest while the other two teams fought it out to get in the finals against us. Ron Schwertner, who Coach Laffey describes as, "always thinking", took the leadership role batting 4 for 4 with 2 triples and playing 1B and some 3B. Jimmy Reese (9/12, Dbl, .692), who went 8 for 9 on Friday, with a messed-up neck I might add, caught everything headed to Right Center Field and did it all day long with the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest tournament batting average on the team. Pitchers Carl Caruso and George Wendt were just as good, both in pitching, and in batting 3 for 3 in this game. RR looked destined to take the game, batting around in the top of the Buffet Inning (7), scoring 12 runs and putting their lead at 30-17 with Relentless having one last at bat. And then everything seemed to go to crap. Relentless started hitting and RR went wobbly. Every tournament seems to crown a 'Pig Pen', the player with the dirtiest uniform on the team. Usually it's Bob Laderach (9/16, .563, Dbl), our 'Mr. Utility' who excels at any position, or John Gauthier (10/17, .588, Dbl) whose intensity and leadership leads him into the thick of battle. But, this day 'Pig Pen' was clearly Johnny B (11/16, .688, 3 Dbls, Trip). Johnny B handled three shots up the middle (kind of handled) and just to be sure had to pounce on two of them and roll to the bag to make the force

out. It wasn't pretty to be sure. Relentless scored 8 runs but RR held on for the 30-25 victory.

Maybe being the top seed wasn't such a good idea. We got to watch our >65 brothers play twice and win their bracket (Congratulations!) and we watched The Rattlers take it to the depleted Relentless. I'm proud to say that we were the ones who depleted Relentless, but we sat on our butts for a long, long time. The championship started somewhere south of 5PM. David McKie (8/13, .615, 2 HRs, 2 Trips and a Dbl), Jimmy Reese and Johnny B each got 3 hits and our top defender, Stu White, and our most consistent hitter, Ken Ford (10/12, .833, Trip) got 2 hits and it looked like RR might pull off a second upset, but it didn't happen. The AAA Rattlers took the title with a 19-16 victory and the Robson >70 AA ballclub reluctantly took their second-place ribbons.

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, 1<sup>st</sup> Place, it's all good. But what made this tournament far and away the best tournament for both teams was the support in the stands of a bunch of wives from both teams. A big deal, you ask. Definitely! A huge deal. The spouses helped create the energy that led our RR teams to top finishes.

All-Tournament Honors go to David McKie who was a rock in the outfield and earned the moniker, Bombaroono (another Coach Laffey description) for his exploits at the plate that included 2 HRs and 2 Triples. Jimmy Reese had the second highest batting average on the team and didn't miss a beat in Left Center Field. George Wendt pitched fantastically and was one of our top hitters. Ken Ford rounds out our

All-Tournament Team and was our top hitter with an average of .833 over the 5 games. Congratulations, Men!

Looking forward to the next Grapevine Tournament the Nationals in Vegas in September.