

SPORTS



Brittany Conger of Delta High School signed with TSJC's softball coach Steve Swazo.

Lady Trojans improve to 5-1 on the year

By MIKE SALBATO
Special to the Chronicle

The Trinidad State Junior College softball team played long ball against Air Force on Sunday. The Trojans hit five homeruns in the two-games series sweeping the Falcons by the scores of 14-3 and 17-4.

In the first game of the day, the Trojans jumped out to an early 5-0 lead and never looked back. TSJC scored five more runs in the second and then added on four insurance runs in the fourth inning. Starting pitcher Kelsey Apodaca picked up her first win of the season allowing only three runs off of four hits. Sophomores Julia Diehl and Alyse Billick each had homeruns to lead the 14-hit attack by the Lady Trojans.

The nightcap was also decided after five-innings of play with the 17-4 victory. In this game, Leah Hanson (3-for-4 with 5 RBI), Julia Diehl (2-for-3

with 2 RBI) and Kelsey Apodaca (2-for-2 with 2 RBI), each had homeruns. The Trojans had 16 hits in the second game to pick up their fifth win of the season.

"I thought our girls really hit the ball well in this series," TSJC coach Steve Swazo said after the game. "When you have 30 hits in two ballgames, this was a great way for us to head into Texas for our tournament this coming weekend."

This past Thursday the Lady Trojans split a series with Lamar, winning the first game 6-1 off a grand slam homerun from Julia Diehl and then lost the nightcap in a thriller, 2-1.

"I really thought we would come away with two wins in Lamar, but we will take a split on the road," Swazo said. "The team played hard for 14 innings and that last game, we gave them an unearned run and it came back to hurt us, but overall they played well."

This solid group of Trojan

hitters is already pounding the career record book at TSJC. Sophomore Nikole Morgan is already the all-time doubles leader with 21. She was joined on the career books by Diehl, who is now the all time RBI leader at TSJC with 62 career RBI's. This passes the old record held by Christy Bruno (59 in 2006-2007). Diehl should soon surpass the runs, hits and homerun records.

TSJC will now travel to Odessa, Texas for a doubleheader on Thursday, February 19. They then will take part in a tournament in Midland, Texas on Friday and Saturday where they are playing against #4 ranked Midland College, 8th ranked Blinn College, and #25 ranked San Jacinto College. The next home stand for the Lady Trojans will be February 28 against Seward Community College with games at 1 and 3 p.m. at Southside Park.

Brittany Conger signs with TSJC

By MIKE SALBATO
Special to the Chronicle

Trinidad State Junior College softball coach Steve Swazo is proud to announce the signing of Brittany Conger, an outfielder from Delta High School. During her senior year, Brittany was selected to play in

the 2008 CCGS All-State Game along with being selected first-team all-conference along with all-state honorable mention by the Denver Post/Rocky Mountain News. She finished her senior year with a batting average of .432 and had seven triples and 25 stolen bases.

"Brittany is another outfield-

er who has tremendous speed. We look forward to seeing what she can do at the college level," Coach Swazo said. "She will bring some depth to the outfield position. I look forward to her being on our team for the 2009-2010 season.

Brittany is the daughter of Gene and Shana Conger.

Broncos release starting cornerback Bly

By ARNIE STAPLETON
AP Sports Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) - The Denver Broncos continued their salary purge Tuesday by releasing 11-year veteran cornerback Dre' Bly, who had spent two years starting opposite star Champ Bailey.

Bly was acquired from the Detroit Lions on March 2, 2007, to replace Darrent Williams, the rising 24-year-old cornerback who was killed in a drive-by shooting two months earlier.

In his two years in Denver, Bly recorded 134 tackles, a sack and seven interceptions, including 77 stops and two pickoffs last season.

He's the fourth defensive starter dumped this week by the new regime of general manager Brian Xanders and coach Josh McDaniels, who

replaced the fired Mike Shanahan.

Bly was due to count \$6.8 million against next season's \$123 million salary cap.

On Monday, the Broncos released high-priced defensive tackle Dewayne Robertson, who had a \$16 million cap number, along with linebacker Jamie Winborn, safety Marquand Manuel, special teamer Niko Koutouvides, defensive end John Engelberger and tight end Nate Jackson.

Bly, Winborn, Robertson and Manuel all started last season for Denver's dismal defense that surrendered 448 points and finished at or near the bottom of the league in every major category.

Bly's agent, Kennard McGuire, declined to comment when reached by The Associated Press on Tuesday night.

J.R. Smith fined \$1,000 for missing NJ court date

MILLSTONE TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP) - Denver Nuggets guard J.R. Smith was fined \$1,000 by a New Jersey judge for failing to show up at a court hearing last month on charges stemming from a 2007 traffic accident that resulted in the death of a passenger in Smith's vehicle.

One of Smith's lawyers, Greg G. Mordas, also was fined \$1,000 because he told Smith he did not have to attend the Jan. 13 hearing. Smith was in Denver that day, playing for the

Nuggets.

Municipal Court Judge Debra J. Gelson imposed the fines Tuesday and ordered Smith to return for another pre-trial hearing on March 17.

Smith, a former star at Lakewood High School and St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, is facing five traffic charges: improper passing, failure to stop, speeding, reckless driving and failure to wear a seat belt.

The June 9, 2007 accident occurred when Smith, at the wheel of a GMC Yukon, alleged-

ly drove around a stopped car and through a stop sign, colliding with a car in an intersection in Millstone Township. His passenger, Andre Bell, 21, of East Orange, suffered severe head injuries and died two days later.

A Monmouth County grand jury last year declined to indict Smith on a charge of vehicular homicide, and the case was sent to municipal court for adjudication of the traffic charges.

Marquis proves he can pitch and hit for Colorado

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) - Colorado starting pitcher Jason Marquis might be a big hit, literally, for the Rockies.

The right-hander is a proven commodity on the mound after winning at least 11 games for five straight seasons. Marquis, considered one of the top-hitting pitchers in the National League, has demonstrated he can swing the bat, as well.

"I don't want to be another out just standing there at the plate. I want to make the pitcher work," Marquis said. "It has won me a few games over the course of the last five or so years."

Marquis, acquired in a trade with the Chicago Cubs for Luis Vizcaino, is slated as the Rockies' third starter in the rotation. He has a 79-70 overall pitching record with a 4.55 ERA.

Marquis might be just what Colorado needs with fellow starting pitcher Jeff Francis working out shoulder pain. And with a career .206 batting average, 25 doubles, two triples and five home runs, his help might not be limited to the mound.

"It makes the other pitcher work a little harder knowing there are nine outs there instead of eight," Marquis said. "More than anything, it puts more pressure on the pitcher."

The New York native's greatest homer was a grand slam against the Mets last year. He hit a curve ball off Jon Niese out as part of a five RBI game. It was his second home run in three at-bats, also hitting one against Cincinnati in a previous appearance.

"As a pitcher, I don't exactly have 500 home

runs, so I remember them all vividly. Hopefully there are more to come," Marquis said. "My favorite was at Shea Stadium with 40 of my friends and family members there. The grand slam made it 6-2. It was great to share that moment and talk a little trash with them."

Marquis should like hitting in offensive-minded Coors Field. So far, he has enjoyed pitching there. The Rockies' new starter has a 3-0 record and a 2.51 ERA in the stadium.

"I have had some success, but it is a small sample. I have to bear down and execute pitches," Marquis said.

Marquis has been good against the rest of the clubs in NL West ballparks, sporting a 6-4 mark with a 2.86 ERA. Consistency has been the key with Atlanta, St. Louis and the Cubs during his career. He pitched the last two seasons with Chicago after posting 15, 13 and 14 wins, respectively, with the Cardinals.

"He is coming here with an edge. He wants to take his career to the next step," Colorado manager Clint Hurdle said. "He feels there is more there, and we are here to help him get there. He is very athletic off the mound and has a nice skill set and sinks the ball. His athleticism on the offensive side of the ball is another dynamic which gives us a chance to make a gigantic step forward."



Colorado Avalanche left winger Ryan Smyth celebrates scoring a goal with defenseman Milan Hejduk (23) against the Ottawa Senators in the second period of an NHL hockey game in Denver on Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2009.

(AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

Wolski scores game-winning goal in OT

By PAT GRAHAM
AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) - Wojtek Wolski scored off his own rebound 80 seconds into overtime, lifting the Colorado Avalanche to a 3-2 win over the Ottawa Senators on Tuesday night.

Ian Laperriere and Ryan Smyth also scored for last-place Colorado, which has won two in a row.

Ryan Shannon scored twice for the Senators as they finished their five-game road trip with a 4-1 mark. They also had their five-game winning streak come to a halt.

Wolski shot a puck in from the blue line that bounced off the chest of Alex Auld. It caromed right back to a charging Wolski, who knocked it in for his 12th goal of the season.

Andrew Raycroft stopped 20 shots for the Avalanche.

Shannon now has nine career goals, three of which are against the Avalanche.

The right winger spent most of the season playing for Binghamton of the American Hockey League before being called up on Feb. 4 to try to ignite a then struggling Senators squad.

It was the first two-goal game of Shannon's career.

The win moves the Avs into a three-way tie with Phoenix and St. Louis for last place in the Western Conference, an unfamiliar spot for them. Colorado (27-30-1) has never been below .500 this late in the season since moving to Denver.

Smyth rammed in a rebound early in the second period, only to have the Senators tie the game back up at 2 moments later when Shannon scored a power play goal.

Auld spent almost as much time dodging

Wolski as stopping pucks in the second period. Wolski knocked the net off its moorings on two separate occasions, Auld scrambling to avoid him.

Ottawa wasted little time getting on the scoreboard, scoring 30 seconds into the game as Shannon lined a shot through Raycroft's legs.

It was Shannon's first goal since last March against Nashville.

Colorado tied the game near the end of the first period when Laperriere reached his stick into the air and tipped Cody McCormick's blast from the blue line past Auld.

Laperriere has a goal in two straight games. The Avalanche were without defenseman John-Michael Liles (wrist) and forward Darcy Tucker (family matter).

Liles injured his wrist during a shootout win over Detroit on Sunday, and won't be with the team when they kick off a six-game, 11-day road trip at Washington on Friday night. He "could join us by the end of the road trip, best case scenario," coach Tony Granato said.

Tucker has been out as he deals with an illness to his father back in Alberta. He will be back with the team on the trip.

The Avalanche may have Paul Stastny back in the lineup as soon as Friday night. Stastny has missed the last seven weeks with a broken right forearm. The center was one of the team's top scorers when he was hurt.

Notes: Colorado remains confident that captain Joe Sakic will return to the ice this season after he recovers from his back operation and three broken fingers. ... Senators D Jason Smith played in his 1,000th career game. ... Ottawa made its first visit to the Pepsi Center since Dec. 12, 2005.