

Ags picked to take SWC crown

'Next Year's Here' refers to cage fortunes too

By **TONY GALLUCCI**
Staff Sports Writer

Everybody has become obsessed with the slogan this year that goes "Next Year's Here". Most people connect the slogan with the football team, while it, in fact, applies to the basketball squad also.

Coming off of a disappointing 15-11 season the Aggie hoopsters generally conceded to take the SWC crown for the first time since the season of 1969-1970.

A quick perusal of three magazines shows quite differing opinions. "Basketball Action '75" is less than inept in their preseason picks and will be discarded from consideration as an "expert".

"Action" gives Texas Tech the nod as SWC champ, followed in order by SMU, Texas, Baylor, A&M and TCU. The magazine is not inept for not picking the Ags first, but because: A) Most teams were given a power rating by the magazine. Tech received no rating, SMU, Texas and A&M were all given a rating of 85, TCU received an 80 and Baylor a 76. Rice and Arkansas were not rated. Baylor's offense was called poor and their defense good while A&M's offense was called good and the defense very good. Where's the logic. The other two magazines, "Popular Sports Basketball 1975", and "Cord Sportfacts College Basketball Guide 1975" both agree on A&M as SWC picks.

"Popular Sports" goes with A&M, Tech, TCU, SMU, Texas, Arkansas, Rice and Baylor. "Cord Sportfacts" sees A&M, SMU, Tech, Texas, Arkansas, Rice, Baylor, TCU.

On a point basis we will go with A&M, Tech, SMU, Texas, TCU, Arkansas tie, Rice and Baylor. But then we picked Baylor last in football.

Here is how they shape up.

TEXAS A&M
Six of the top eight players return and five excellent newcomers should make the team a genuine contender.

Walter Robertson writes in "Popular Sports", "In Shelby Metcalf's dozen years as head basketball coach at Texas A&M, he's seen more muscle than a Pennsylvania truck stop. Give him just an ounce or two of finesse and you usually have a bonafide contender for the Southwest Conference championship."

He goes on to say that since the Ags are making noise they must have a little finesse. But he denies it saying Metcalf found something better. More muscle.

The only heavy on the court loss will be leading scorer Randy Knowles. The big off the court loss is team leader Joe Arciniega. Seniors John Thornton, Cedric Joseph, Jerry Mercer and Mike Floyd return to add a base for Matcalf's bulks.

Thornton, the biggest surprise in Metcalf's package in years, came on strong the second part of the season after gaining a starting berth to finish second in scoring at 12.7 behind Knowles. His average was helped by an amazing 53.6 per cent accuracy from the field. Joseph was

the No. 3 scorer and leading rebounder at 9.3 per game. Mercer was also up there percentage wise at 55.5 from the field.

Floyd was the fifth Aggie to average better than ten points per game last year and led in assists with 83. Top returning reserves are Ray Roberts and Webb Williams.

Other veterans are Bruce Ott, Steve Chambers, Leroy Baerwald, Dale Donaldson and Kim Wiatt. Chuck Tone returns after a year's absence from the team. The top newcomers which will vie for starting berths are freshman Doug Mezger, Sonny Parker from Mineral Area JC in Missouri, Barry Davis from Hill County JC, Steve Jones also from Hill County and Gates Erwin from a JC in Florida.

TEXAS TECH
The Red Raiders won more games than any other SWC team last year but were one loss back of champ Texas. Coach Gerald Myers has to come up with replacements for Richard Little and Don Moore both combination wizards. Of the returning veterans, note Rick Bullock. One of the monsters of the conference at 240-lbs., he averaged 21.4 points and 10.7 rebounds and had a tough 58.7 percentage from the field. Standing behind Bullock will be William Johnson and Grady Newton. Watch out for Randy Ligins, a JC transfer. At shooting positions, Tech's most valuable asset could easily be Phil Bailey, hailed as one of the best pure shooters around. Bryan Mauk, a ball handler, could sub for Bailey as could Steve Dinn.

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY
The Mustangs stormed to an eight game winning streak at the end of last season to finish tied for second with Tech. SMU was picked to give the Ags a go of it in magazines which had to meet an early deadline. The consensus was that with four starters returning including preseason All-America pick Ira Terrell the 'Stangs could do little wrong.

But 'Big Daddy' (NCAA) saw it different by deciding that Terrell could not play to add to the woes of a University struck heavily by football problems. Terrell, a junior, led the conference in scoring and rebounding last year.

The other three starters will still make a hefty contribution though, with Oscar Roan leading the way. Rusty Bourquein will add depth to the lineup. Bourquein, like Thornton, spent most of the early season on the bench but came on strong for the Mustangs in their last eight games. John Sagehorn could do something for the Raiders as could any of several good recruits, the most well known being Jeff Swanson.

TEXAS
The Longhorns produced a season last year that should fit somewhere in Ripley's believe it or not. The team won the conference title, had the top scorer and won the race for best shooting percentage.

So what, you say? Well consider this. The Longhorns finished with a losing season. After going 1-12 in

pre-conference, the Longhorns turned the table at 11-3 during conference play to end at 12-15. With Larry Robinson and Harry Larrabee gone, the Horns should have about the same record, only the wins and losses will be spread out a little more evenly over the season. Dan Krueger and Hank Bauerschlag must enlist transfer and freshman and benchwarmer help to stay off the bottom of the ticket this year.

There is plenty of competition for starting spots but very little experience. Watch for Jeff Boothe, Ed Johnson, Tommy Weilert, Gary Goodner and Mike Murphy. A couple of other possibilities are Mike Lien, Brett Taylor and Rich Parson.

ARKANSAS
Despite the loss of Head coach Lynn Van Eman (39-65) there will

probably be no improvement from Fayetteville this year. Dean Tolson, an alltime record holder at UA, and Dennis White have departed leaving little more than remnants of a high scoring (86.1) team. Jack Schulte, Dan Pauley and Curtis Drake must lead a bunch of fair talented newcomers.

Remember the names, Charles Terry, Marvin Delph, Jim Counce, and Tom Maxwell. They may be synonymous with Arkansas basketball this season. Ricky Medlock is the only name left that is anywhere near a household name and he might not play. Medlock broke one of the oldest of conference records after recording a 92.9 free throw percentage last year.

Johnny Swaim, probably the most disagreeable coach in the conference, lost four seniors to graduation. The Horned Frogs finished last in the conference last year and their only chance to move up this year is the fact that the others below have accumulated more problems.

Lynn Royal is the biggest hope, providing he has recovered from eye surgery. Wayne Wayman could add a little depth. TCU walked off with a couple of the state's most recruited schoolboys in Dirk Hoyt. But what they can do for the team could be minimal. Look for Thomas Bledsoe, Ted Jones, Gary Landers, Alonzo Harpis, Rick Hensley, Robert Hollie and Eddy Fitzhugh also.

RICE
The race for last is apparently as close as that for first and foremost among contenders is Rice. It is most likely that the sparse talent returning will make a happy winner out of new coach Bob Folk.

The Owls bring back a lot of starters and a lot of familiar names but each did little for the team. Returning will be Tim Moriarty, Charles Daniels, Danny Carroll, Pete Meyers, Howard Laidlaw, Mark Keitel, Chuck Saus, Jeff Tunnell, and Dwight Whitson.

Five super newcomers led by All-America Frank Jackson might add a little punch. The others are Dave Louwerse, Doug Nally, Alan Reynolds and James Simmons.

BAYLOR
The Bears have done little since they won the title in 1950. But then again how long has it been since they were in competition for the Cotton Bowl. Charles Dawson in his

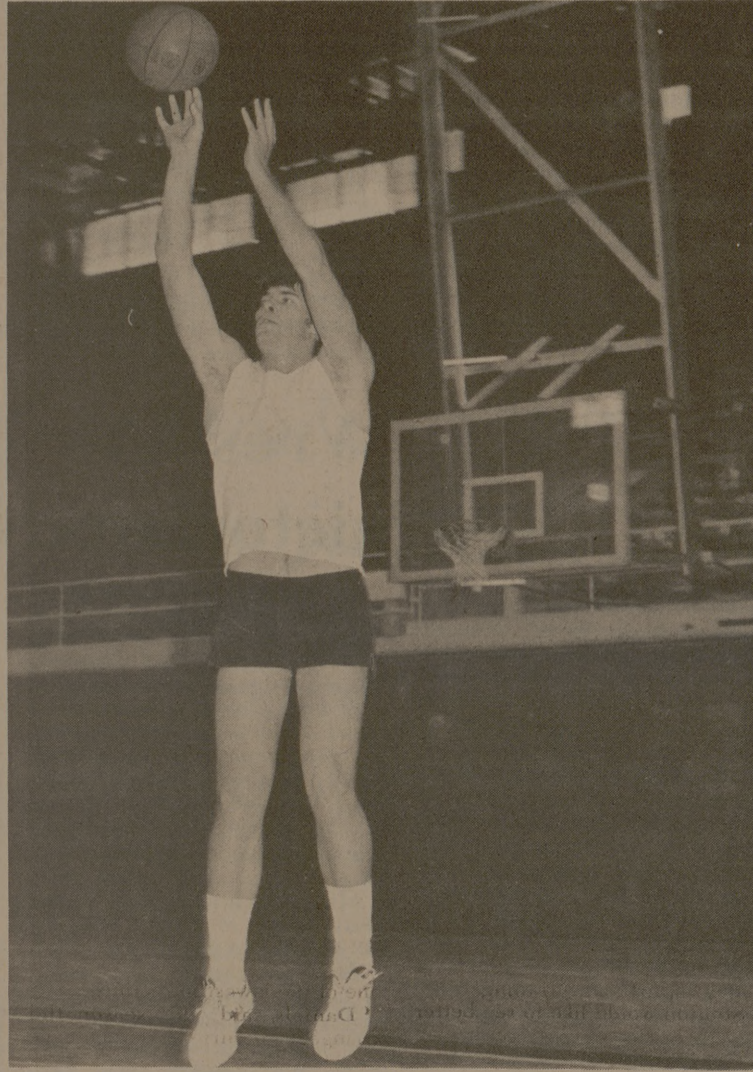
second year as coach might get his team to find .500 worth of competition but don't bet on it.

Probably the best man on the squad is Gary McGuire who takes the place of departed Charles McKinney. McKinney was the lone spark in a smoldering log for the Bears last year. Again, for the Bears a squad of no-names will back up McGuire. Listen for James Weaver, Tom Hutchinson, Hay Downs, Tom Rufus, Craig Bishop and on and on.

The Aggies' first opponent will

enter the confines of rowdy G. Rollie White Coliseum this Saturday. The holidays will be about half through, but the Ags could use a show of confidence in their first outing. A good crowd could set the pace for the season. TCU finished strong last year with a 19-8 record. Leading returnees are 6-8 Steve Porter and 6-3 Herbert Lee.

The JV's first game of the season will precede the varsity game at G. Rollie. They will play San Antonio College.



John Thornton takes a jump shot in preparation for Saturday's opener with Texas Lutheran.

Lacrosse team loses against San Antonio

By **PAUL McGRATH**
Staff Sports Writer

The Aggies came close but not close enough as the more experienced San Antonio LaCrosse Club sent the Maroon and White back to College Station with a 6-4 loss.

The lack of A team personnel obviously hurt the Ags as inconsistencies in teamwork were seen throughout the game. Fast breaks gave A&M good scoring opportunities, however a failure to pass off to open men cost them key points.

San Antonio controlled the game with their greater experience which was shown in their superior passing game.

A&M is now 1-1 with both games having identical scores of 6-4. A&M will face the University of Texas for the second time, having beaten the Horns previously, in Austin this Friday just before the football game. The team will begin Texas Lacrosse League play next semester.

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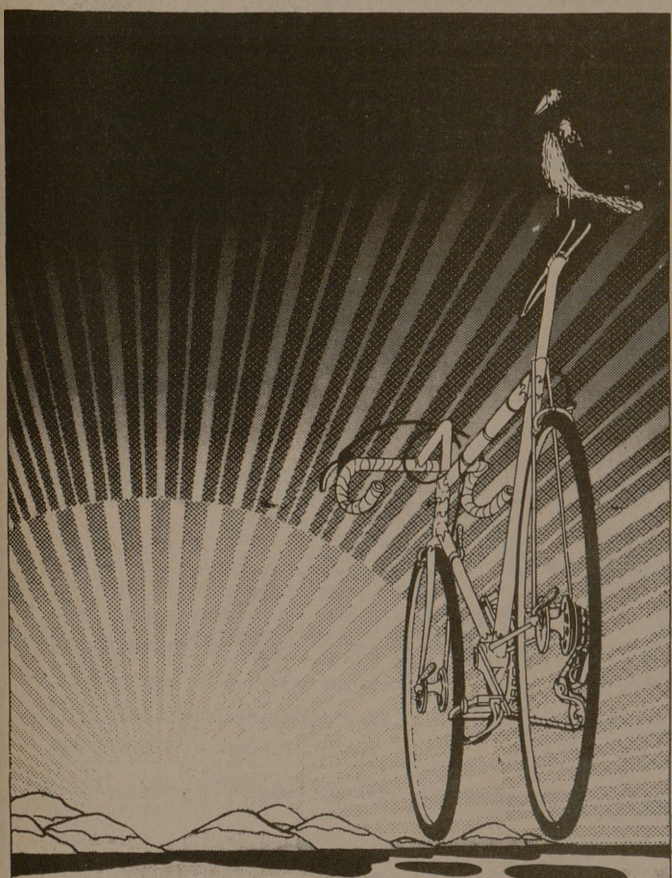
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