

## The Greek Speaks

By NICK VOINIS  
Special Correspondent  
HOUSTON, Texas — Have you ever noticed something about the National Basketball Association that makes it different from most professional sports leagues?

Not one player in the league played his collegiate ball in the Southwest Conference. Not one. Many players in the National Football League have been recruited from the SWC along with numerous professional baseball players. Even the Professional Golf Association has members on its tour who are SWC exes.

This September two SWC exes stand respectable chances of making an NBA roster. Former A&M forward Randy Knowles (as reported in The Battalion last week) will be trying out for the Chicago Bulls along with former Red Raider forward William Johnson, who will be trying out with the Houston Rockets.

The Rockets held a three-day rookie camp at Houston Baptist University two weeks ago, where Johnson, with some impressive play, was one of four rookies to be invited back to the Rockets' camp. Others who will be returning for a shot at the big club include No. 1 draft choice Joe Meriweather of Southern Illinois; No. 2 pick Jim Blanks of Gardner-Webb (N.C.); and No. 8 selection Leon Johnson of Centenary. Tech's Johnson was selected in the sixth round.

Johnson said he feels very fortunate being the only draftee picked from the SWC. "The conference doesn't get the publicity other conferences get. Not as many scouts come out because the type of play in the conference isn't pro type," the 22-year-old Houston Yates High School grad said. "The brand of basketball played in the SWC isn't the kind played over the rest of the country. The teams are then at a disadvantage when they go to play teams from other conferences."

Johnson averaged 15.4 points and nine rebounds a game as a senior at Tech. He made nearly 53 per cent of his field goals for the 74-75 season. Those credentials put Johnson on the All-SWC team.

The 6-7, 225-pound forward believes the conference is steadily progressing. "SWC basketball has always been in the shadow of football. This has always been football territory. People say, 'Guys down here can't play basketball,'" Johnson said. "We need to get a team up in the finals of the NCAA tourney to start drawing attention."

"There are three guys (with remaining conference eligibility) who could make the pros. . . . They'll have to go out and work hard trying to adapt to the pro game. Overall the conference has many young players," Johnson said. Ira Terrell, Rick Bullock and Sonny Parker are the players which Johnson felt had the best chance of surviving in the NBA.

He also expressed his views about the improvements in SWC recruiting. "The teams are now going all over the nation for the best talent available instead of staying around here," he replied. Is this being caused by the addition of the University of Houston next season? "Yeah, the teams are trying to prepare for Houston, because Houston goes all out for basketball. The teams will have to be able to compete with them," Johnson added.

As for who Johnson predicts to take the SWC crown next year: "Baylor will have a very tough team. They have some good young, big guys. A&M will be pretty strong again, and I think Texas Tech will still have a pretty good shot at it," he said.

Johnson stands a good chance at making the Houston Rockets' club next season even though the Rockets are cluttered up at forward. "I'd like to give it a shot. I think I will be able to compete at a pro level," he said. "I believe if I work hard this summer I would very definitely have a shot at making the team."

Johnson is currently at Texas Tech completing his undergraduate degree in physical education.

### \*\*\* TIDBITS

✓ All members of the Houston Astros baseball club received watches in honor of Bob Watson's scoring baseball's millionth run prior to a game in the Pittsburgh homestand. Watson will receive a special \$1,000 watch at the annual All-Star game in Milwaukee, July 15 to commemorate the event. Perhaps these gifts will help the team arrive at the park on time.

✓ Congratulations to Watson for being selected the National Baseball League Player of the Month in May. He seems to be the Astros' only player worth mentioning so far this year.

✓ The Astros signed seven draftees from last month's free agent draft, including the Arkansas Razorback pitching duo of Richard Miller (17th round) and Robert Blank (18th round). Both were selected in the regular phase.

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