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Sports

Cliff Speegle talks about referees

By TONY GALLUCCI
The following interview took place at 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 23, 1977. The interview was conducted with Cliff Speegle, Southwest Conference Commissioner. Speegle refused to answer questions the night prior to the interview when he attended the Texas A&M-Arkansas basketball game in G. Rollie White Coliseum. He was contacted long distance per his request. The interview will run in two parts.

Question: Are the referees who officiate at Southwest Conference games rated by any system, quality or otherwise?
Answer: Well, we rate them through observers at all times.
Q: There is an observer at every game?
A: Most every game that we have,

we have someone there observing the officials.

Q: How does the observer's rating affect which games a referee will officiate?

A: Well, we have a procedure in the conference which was here when I came, and we followed that same procedure.

We meet with the basketball coaches in the spring. They rate the officials at that time. They're given a list of officials. They rate the officials at that time and we attempt in our selection of officials to put the officials that the basketball coaches rate high in the conference games that these basketball coaches have. So, they do have a say in the selection of the officials.

Now at times, due to scheduling and due to what we have limitations on, the officials' appearance during one season with any one ball club—sometimes we have to deviate from those complete selections. But we attempt to stay as close as possible to those selections.

Q: Are referees that are rated well across the board by all coaches given any preference in officiating TV games or important games?

A: No sir, we do not know the TV schedule when we assign basketball officials. We assign basketball officials in late July and early September. We don't wait for two reasons. One, after we get the schedules we like to get our officials assigned and get all of the mechanics of this office out on the road, because we have to coordinate officiating

with all outside opponents of the Southwest Conference and that means that if you have a split crew then you are assigning an official with someone else who has the same duties and therefore when you are looking at as many basketball games as we are, we have a tremendous amount of correspondence that has to take place, so we have to do it at that time of year before this office gets geared up for competition after school starts.

We assign the officials early.
Q: Are the coaches restricted in any manner towards criticism of the officials?

A: The conference does not have what you would call a gag rule. They, the basketball coaches themselves, voted the gag rule upon themselves as an agreement that the conference in a business meeting took cognizance of this and I think the coach has a moral responsibility to uphold an agreement between the coaches.

Q: Do you think that would affect the coaches who were not in on the agreement since there has been a large turnover the last couple of years?

A: This agreement was brought up in the coaches meeting and it was circulated to all the coaches.

Q: Certain situations have been prominent recently involving referee's decisions. Do you have any power to make decisions concerning a game after it has happened?

A: Well, this was a mechanical mistake by more than one person. This was something that should

never have happened and it did under certain conditions, but we nearly had the same thing happen last night. They were lined up but the officials and the scorer and timer did a good job in coordinating that.

Q: I have been told that Del Poss officiates at Rice University and his son is enrolled there on scholarship?

A: Well, if we were to eliminate all of the officials, football and basketball, where their sons or daughters go to school at another institution we

wouldn't have any officials encourage families to go to our conference schools and this would defeating the purpose if we asked of our officials to send their children elsewhere, and I think we're interested in the youngsters going Southwest Conference schools. This, as far as I am concerned, really no bearing on that individual efficiency as far as officiating is concerned because you're in two different fields.

Kuhn and Finley are at it again

United Press International
CHICAGO — Oakland A's owner Charles O. Finley said last night Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn is "out of his mind," but that he would attend a hearing Kuhn scheduled over his sale of pitcher Paul Lindblad to the Texas Rangers.

Finley said Texas owner Brad Corbett told him he had signed Lindblad to a contract.

During a self-initiated conference telephone call with the wire services, Finley phoned Corbett in Arlington, Tex., and asked him if he would attend a March 2 meeting scheduled by Kuhn about the sale of Lindblad from Oakland to Texas for \$400,000.

"Mr. Corbett has stated he signed Lindblad to a contract on Saturday and he stated he is not going to any meeting," Finley said.

"My attorney and I have decided tonight that we will attend the meeting, only because there's no telling what this man Kuhn might attempt to do," Finley said. "At times, he doesn't act very rational. He is out of his mind."

In June, 1976, Kuhn voided Finley's sales of pitcher Vida Blue to the New York Yankees and pitcher Rollie Fingers and outfielder Joe Rudi to the Boston Red Sox for \$3.5 million.

Kuhn said it was in the best interest of baseball. Finley then filed a \$3.5 million lawsuit against Kuhn.

Finley said, "Kuhn has caused the near destruction of Oakland club by irresponsibly interfering with the sales of Rudi, Fingers and of Blue."

"Kuhn is acting maliciously to encourage families to go to our conference schools and this would defeating the purpose if we asked of our officials to send their children elsewhere, and I think we're interested in the youngsters going Southwest Conference schools. This, as far as I am concerned, really no bearing on that individual efficiency as far as officiating is concerned because you're in two different fields."

"It is no coincidence that the deals in which Kuhn interfered those made by Charlie Finley, although there have been many other transactions during the last several months," he said.

He cited as an example the New York Yankees' recent purchase of Jimmy Wynn from the Atlanta Braves for more than \$100,000.

"Kuhn has no right to void approval of my sales unless the have been violated," Finley said. "Kuhn knows there have not any violations and his only purpose is to harass me and to influence court in the Rudi, Blue and Finley litigation."

Finley said he received a letter from Kuhn last night telling him to attend the meeting.

"I don't expect him (Kuhn) to damn thing this time. The man has got to be out of his mind. He is ridiculous," Finley said.



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