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Six marked in SWC

United Press International
DALLAS — It's not divulging any game plans to point out that six Southwest Conference football players will be marked men in 1977. They're all on the pre-season all-conference team named by Dave Campbell's Texas-Arkansas Football Magazine and between them they've won eight individual statistical championships the last two seasons.

Conference schools, opening the 63rd SWC season Sept. 10, return five players who won six statistical championships last year and three other who grabbed four in '75.

The six are 1975 scoring and tandem offense champion Earl Campbell of Texas, '76 rushing and scoring champion George Woodard of Texas A&M, '76 punting champion Russell Erxleben of Texas, '75 pass receiving champ Mike Renfro of TCU, '76 rushing champ Ben Cowins of Arkansas and '76 interception leader Anthony Francis of Houston.

Also back to add to the star system are last year's punt-return king, Arthur Whittington of SMU, and '75 tandem leader Jerry Eckwood of Arkansas.

The SWC will have more proven runners than at any time in recent seasons with last year's top seven rushers returning. Cowins edged

Woodard for the title by nine yards with Houston's Alois Blackwell finishing third, Baylor's Gary Blair fourth, Whittington fifth, and a pair of fleet freshmen, A&M's Curtis Dickey and Texas' Johnny (Lam) Jones, sixth and seventh. Also returning are ninth-placer Billy Taylor of Tech and Eckwood, who was tenth.

And that, of course, ignores Earl Campbell, who was unranked after missing four games with a leg injury.

Campbell enjoyed a strong spring training under new coach Fred Akers and appears ready to challenge for the all-time SWC career rushing title.

The 220-pound senior from Tyler is currently in seventh place, 618 yards away from the record of 3,317 set by Arkansas' Dickey Morton in 1971-73.

Returning from last season's consensus all-conference team are four offensive players, two defensive, and both the punter and place-kicker. There are also four members of the consensus '75 first team who didn't repeat last year.

The '76 returnees are Renfro, offensive tackle Dan Irons of Texas Tech, Woodard, Cowins, Erxleben, defensive nose-guard Gary Don Johnson of Baylor, Francis and

A&M place-kicker Tony Franklin, who set NCAA records with field goals of 64 and 65 yards on successive tries against Baylor last year.

Returning from the '75 consensus team are Renfro and four who didn't repeat last year — Campbell, Baylor safety Ron Burns, Texas Defensive tackle Brad Shearer, and Arkansas kicker-punter Steve Little.

The punting crew appears as solid as the runners, with last year's top five returning. Erxleben led the nation with a 46.6 average, while Little challenged at 44.4. Three freshmen followed — SMU's Ken Rosenthal at 43.0, Baylor's Luke Prestridge at 40.1 and A&M's David Appleby at 39.7.

And place-kicking accomplishments bordered on the unbelievable in '76 with the same feat around for new feats in '77. Little, later named to the Football Writers Association All-America team, broke the conference record with a 61-yarder, only to see Franklin top that twice in the Baylor game.

Little gained consolation by setting an all-time conference career record of 34 field goals, with one season still to play. However, that man Franklin is shadowing the Arkansas booter there, too — Franklin has 29 with two seasons to play and coach Emory Bellard obviously isn't afraid to call on the 170-pound sidewinder from distances of up to 70 yards.

Among the guys who play catch, five of the top eight passers and five of the top seven receivers return.

Biggest offensive loss in the SWC, of course, was all-America

quarterback Tommy Kramer, who spent his senior season leading the nation in passing and while setting seven SWC records.

Among the returning backs are TCU's Jimmy Darr and Steve Bayuk, seventh-ranked passers, respectively; Tech's Rodney Allison, ranked in yardage but top racy with a 59.7 completion percentage; and Houston's Danny who ranked sixth in yardage and second in touchdowns passed.

The second, third, fourth and fifth busiest receivers return in order they're Doug Cameron and David Houser of Rice, Davidson of Baylor, and also back is seventh-ranked Williams of Tech, whose 11.1 per reception was tops among leaders.

Eight season openers are Sept. 10, including a pair of matchups — SMU at TCU and Texas Tech at Baylor. Rice starts its season the following week.

Bears trim roster

United Press International
LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Chicago Bears have reduced roster to 49 players, one above National Football League limit, by cutting three veterans.

Defensive end Royce Berry, receiver Randall Burks and tackle Tommy Reamon were on waivers Monday. The Bears until Wednesday to announce final cut to pare the roster to

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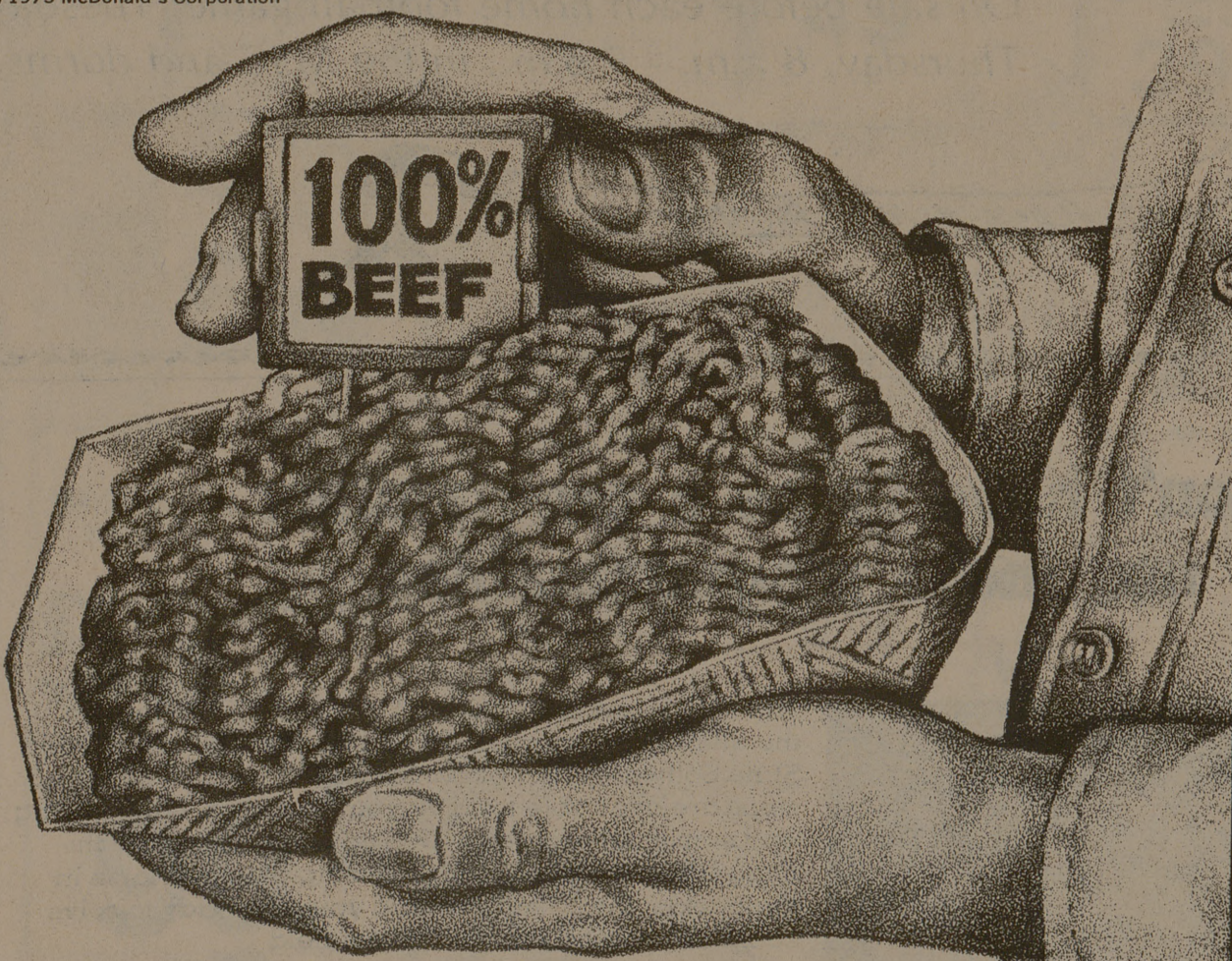
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