

It has all the makings of a circus

One month into the conference schedule I think it's about time to make my semi-annual SWC basketball predictions for this year.

After some unusual and interesting developments, the race for the crown has become as tight as money at the end of the month. And we all know how that can be.

So let's start at the top of the standings and work our way down to the pits.

With computer-like accuracy I have concluded that Texas will win the conference title and draw a bye into the final round of the post-season tournament. Though they have four tough games ahead (two away, two at home) I don't see how they'll lose another game. They'll

finish with a 15-1 conference mark and await the tournament survivor.

But I didn't forget Arkansas. The number two team in the nation is going to lose one more before the final regular season whistle is blown.

Where? My guess is down in Hofheinz Pavilion, on Feb. 18, to the Houston Cougars. I just don't believe Arkansas can maintain their present level of greatness with all the traveling they've had to do this season. They're tired, and looking ahead they still have to go to SMU, TCU, and Houston while entertaining Baylor and Tech at home.

And all the mileage will cost them a conference championship.

Beyond the two frontrunners, the race is really on in the conference.

With the championship virtually assured to Texas or Arkansas, the rest of the conference is battling for home court advantages in the opening round of the post-season tournament. And it's getting bloody.

Tech has assured itself of finishing in the top five with a 9-3 conference record and four games left to play. But where they're going to finish in the standings is still up for grabs. It's going to be a toss-up between Tech and Houston for third place. And I call it a tie.

The key to this race will be the exciting match-up between the two Wednesday night in Lubbock. If Tech can beat the Cougars, the two teams should finish the regular season

with identical 10-6 conference records. And a coin toss would determine who entertains the seventh and eighth place finishers.

Let's skip down to the bottom two teams, Rice and TCU. The two teams should finish right where they are; at the bottom. TCU should finish with their lone win over A&M and end up 1-15 on the year. Rice will be a little better with a 3-13 final record.

The key to this slugfest will be the exciting match-up between the two in Fort Worth Monday. Tickets are now on sale.

I purposely skipped the middle three teams, SMU, Baylor and A&M, because the race for the fifth

and final spot and the home court advantage has turned out to be the most exciting race to follow.

At the moment, Baylor is in the driver's seat for the coveted position. With their win over Houston Wednesday night, the Bears stand one game ahead of the Aggies and one game behind SMU. The Bears should finish the regular season with a 7-9 record and lock-up fifth place in the conference. Standing 4-7 in the conference, the Bears still have to face Arkansas, Texas SMU, TCU and Rice. Baylor ought to win three out of the five and hold the first round of the tournament in their own coliseum.

But SMU can control its own destiny as can Baylor. The key game for

the Mustangs will be the game down at Baylor tomorrow. The Ponies almost have to win, because ahead they face Houston, Texas, Arkansas and TCU. Standing 5-6 in conference play, the Mustangs would have to finish with a 7-9 record, or better, to hope for entertaining the first round of the tournament.

Last, but not least (remember Rice and TCU), are Shelby Metcalf's boys. From now on in, every game is important for the Aggies if they hope to have the first round of the tournament here at G. Rollie White.

And the possibilities look bleak. The Aggies could finish with a 6-10 conference mark and, by chance, tie for the fifth place spot with Baylor and SMU. But 7-9 looks like the record that will finish fifth.

But that isn't unachievable, even for the Aggies.

In order for A&M to end up 7-9 they have to beat Tech, TCU and Rice.

But the key game for A&M will be

Monday night in Austin. The Aggies cannot afford another loss and the hopes of finishing fifth. It's all on the line for the Aggies in Austin Monday.

So there you have my view of the season. The way I see it, the Aggies should win the conference, followed by Arkansas at Tech and Houston at 10-6, Baylor at 7-9 (and fifth place), SMU and Rice at 6-10, Rice at 3-13 and TCU at 1-15.

Arkansas should host TCU in the first round of the coin toss between winner of the coin toss and loser of the coin toss. The winner of the A&M coin toss will host Baylor and SMU. Baylor and SMU will host Waco to face Baylor. Then the first round winners would play Houston for the big party at Summit.

Confused? Aw, it's really simple if you think about it. But I'd like to talk to you about this baseball season....

Ladies lose to Red Raiders

By JANA THIEME

The Aggie Ladies were defeated in a heartbreaker Thursday evening by the Texas Tech Red Raiders 71-64. The Raiders are ranked fourth in the state and displayed their talent before a rapidly filling coliseum of spectators.

Their main attraction came in the form of a young woman, D'Lynn Brown, who scored 29 points and grabbed 12 rebounds. The only other Raider to score in double figures was Marilyn Payton with 15.

The Aggies had three women who finished the evening in double figures. High-point scorer for the Ags

was Sheree Christian, a junior from Houston, who wound up with 17. Von "the gun" Bunn, a sophomore from Victoria, connected with 16 and Julia Crawford, a freshman from College Station had 12.

Christian also had the highest number of rebounds with 12.

The Ladies and the Raiders battled for the lead throughout the first half.

In the second half, Tech came out of the locker room fired up, and suddenly the Ladies found themselves down by 11.

"For the time span where it counted," Christian said, "they

out-hustled us. It seemed like we looked up at the clock and we were four points behind and the next second we were down by 11."

With 12 minutes remaining in the game, the Ags pulled to within three. But the Red Raiders got hot, scored seven unanswered points and the game was over.

Foul trouble plagued the Aggies early in the contest. Both Christian and Crawford were in foul trouble

before the second half and could not play the aggressive defense they are accustomed to.

"Tech played excellent defense against us," Bender said. "They put pressure on the ball all the time. Two and three girls would always be on or near the ball wherever it happened to be."

Bender also said that the Ags did not run as smoothly as she would of liked them to.

Swanson's had long season; hopes final games get better

By RENNE PEVOTO

Wally Swanson, the 6-8 junior from Waukegan, Ill., says, "it's not much fun not to be a starter" for the Aggie basketball team this year.

Number 54 started all 28 games last year and 11 more when he played on the Southwest Conference Championship team his freshman year.

"I got off to a slow start this year and that hurt me," Swanson said. He added that he doesn't play any worse than last year, just not as much.

"It's harder to prepare yourself for the games when you don't know when you'll play," Swanson said. Instead of getting nervous, Swanson likes to "relax before the games." He doesn't get serious until they leave the locker room for the last time.

Swanson works on improving his skills by shooting a lot before practice, he said. He added that the post, or inside men, work on a drill to im-

prove their defense. The Aggies had a lot of trouble adjusting to each other's different styles.

"I think the team meeting after the TCU game helped," Swanson said. "Everybody got stuff off their chest that they had been wanting to for a long time."

Swanson is majoring in business management and says he doesn't have time to study much when they have so many road games.

"Everybody wants to play pro ball, it's just a question of whether or not you're good enough to. It's for a very chosen few."

Swanson has notoriety with other teams on the road and at home. He said perhaps this is "because I'm one of the few players they remember from the championship team." He, Joey Robinson, Jarvis Williams and Brian Barrett are the only remaining Aggies that played on the '75-'76 winning team.

"They tried hard," she said, "maybe too hard."

Christian said that the loss was one of the toughest ones of the season but added that the support of the crowd and yell leaders helped their play a lot.

The next Aggie Lady home game will be against Wharton Jr. College on February 15 at 5:15 in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

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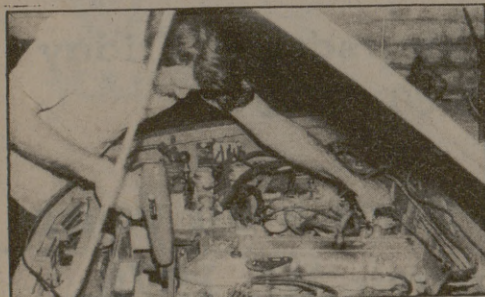
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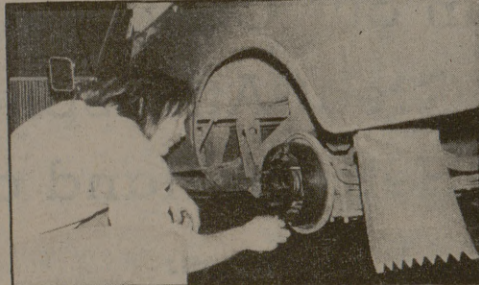
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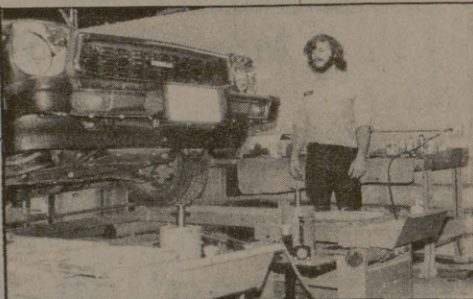
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