

# Good year for basketball

By MARK PATTERSON  
Battalion Sports Staff

The Southwest Conference made basketball history last week and it happened at the end of one of the most exciting conference races.

For the first time since the conference's inception, two SWC teams were invited to participate in the NCAA post-season tournament. The University of Houston earned its berth into the tournament by its 92-90 victory over the University of Texas in the conference's tournament last week.

And even though Arkansas was upset by those same Cougars in the semi-final game of the tourney, the NCAA tournament committee felt the Razorbacks were worthy of one of the nine at-large bids extended to non-conference winners.

But what happened to Texas? The conference co-champions lost its chance to play in the tournament with its loss to the steamrolling Cougars. Abe Lemons' boys had the choice of competing in the NIT tournament or sitting out of the

postseason play.

They chose to play.

Texas ended the season holding on to the 16th position in the AP poll and the Longhorns were granted the home-court advantage in the opening round of the NIT tournament.

The Longhorns will play host to Temple University tonight at the Super Drum. The Wildcats carry a 22-4 season mark into tonight's game against Texas.

If the Longhorns can win the opening round they would face the winner of the Utah State-Nebraska game. Word out of the NIT office is that the Longhorns and their 17,000-seat arena would be granted the home-court advantage for the quarter-final game also.

But after the first two rounds the four surviving teams head to Madison Square Garden for the semi-finals and the NIT championship games.

The road to a championship is a lot tougher for the other two Southwest Conference teams. Houston,

opening up in the Midwest regionals in Tulsa, has to face Notre Dame in its first-round game. Following the Irish the road is full of surprises.

For Arkansas, the Hogs were placed out in the West bracket of the tournament and face Weber State in its first game. But after the opening round, the winner of the Arkansas-Weber State game has to face the winner of the Kansas-UCLA game.

In the quest for the NIT championship, Texas has to win five games to lay claim to the post-season championship.

Arkansas and Houston have to win five games also, but the NCAA foes are considerable stronger and the road to the championship will take considerably more expertise.

But realistically, it doesn't really matter what the outcome of the tournaments are. All the three teams are really concerned about is laying to rest the myth that the Southwest Conference is strictly a football conference.

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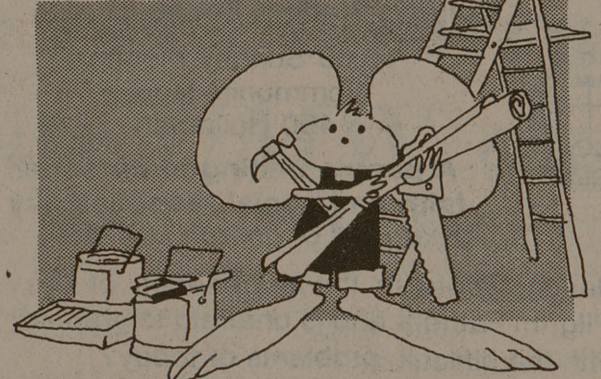
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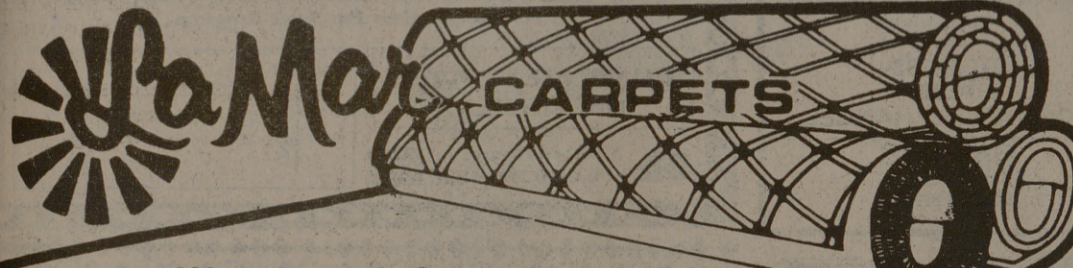
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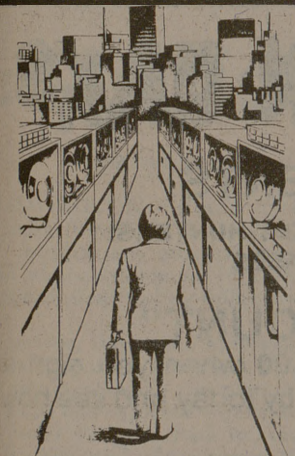
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