

sports

By Sean Petty

# Hockey in Houston?

Will the city of Houston pull the Houston Aeros out of the fire and keep them on ice, or will one of the winningest World Hockey Association teams fold.

The Houston Aeros are in danger of losing their franchise unless they sell 7,000 season tickets. At this

time, the Aeros have sold over 4,200 with two weeks left before their deadline.

The question is, can Houston support professional hockey along with four other professional sports? The Aeros are the winningest

team the city of Houston has had. The franchise has been in Houston for six years and has made the WHA playoffs all six years. It has won its division four times, and the AVCO Cup, which is the equivalent to the Stanley Cup in the National Hockey League, two years.

If part of the answer is winning, the Aeros surely have done enough to draw the crowds. Attendance has dropped since the 1975-76 season. The Aeros sold 6,098 season tickets in '75 and averaged 9,500 a game, while in 1977-78, the Aeros sold only 3,200 season tickets and average attendance was 7,300.

The drop in attendance can be attributed to one main source, the Houston Rockets. The Rockets, Houston's pro basketball team, has increased attendance since 1976. The Rockets share the Summit and part of the season with the Aeros. Subsequently, most fans cannot afford to go to both hockey and basketball games. So fans choose the more familiar sport — basketball.

The Rockets made it to the playoffs in 1977 but the Aeros are in the WHA playoffs after overcoming many major problems. Early in the season, the team had a change in ownership which left the team's future in jeopardy temporarily.

In these days of high priced athletes, the Aeros went through a period where they did not receive any pay, yet kept on winning. Truly a rare bunch.

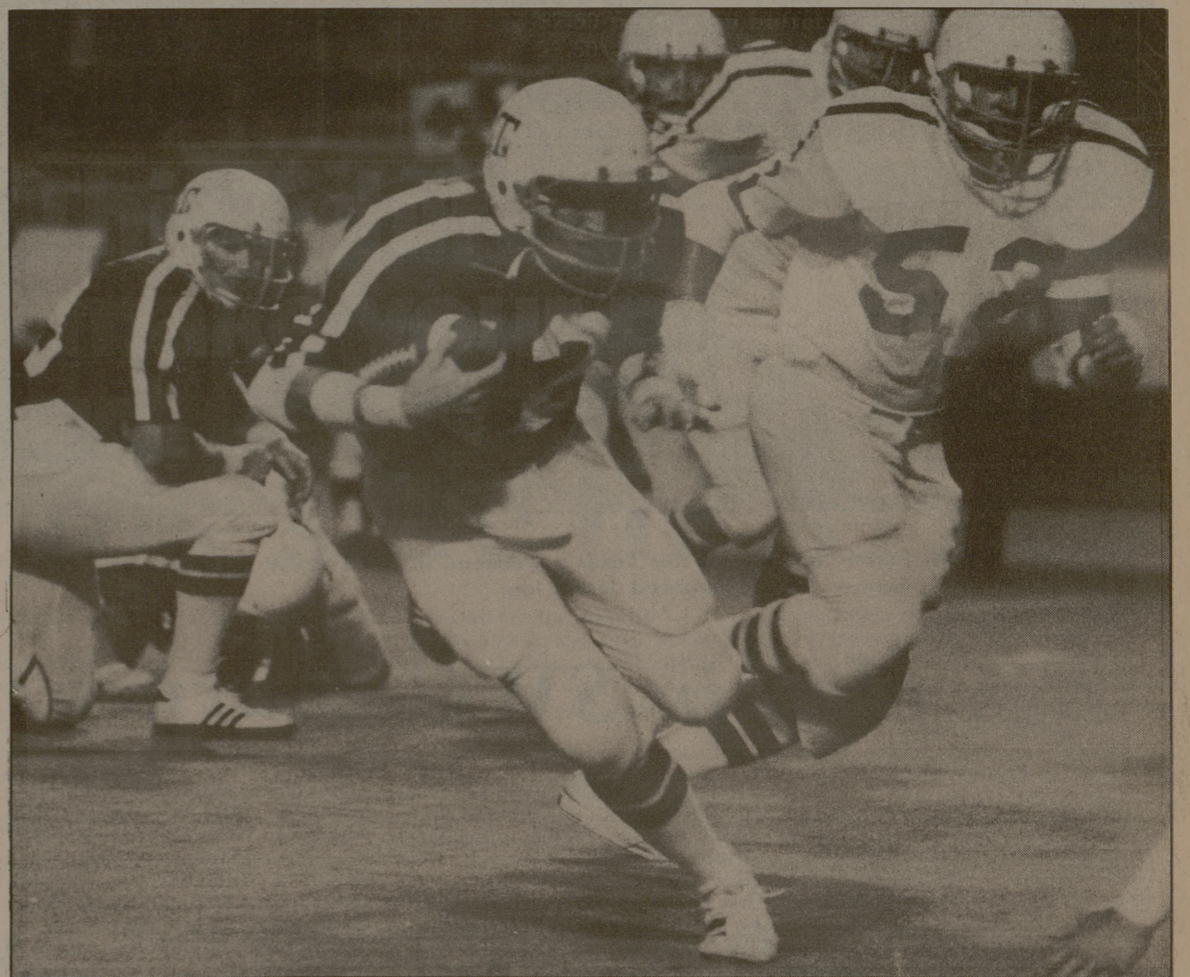
So what is the answer? The owners seem to think the magic word is the NHL. But even if the Aeros sell 7,000 season tickets, they are not guaranteed a spot in the coveted NHL.

The Houston sports fan is faced with the problem of having to choose which team he will support. In one year a fan can watch the Aeros, the Rockets, the Astros, the Oilers and the most recent addition to the Houston sports scene, the Hurricane. From January until March, a fan can see the Rockets play basketball, the Aeros hockey, and the Hurricane play indoor soccer, all in one week's time and all in the Summit.

The Aeros are spending lots of money trying to sell season tickets and it looks like the person who buys the tickets is paying for the advertising. The season ticket prices have not only gone up, but the season ticket holder gets no discount from the regular ticket price. The Aeros used to have redemption night for unused tickets but will no longer have it. Plus the fact that season ticket holders pay full price for such things as family discount nights where tickets are cheaper, seems to make the season ticket idea self-destructive.

It would appear that the Houston fans are not truly concerned with having a winning team, as their attendance patterns seem to indicate. They continue going to watch the Oilers come close, the Rockets get beat up, the Hurricane get blown out and the Astros take third once again.

But then, how can a person really get into hockey in the winter when it's 75 degrees and all he ever heard of when he was growing up was football.

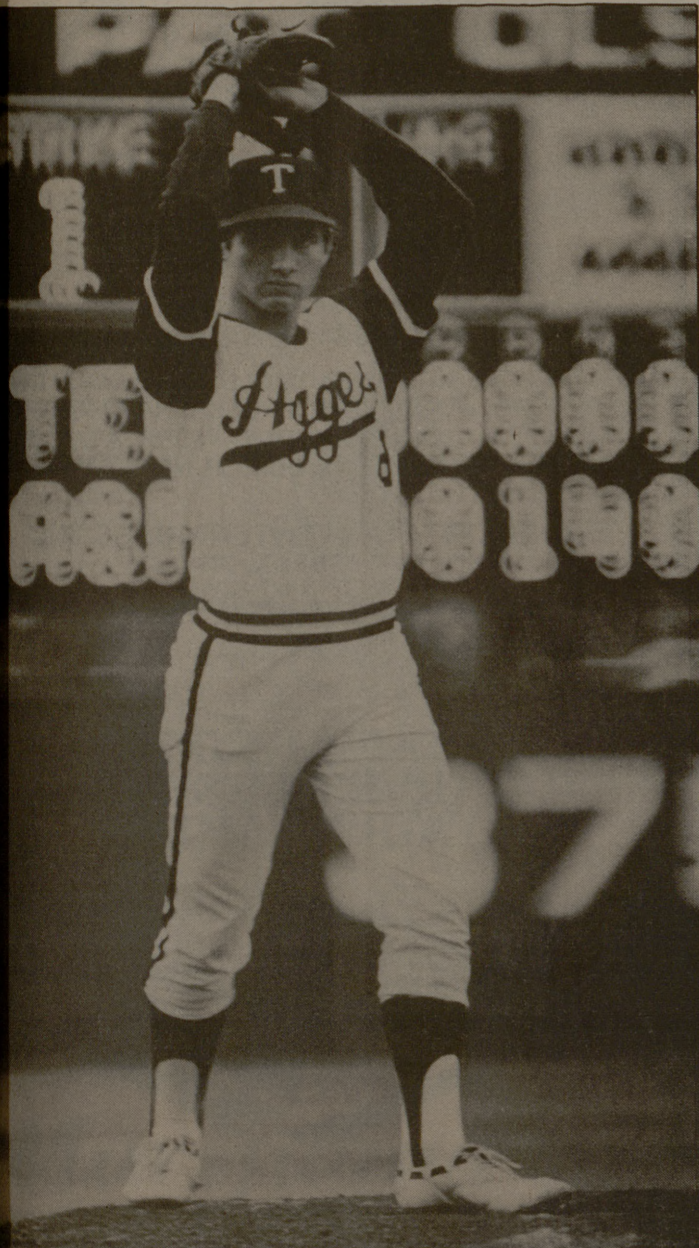


Quarterback keeper

Battalion photo by Pat O'Malley

Quarterback David Beal options to keep the ball in Saturday's Maroon and White game.

Beal gained 16 yards for the Maroons and completed 4 of 10 passes for 48 yards.



Battalion photo by Pat O'Malley

## No-hitter in progress

Texas A&M's Mark Thurmond, one of the country's premier pitchers, is shown here working on the no-hitter he pitched in Saturday's game against Texas Tech. The Aggies travel to Arkansas this weekend to decide the conference championship.

## Spurs need win tonight to stay alive

United Press International

Look for San Antonio to pull out all the stops tonight against Washington in the Spurs' desperate fight for survival in the NBA playoffs.

One more loss and the spurs are out, and Coach Doug Moe showed a hint of his desperation Sunday when the NBA's most running and gunning offense was abandoned in favor of the slow-down pattern offense.

However, the Spurs lost the game 98-95 anyway and Washington took a 3-1 advantage into Tuesday night's game in Hemisphere Arena.

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## Oilers get first round choice

United Press International  
The Houston Oilers Monday traded starting tight end Jimmy Giles and four draft choices for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' No. 1 draft pick and the right to Heisman trophy winner Earl Campbell.

Oilers general manager and coach A. "Bum" Phillips said he had been working on the deal for a week, ever since Tampa Bay told him it wanted Giles.

Tampa Bay owned the No. 1 pick in the NFL's draft of college players next week. The Buccaneers, who already have former USC running backs Anthony Davis and Ricky Williams, did not need another.

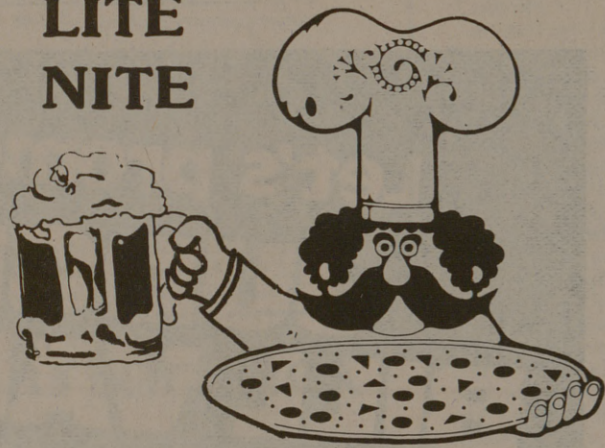
Houston gave up its first and second round draft choices in the upcoming draft and the third and fifth round choices in the 1979 draft. The draft is May 5.

Several teams had expressed interest in obtaining the top draft pick in order to choose Campbell, a pound tailback from the University of Texas.

Phillips was asked at an afternoon news conference how long he expected it to take for Campbell to contribute.

"About a day or so, as soon as we had him the ball the first time," Phillips said.

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