

the sports

Start your calculator

Tournament situation shaping up

By MARK PATTERSON
Battalion Sports Staff

Dust off your slide rules, break out your calculators and sharpen your pencils, it's Southwest Conference tournament time.

The tournament format has been changed somewhat this season because of coaches' complaints about the past three tournaments. Before this season the conference champion received an automatic bye into the final round to face the tournament survivor.

The previous format sounded good to every team except the conference champion. The conference winner, forced to wait two weeks before playing a game after its season was over, lost the edge it honed during conference play. The argument was well documented.

Only Arkansas, the 1977 conference champion, was able to sit out for the two weeks and beat the tournament survivor, Houston, to gain the NCAA playoff berth. In 1976, the tourney's first year, Texas A&M won the conference crown but lost in the tournament's final game to Texas Tech 74-72.

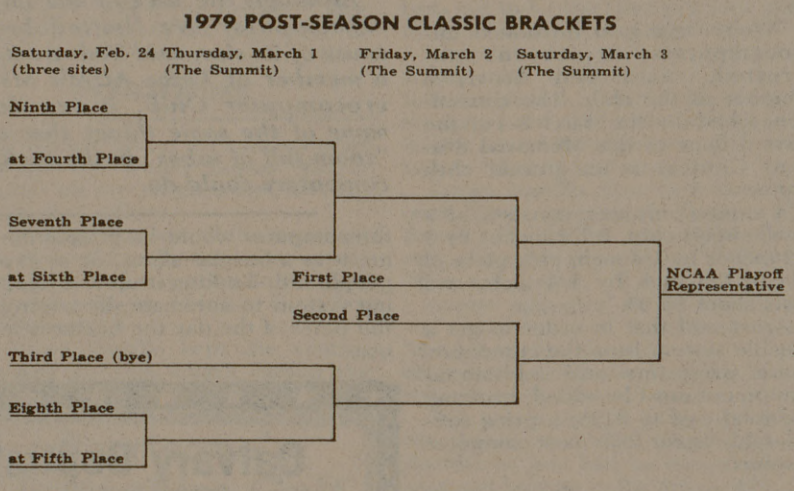
Last season Houston survived the first three rounds and beat conference champion Texas in the final game 92-90.

This year the first place team and the second place finisher in conference play receive byes into the semi-final round of the tournament.

Texas and Arkansas have already clinched the top two spots, with Texas being assured of the first place slot no matter what happens Tuesday night against SMU. Win or lose the Longhorns win the upper-bracket position due to the tie-breaking procedure set up by the tournament committee.

If Texas should lose and Arkansas beat Texas Tech in Lubbock Tuesday night, the two would be declared conference co-champions. But because the two teams split during the season in heads-up competition, in order to break the tie for tournament play, it's on down to the third place finisher and see how the two teams fared against it.

The Texas Aggies will assure themselves of a third place finish with a victory at home Tuesday night against Rice. A third place finish in



the conference race gives the Aggies a first round bye this weekend and an automatic berth into the second round of the tournament at the Summit March 1.

Texas beat the Aggies twice this season while Arkansas split with Texas A&M, so on the basis of the year's performance the Longhorns are declared the conference champion for the tournament's sake.

Fourth, fifth and sixth place finishers host first round games Saturday against ninth, eighth and seventh place finishers, respectively. And the TCU Horned Frogs are the only team in the lower six with their spot locked up, ninth with

a 1-13 record. TCU can look forward to traveling to the home of the fourth place finisher, either Tech or Baylor.

The Red Raiders were the only team that controlled their own destiny in their last four games. The Raider's faced Texas A&M, Houston, Texas and Arkansas, with a possible conference championship at the end of the line. After beating the Aggies, Tech lost to Houston and Texas and now face the Razorbacks Tuesday night. Going into the Arkansas game, Tech is 9-6 in conference play.

But right behind the Raiders are the Baylor Bears, currently 8-7 in conference play, with TCU as their last game Tuesday night. A Baylor win and a Tech loss would throw the two team into a tie for fourth and force a coin flip to decide which team hosts TCU Saturday.

The loser of the flip, the fifth place finisher, would host either Rice or

SMU, the eighth place team. Eighth place is still undecided. Rice, 4-11, visits Texas A&M while SMU, 4-10, hosts Texas Tuesday and travels to TCU Wednesday.

Should SMU win its final two games and end 6-10 and in a tie for sixth with Houston (already through with SWC play with a 6-10 record) it would force a coin toss to determine which team would host the other.

So to recap all we have learned, Texas and Arkansas have assured themselves of byes into the tournament semi-finals March 2 at the Summit in Houston. A victory by Texas A&M Tuesday night would give the Aggies a first round bye and into the second round March 1. The fourth place finisher hosts the ninth place finisher (TCU), the fifth place finisher host the eighth place finisher and the sixth place finisher hosts the seventh place finisher. And all ties, second through ninth, are broken by a coin toss.

Beyond that, it's simple.

Southwest Conference Standings

Texas	13-2	.867
Arkansas	12-3	.800
Texas A&M	10-5	.667
Texas Tech	9-6	.600
Baylor	8-7	.533
Houston	6-10	.375
SMU	4-10	.288
Rice	4-11	.267
TCU	1-13	.071

This week's schedule

TUESDAY: Arkansas at Texas Tech; TCU at Baylor; Rice at Texas A&M; Texas at SMU.
WEDNESDAY: SMU at TCU.
SATURDAY: First Round of SWC post-season tournament — No. 9 finisher at No. 4; No. 8 at No. 5; No. 7 at No. 6.

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Tea or Coffee

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"Quality First"

Meyer and Mustangs aren't horsing around

United Press International

DALLAS — Having pulled off one recruiting coup after another, Meyer is ready to reap the benefits.

And Meyer, the never-shy Southern Methodist coach who gathered one of the best groups of high school players in the country last year, feels those benefits will be forthcoming in a hurry.

"When we go out on the field next year we will be able to beat anybody we play," Meyer said. "We've been favored for two years the past few years. Next year we will be favored in at least our games and maybe more. And when we are the underdog we will be the underdog we were."

The arrival of Meyer as football coach and promotion-minded Potts as athletic director has turned Southern Methodist's football program into a potentially dominating force in the Southwest Conference, and last week's recruiting results mark the highlight of the efforts.

LAST YEAR THE MUSTANGS WERE always a threat in the Southwest Conference with sophomore quarterback Mike Ford — the nation's total offense leader — and a talented crew of receivers. But they could not run the ball and the opposition knew it.

Now Meyer has landed the two best running prospects in Texas, Eric Dickerson of Sealy and Craig James of Houston. In addition, a talent-laden recruiting crop includes running back James Collier of Seagoville, 9.3 sprinter Mitchell Bennett of Bonham at wide receiver, defensive back Stanley Godine of Houston and highly sought-after lineman Michael Carter of Dallas.

There is also New Mexico's player of the year, quarterback Larry Walker. Of the players generally considered to be the top 100 in Texas, SMU grabbed 15.

Meyer feels there will be no trouble keeping all of those who signed national signing date comes Wednesday and he says there might be a few more surprises.

"THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE," he said. "We might get a few more from around the country."

But SMU's recruiting efforts were marred by rumors of wrongdoing and by an NCAA investigation into an automobile being driven by Dickerson, a player who originally said he was going to Texas A&M but then chosen SMU.

"The NCAA investigator told me, 'Hey, coach, I've checked it out and it's fine,'" Meyer said. "That was just all part of the innuendo that was going around."

"The thing that bothered me was that as soon as a rumor is broadcast on a radio or television station or is printed in the newspaper, it becomes fact in the minds of 99 percent of the people who hear it. Take the example of the James' family in Houston (James backed signing with SMU for a day because what other recruiters were saying about the Mustangs left his parents in doubt).

"THEY ARE FRIENDLY PEOPLE. When the phone rings they answer it. And they had people saying, 'I'm so and so and this is going to happen to SMU.' Well, who knows if it is so and so or not."

"But it can really get vicious, particularly in the hotbed that Houston is where there are alumni from every school and you happen to be one of the best players in the state."

"Both kids told me all along they were going to SMU. Dickerson was three or four weeks ago that he was going to SMU. Of course when he came out that he had committed to Texas A&M it concerned me. I called him and he said he wanted to think about it."

"He said, 'Coach, you come at 8 p.m. Friday and we'll sign.' So that's what we did. I didn't talk to him any more. You just have to trust them. If you are going to hand them the ball on the goal line you need to trust them from the start."

MEYER SAID HE DIDN'T THINK it should be a shock to anyone that SMU has been able to pull itself out of the depths.

"When John McKay went from Oregon to coach at USC it certainly no bed of roses," the SMU coach said. "Schools have risen from the bottom of the heap to the top before and they've done it legally."

"Anybody in football knows that. If they don't they are just being short-sided. And we didn't get everybody we wanted. There were a lot of fine athletes that we wanted that signed with other schools. Balanced out."

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