

And they're off!

SWC starts 65th year with a bang

The Southwest Conference opens its 65th and perhaps most jumbled season Saturday.

On the first big college football weekend this year, Texas A&M plays a home game on the road, the

Houston Cougars begin their coast-to-coast travels, Texas Tech faces the No. 1 team in the country, Baylor will break in a running quarterback and the league will have its first family squabble.

Although the University of Texas is the consensus pick to win the SWC crown and a spot in the Cotton Bowl, as many as six other teams are given at least an outside chance at coming away with the championship.

Four conference teams are listed among the top 20 in preseason rankings — Texas No. 4, Houston No. 11, Arkansas No. 17 and Texas A&M No. 20.

The highlight game on opening week could come in Lubbock, where the Texas Tech Red Raiders and James Hadnot, the conference's leading rusher in 1978, host defending national champion Southern California.

The Trojans have been voted No.

1 in the pre-season poll and have plenty of reason to beware of the Raiders.

Tech and USC opened the season a year ago in Los Angeles and at the half the Raiders led, 9-0. The Trojans fans booed them as they left the field, but the eventual Rose Bowl winners came back to down Tech in that one, 17-9.

Other games next Saturday will have Baylor hosting Lamar, Houston visiting UCLA, Texas A&M playing Brigham Young in Rice Stadium and the SMU Mustangs opening their first season in Texas Stadium by entertaining the Rice Owls.

The SMU-Rice winner will take the early lead in the conference race and SMU will be a heavy favorite to do just that.

"We're looking forward to going to play Mania," said Rice coach Ray Albora, referring to SMU's promotional campaign called "Mustang Mania."

"We may even go up a little early."

The Owls-Mustangs contest could be spiced by Albora's inferences that SMU ran up the score on Rice last year in a 58-0 romp.

Houston, meanwhile, will embark to the West Coast for its meeting with the Bruins. The following week Houston will go east to face Florida. The Cougars are generally considered to be the most likely candidate to down Texas, thanks chiefly to their talented and experienced defense.

Texas A&M will use Rice Stadium as its home base for the game with Brigham Young because Kyle Field is still in the midst of an expansion project. The Aggies will not play in College Station until their Oct. 13 date with Houston.

Baylor's opener with Lamar is expected to serve as a mere tuneup for the rugged weeks ahead. After Baylor finishes with Lamar it must face Texas A&M, Alabama, Texas

Tech and Houston in succession.

The Bears will need all the warm-up they can get for quarterback Mickey Elam, who, despite being a senior, has played only one game at that position during his college career.

That came in the season finale a year ago in which the Bears stunned Texas, 38-14.

Elam is known for his running ability, but because of his lack of experience throwing the ball, the Bears may be hurting for a balanced attack.

"Mickey throws the ball about like I do," says Baylor coach Grant Teaff.

Arkansas and TCU do not open their seasons until Sept. 15, the Razorbacks playing in Little Rock against Colorado State and the Horned Frogs beginning with SMU in Fort Worth.

Texas will be the last of the SWC teams to kick off, hosting Iowa State in its season opener Sept. 22.

Astros lose to Mets, 5-4

United Press International
HOUSTON — John Stearns doubled in the tie-breaking run in the seventh inning Sunday, enabling the New York Mets to end a nine-game losing streak with a 5-4 victory over the Houston Astros.

The defeat left Houston one-half game ahead of second-place Cincinnati in the National League West. Stearns' double followed a pinch-single by Elliot Maddox. The Mets added another run in the inning off reliever Randy Niemann, 3-2, after Jeff Leonard dropped Lee Mazzilli's flyball and Richie Hebner hit into a fielder's choice.

New York took a 3-1 lead in the third on RBI singles by Frank Taveras, Stearns, and Mazzilli after a single by Doug Flynn and an error by pitcher Joaquin Andujar on a sacrifice bunt by Kevin Kobel.

Houston scored a run off Kobel, 6-8, in the first on a sacrifice fly by Jose Cruz. The Astros tied the game at 3-3 in the fifth on a run-scoring single by pinch-hitter Jesus Alou and an error by Frank Taveras on a potential double-play ball off the bat of Rafael Landestoy. Neil Allen got the last three outs to earn his sixth save.

Woods injured

United Press International
WACO — Baylor University reserve defensive back Kyle Woods was in traction in the intensive care unit of a local hospital Sunday with a severe neck injury suffered during a football scrimmage.

Woods, a freshman red-shirt, was injured when Saturday night he made a solo tackle on a Baylor running back. Woods, 19, was immediately rushed to a hospital by ambulance.

Skip Cox, Baylor trainer, said Woods did make some overnight progress, but added it was a day-by-day situation.

"He's definitely out for the year," said Cox.

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