

Samson to check out new system for next year's SWC officiating

By NATHAN R. HINES
Sports Reporter

The average Southwest Conference fan has never thought too highly of referees, and many feel this year's officiating has only served to reinforce that opinion.

Several calls by officials have helped determine the winner in close games — notably in the case of the Texas A&M-Arkansas basketball game earlier this month.

Now the Southwest Conference is

looking for ways to improve the consistency of officiating. Dr. Charles Samson is the president of the Southwest Conference, and is also Texas A&M's faculty representative. As a key figure in conference operations, Samson has a hand in regulating officiating.

"We're looking at the ways of acquiring the most capable officiating possible within the conference," said Samson. "One approach that we're well along in is working with another

conference. We have finalized a plan with the Atlantic Coast Conference to establish more or less a central assigning agency. Heading this agency would be a joint employee of both conferences."

Samson said the joint employee would handle assigning officials to all the games in both conferences. He would also be responsible for making sure that all officials are rotated around the leagues' member schools.

"I think this would get more people involved," said Samson. "It would serve to reduce the visibility of any one officiating crew at a given school as well."

Samson pointed out that Reggie Copeland is a prime example of one official becoming too visible at a school, in this case, Texas A&M. Copeland called the controversial foul as time expired that enabled Arkansas to beat Texas A&M.

Samson said he hopes the new arrangement will be a marked improvement over what has been the status quo.

"We would like to believe that this will be sufficiently successful so other conferences will want to come into this pool. Perhaps in a few years, this arrangement can be expanded to a nationwide effort."

Samson said that several other conferences have expressed interest in the plan. He said it is conceivable other conferences could join the agency pool within the next year or two.

Now, however, most conferences are waiting for the Atlantic Coast-Southwest Conference experiment to prove itself a success. Samson said that if the new plan can quiet the protests of fans, coaches and players alike, while at the same time improve the consistency of officials' calls, he'll consider the arrangement successful.

According to Samson, the new agency agreement will be ready for the next scholastic year. He said the most likely starting date will be this coming fall and may be used for football season.

Staubach's retirement would challenge Landry

MILWAUKEE—Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry admits he is nearing the end of his long career but will continue for the present, partly because he may be challenged by the retirement of quarterback Roger Staubach.

Landry said Sunday that Staubach, who has hinted at retirement, will make up his mind in April whether to return for 1980.

"If Roger leaves, our offense will be different and that will be a big challenge," said the coach with the fourth best record in NFL history.

Landry explained that it was "getting harder and harder" to handle today's athletes because they have agents and gain more national exposure through television and other media.

"We played mostly for fun in our day, mostly because there wasn't any money," laughed Landry. "But I have to be realistic. I'm coming to the end of a long stay."

"I've been there 20 years and I don't know when I'll say it's enough. It won't be this year. I've had a great management with the Cowboys."

Landry was here to receive an award named for one of his contemporaries and a bitter rival — Vince Lombardi, the late coach of the Green Bay Packers and Washington Redskins. He received the Vincent Lombardi Dedication Award at the annual dinner of the Wisconsin Chapter of the Professional Football Writers of America.

Landry said perennial backup quarterback Danny White would have the "first shot" at Staubach's job if it becomes vacant.

He said the Cowboys' defense

needs some strengthening if Dallas is to get further in the playoffs than last season's divisional round loss to Los Angeles.

One of the holes was left by Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson,

whom Landry released because of what he called "some differences of opinion." Landry said he and the former linebacker are "good friends" and he is trying to find him a job with another NFL team.

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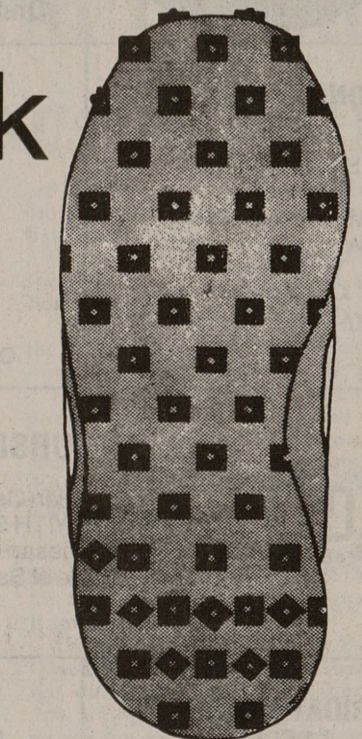
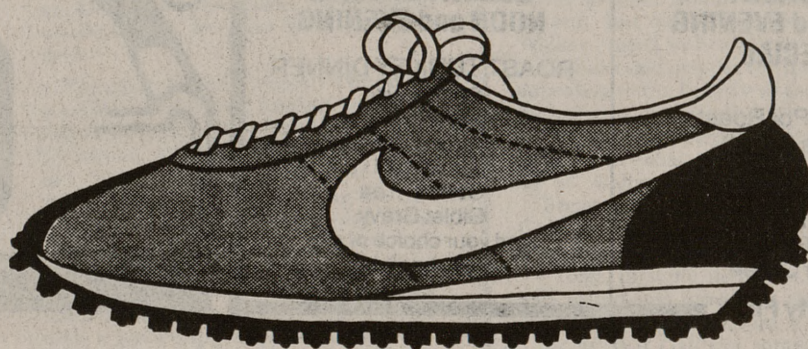
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