

Out of the blue

by Rick Stolle



Upsets rule in the SWC

Upsets are the name of the game this year in the Southwest Conference basketball race. The underdog has come through time and time again to not only shock but sometimes humiliate the favorite.

Teams running hot suddenly become cold and then come right back to have a fine game in their next outing.

The Ags this year are a fine example. After a sizzling start to compile a 7-0 record and a Top 10 rating, the team seemed to fall apart following the Christmas break.

SMU owns a 2-3 conference record. The Mustangs beat a good Texas team in overtime 53-51 and then upset the streaking Houston Cougars in triple overtime 72-70. In between these two excellent performances, the Mustangs were crushed by Arkansas and Texas A&M. The Ags beat the Ponies by 20 and the Razorbacks handed SMU its worst defeat ever in conference 92-50.

Both are good examples of the way teams in the SWC are playing with streaks. When their respective games are running correctly, they are devastating. When they're not, they are devastated.

After just a fourth of the conference season, it is obvious that this is not going to be a typical SWC basketball season. Teams that were picked as the league powers have stumbled almost to the point of no return. Teams picked as the league also rans are giving surprising performances against top-rated teams.

Texas A&M, picked as the pre-season champion, has finally made a recovery from their five game nose-dive of the past three weeks. During the Christmas break, they lost two games in a tournament in Montana and then proceeded to drop the first three conference games. The Ags were soundly beaten by TCU in Reunion Arena 56-51 and Baylor at the Heart of Texas Coliseum in Waco 53-44.

The Ags seemed to find themselves against Tech even though they were defeated 72-70. After a weeks rest, a new team graced the floor of G. Rollie White Coliseum to defeat SMU 71-51.

Arkansas is in a steady nose-dive that could become fatal if the Hogs are not able to pull out soon. The Hogs lost a heartbreaker to Texas in Fayetteville 62-60 and then again to Baylor in Waco 67-58.

Baylor, picked no better than fourth in the SWC, is the surprising leader with an unblemished 4-0 conference record. The Houston Cougars are second with a 3-1 SWC mark.

Rice upset Tech Saturday and TCU polished off Texas. I wouldn't be surprised to see all nine teams scrambling for the five playoff spots for the SWC tournament to be held in March.

There is no totally dominant force in the conference this year. A group of good, solid teams take the floor each game with the outcome of each in doubt until the final buzzer.

I believe this parity is due, at least in part, to the effect of the home court advantage. Visiting teams are finding it hard to neutralize the advantage like they had in years before.

A&M Coach Shelby Metcalf said, "It (G. Rollie) is the best place in the world to play basketball. Especially if you are an Aggie." A&M uses its home-court for all the advantage it can.

Also, there is no stockpiling of talent at any one school in the SWC. The real winners in this unpredictable scramble are the fans. The SWC basketball fan is treated to an exciting, unpredictable game each time conference foes go against one another.

I believe it will be the same all the way to the SWC tournament. Tournament tickets will undoubtedly be the hottest in town once the teams are finally decided. For the simple reason the winner will be in doubt until the final buzzer of the final game.

Franco elected to head Rules Committee

By RICHARD OLIVER
Sports Editor

If the U.S. Soccer Coaches Association has its way, soccer will soon be a major attraction in the Southwest Conference.

At the annual coaches conference held this weekend in Houston, the nation's coaches placed their trust on a few notable officials of this region by appointing them to high positions. One of those officials was Head Aggie Coach Telmo Franco.

Franco, in turn, came away from the meetings more determined than ever to join the fight, he said Monday.

Franco was selected to head the Southwest regional branch of the Association's Ethic and Rules Committee, and was also elected to the

International Exchanging Committee. That group deals with the international exchange of coaches and foreign players who want to come to the United States for an education while playing soccer.

Despite his success at the convention, Franco seems a little embarrassed that A&M had no recognized team to offer.

"Most of the people at the convention expressed surprise that soccer was not recognized here (in the Southwest)," he said. "They were surprised because the Southwest Conference is well-known and prestigious all over the country but has only two varsity teams. They feel it (soccer) is so popular and the SWC is so prestigious, there should be more. When

they asked why, well, I just couldn't answer that question."

Currently only TCU and SMU field varsity SWC teams, and the Mustangs have molded a nationally ranked squad.

The Aggies, on the other hand, had been weak in soccer until Franco took over last fall. Under his hand, Texas A&M fashioned a 7-3-3 record, good enough for third place in the conference, the best finish ever for the Ags.

Franco and Flentge and team sponsors are now lobbying for varsity status at the University, and they hope their actions will carry over to other SWC schools, which have programs but are not recognized.

The Aggies look strong this spring, despite having a lighter schedule than in the fall.

"We're going to have the same guys," Franco said. "But we're looking for the possibility of trying out some new players also for the season, when league play begins again receiving a lot of calls from interested students."

The SWC's first all-star game will be held Friday at Texas A&M, with 16 stellar players from the league participating. The game begins at 7 p.m. at G. Rollie White Coliseum with eight players on each team competing.

"This is the first SWC all-star game ever organized," said Franco. "They hope to do it every year. A&M was selected primarily because of its geographical location."

The University will also host the SWC coaches meetings this weekend.

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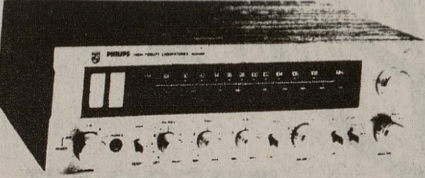
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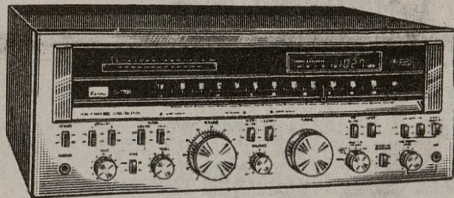
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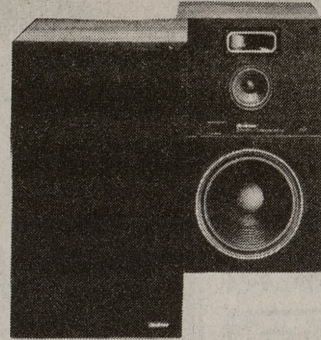
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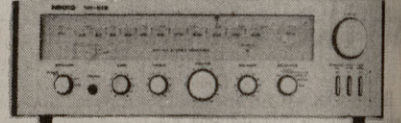
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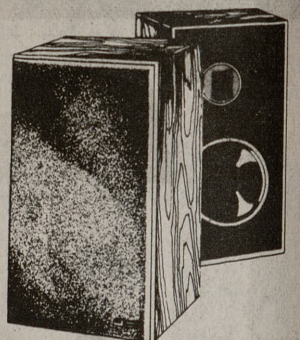


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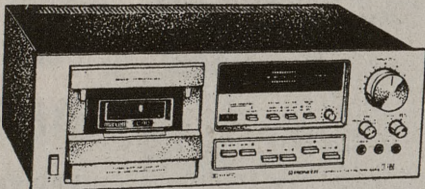
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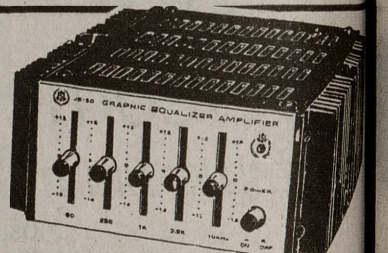
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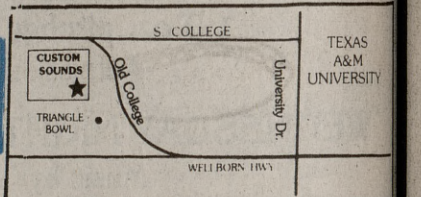
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