

# Sports

## Off the wall

By Frank L. Christlieb



### Surprises, discoveries headline SWC first-week gridiron action

After only one weekend of action, it's evident that the 1981 Southwest Conference football season will feature a race even closer than preseason forecasters predicted. Some analysts may not have realized the Herculean task involved in picking the order of the finish in the nine-team league.

In winning three games and losing two, the conference proved that unpredictability and balance best describe the 1981 SWC. Weekly predictions of conference games will probably not provide most prognosticators with a winning percentage, but most would rather see a competitive league than a runaway SWC champion.

Not only did the first five games of the season bring a few surprises, but they also provided insight into the difficulties some of the teams may face during the next 12 weeks of SWC gridiron action.

Only one game surprised every college football follower in the nation. Baylor, as the winner of the 1980 Southwest Conference race, should have disposed of Lamar University in a hurry. However, the Beaumont school shook off a 3-8 injury-plagued 1980 season to upset the Bears 18-17 in Waco. Cited by some forecasters to repeat its championship performance of 1980, Baylor picked up where it left off in January's Cotton Bowl, which the Bears lost 30-2 to Alabama.

Baylor's senior tailback Walter Abercrombie managed only 3.1 yards a carry in rushing for 50 yards, as the team totaled just 227 offensive yards against the Cardinals. Quarterback Jay Jeffrey completed four of eight passes for 16 yards, and for the Bears to bounce back, he'll need to increase his production a little.

As if their lack of offense wasn't enough, the Bears now lack two of their starters as a result of injuries incurred during the Lamar game. Steve Malpass, the sophomore linebacker who was expected to help fill the void brought on by the 1980 graduation of five members of the defense, is out for the season with a knee injury. Starting right cornerback Cedric Mack received a shoulder injury and will miss about three weeks of action.

Even with its problems, Baylor will take a different approach to this week's game with Bowling Green University. It's likely that after defeating Lamar 42-7 in 1980, the Bears didn't feel a need to lose any sleep over playing the Cardinals. Rest assured that Coach Grant Teaff will quickly rekindle the winning desire that carried his team to a 10-2 record in 1980, and that his squad will more than make up for its dismal first-week performance.

The three winners in the SWC turned in impressive defensive efforts against the rush, as SMU, Houston and Texas A&M each allowed less than 50 rushing yards. SMU gave the Movin' Mavs of the University of Texas at Arlington only 17 rushing yards on 41 attempts, while Houston held New Mexico to 50 and the Aggies gave up only 45 yards to the California Golden Bears. In addition to the 17 rushing yards, SMU allowed only 13 passing yards, easily outdoing the 212 total yards given up by the Houston defense.

However, the Aggies, who defeated California 29-28 with a furious second-half comeback, benefited more from victory than many other teams around the nation. Although the win wasn't as impressive as Georgia's 44-0 triumph over Tennessee, or as one-sided as SMU's 48-0 win over UTA, the Aggies would rather have that one-point victory.

The margin of the Aggies' win, combined with their resurrection from a 28-16 halftime deficit, taught the team that football is more than a game of offensive and defensive tactics. If the Aggies had rushed and passed for 700 yards, and held the Golden Bears to 50 total yards, they wouldn't have discovered that they really have a confidence that sets them apart from other teams.

Head Coach Tom Wilson knows the value of his team's performance against California. His persistence and guidance have been a major factor in bringing on the optimistic feelings of his athletes. The 1980 Baylor squad's character and team attitude sent the Bears to the Cotton Bowl, and it looks like this year's Aggies have the same spirit. And just as the Bears were picked no higher than sixth in the 1980 SWC race, the Aggies have been predicted by most to finish in the same mediocre spot.

It's a shame Texas A&M doesn't have a game this week, because the team is eager to show that it will win several games this year. The Boston College Eagles, who used their I-formation offense to finish 7-4 in 1980, should keep the Aggies busy Sept. 19 when the teams play in Chestnut Hill, Mass.

But the Aggies don't care what formations their opponents use — they only want to make 1981 a success for Wilson, his coaching staff and Texas A&M University.

# Holmes ready for challenge of Snipes

United Press International  
NEW YORK — Don King had to laugh at the question, which was a joke to begin with.

King, who's promoting the bout, was asked what would happen if Renaldo Snipes amazed everybody by beating Larry Holmes.

Snipes is a 25-year-old heavyweight whose affidavit of 22 straight victories without a loss includes such household names among his victims as Carl Halliburton, Sam Miller, Mike Tarasewich and Tyrone Harlee.

Who? Snipes is such a definite underdog for his Nov. 6 heavyweight title test against Holmes, you can't find anybody around who'll offer you any betting line on it. King hasn't even found a place to hold his extravaganza yet. The site, he says, will be announced shortly.

But the two fighters were on hand for a luncheon Wednesday and although most of the questions centered around Holmes' subsequent engagement with Gerry Cooney in Las Vegas next March, King quickly came up with the answer to the one dealing with a hypothetical upset by Snipes.

"He'd be the new heavyweight champion of the world," King declared, doing his best not to fall over laughing.

"Then what would happen to the Holmes-Cooney fight?" was the next question.

"It would knock it down the drain. I told Larry that. He said he's a fighting champion and must continue to practice his trade, which I agree with. Cooney is gonna do the same thing. He's gonna have a fight before meeting Larry. That's why I call this fight between Larry and Renaldo 'imminent danger.' It's fraught with danger and Larry is risking his \$10 million fight with Cooney by going through with it. That's the way he wants it, though."

Ranked eighth by the WBC, which sometimes hands out rankings even to guys beating little old ladies to seats on the bus, Snipes comes under the heading of a boxer-puncher. He also comes out looking the worse for wear occasionally against a more experienced opponent like Gerrie Coetzee, the South African who knocked him down twice in their bout last month. Snipes wound up getting the decision, one that had most of those who saw the fight holding their noses.

When it comes to promoting a fight, Don King is easily the No. 1 man around. He knows how to pump life and interest into an otherwise ordinary contest even if it means sometimes overshadowing the principals themselves.

King was doing the best he was able Wednesday to make it sound as if Snipes had a chance against Holmes, although he didn't

actually believe it himself. "What are the odds on this fight, 10-to-1 or 15-to-1?" someone asked him.

King never even blinked. "How about the 60-to-1 shot who beats a Nashua or Native Dancer at the race track?" he came right back. "The bloodlines aren't there and the past performances aren't there, but the fact is it happens sometimes and no one can ever explain it. I don't look for it to happen in this fight, but it

could. You never know." That was the way Snipes was looking at it, too.

"The Cooney-Holmes fight is never gonna come off," he said. "Forget it. I'm gonna be the heavyweight champion of the world."

Holmes was generally amused by what Snipes had to say. Besides, he was kept busy answering more questions about Cooney.

"I'm having fun," Holmes said. "I'm enjoying life and I'm en-

joying knocking out people. I'm gonna enjoy knocking out Renaldo Snipes," and here he bent over and looked directly at his next opponent. "I'm gonna enjoy it be-

cause that's what this man" — he turned toward King now — "is paying me to do."

Don King beamed at that. "Absolutely," he said.

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## MORNING WORSHIP SERVICES

8:45 9:45 11:00

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