Sports

Off the 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 loser than preseason forecasters predicted. Some analysts may not have realized the Herculean task involved in picking the rder 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 pro-vide most prognosticators with a winning percentage, but most rould rather see a competitive league than a runaway SWC

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 grid

Only one game surprised every college football follower in the ation. Baylor, as the winner of the 1980 Southwest Conference ace, 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 he Bears lost 30-2 to Alabama.

Baylor's senior tailback Walter Abercrombie managed only 3.1 and a carry in rushing for 50 yards, as the team totaled just 227 ffensive 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

f their starters as a result of injuries incurred during the Lamar ame. Steve Malpass, the sophomore linebacker who was ex-pected to help fill the void brought on by the 1980 graduation of we members of the defense, is out for the season with a knee njury. Starting right cornerback Cedric Mack received a shouler injury and will miss about three weeks of action.

Even with its problems, Baylor will take a different approach to his 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 ose 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 ore 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 ttempts, while Houston held New Mexico to 50 and the Aggies ave up only 45 yards to the California Golden Bears. In addition to the 17 rushing yards, SMU allowed only 13 passing yards, asily outdoing the 212 total yards given up by the Houston

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

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The margin of the Aggies' win, combined with their resurrec-tion from a 28-16 halftime deficit, taught the team that football is more than a game of offensive and defensive tactics. If the Aggies ad rushed and passed for 700 yards, and held the Golden Bears 50 total yards, they wouldn't have discovered that they really ave a confidence that sets them apart from other teams. Head Coach Tom Wilson knows the value of his team's per-

mance against California. His persistence and guidance have en 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, be-

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 ev-erybody by beating Larry Holmes

Snipes is a 25-year-old heavyweight whose affidavit of 22 straight victories without a loss in-cludes such household names among his victims as Carl Halli-burton, 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

But the two fighters were on hand for a luncheon Wednesday and although most of the ques-tions 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 gon-na 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

Ranked eighth by the WBC, which sometimes hands out rank-ings even to guys beating little old ladies to seats on the bus, Snipes comes under the heading of a boxerpuncher. He also comes out looking the worse for wear occasionally against a more experi-enced opponent like Gerrie Coet-zee, 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 overshadow-ing 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 Ho aren't there and the past perform-ances 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

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

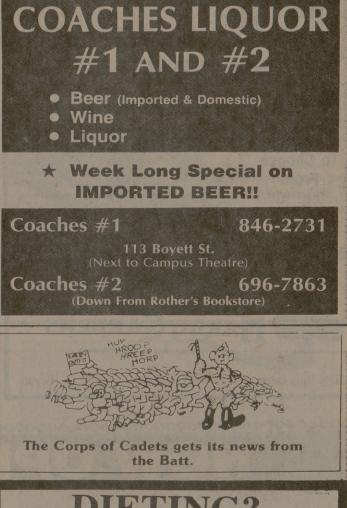
The Cooney-Holmes fight is never gonna come off," he said. "Forget it. I'm gonna be the heavyweight champion of the

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 cause that's what this man" — he gonna enjoy knocking out Renaldo turned toward King now — "is and looked directly at his next

and here he bent over paying me to do. Don King beamed at that. opponent. "I'm gonna enjoy it be-

Absolutely," he said.

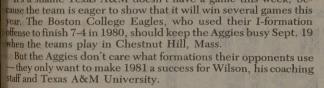


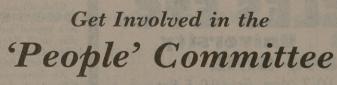
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