

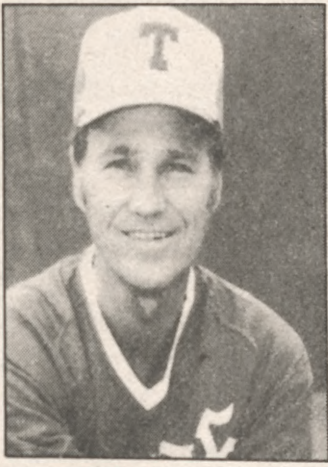
The Battalion Sports

March 12, 1982 Page 7

SWC race

Coaches expect tight battle among A&M, UT, Houston and Arkansas

by Frank L. Christlieb and Denise S. Sechelski
Battalion Staff



Cliff Gustafson

and most of those people are back. We're a well-balanced ballclub and I believe a bona fide contender. I've seen years when a team like ours was just a little better than some. We've got a good team here this year, but so do those other three guys."

Freshman second baseman Corkey Swindell, hitting .349, broke into the starting lineup early in the season. Walton describes Swindell as "one of those freshmen that comes in and plays extremely mature baseball."

RICE: The Owls finished the 1981 season with an 11-10 fourth-place record, which qualified them for the SWC post-season tournament. Coach David Hall says that his team, 16-7 so far this season, hopes to reverse the outcome of its series with Texas A&M last year. The Aggies defeated the Owls in two of three games.

"Probably the biggest difference this year is that we've got a little more punch in our bats," Hall said. "We're hitting the ball a little harder and we're more consistent at the plate. We've got more power this year, too."

The Owls have already hit 20 homers this season, three more than they had all of last season.

Hall said the Rice pitchers have had good seasons so far as well. Senior Pat Devine, who had a 6-4 record last season, has a 4-1 record, while senior Doug Watson is 3-0 and freshman Norman Charlton has won two games without a loss.

"It looks like the whole conference is really gearing up for a tremendous race," Hall said.

See SWC page 9

Every Southwest Conference baseball coach agrees that this season could produce one of the toughest fights ever for the league title.

Texas A&M coach Tom Chandler, whose team opens SWC play this weekend by hosting Rice in a three-game series starting with a single game this afternoon at 3, says the league is well-balanced with strong teams from top to bottom.

"I don't look for anyone to run away with it," Chandler said.

Arkansas hosts TCU this weekend, and the Aggies play Texas in Austin March 19 and 20. The Longhorns and Coach Cliff Gustafson, the defending league champions for the past three seasons, have been selected by many as favorites to repeat their 1981 performance.

Here's a summary of each conference team's outlook for the 1982 SWC season:

ARKANSAS: Razorback coach Norm DeBriyn, whose squad is 10-1-1 this season, used the term "well-balanced" to describe this year's SWC baseball race.

"There are some tough teams in the conference and it's basically a close race," DeBriyn said. "Texas A&M will be tough. They have excellent pitchers returning. They also have some really good freshmen this year, too. Of course, the Aggies have a great tradition for playing good baseball."

The Razorbacks have two starters returning with Chris Shaddy at shortstop and Billy Dees at first. Dees, Arkansas' designated hitter most of the season, led the SWC with a .407 average in 1981. Shaddy hit .260 last season.

Arkansas' leading pitcher with an 11-2 record in 1981, Scott Tabor turned down an Atlanta Braves contract and will be back for the Razorbacks.

DeBriyn said: "With seven of nine new faces in the lineup, it's hard to predict how we'll do in the conference yet. We'll have to play a few conference games before we can say."

BAYLOR: The Bears, coached by Mickey Sullivan, have compiled a 6-4 record in 1982. Baylor finished in last place in the SWC with a 6-15 record in 1981. The Aggies swept a three-game series from Baylor in Olsen Field during the year.

Top returners this season include Jay Jeffrey, who hit .320 while splitting playing time between shortstop and pitcher last year. Outfielder Cedric Mack, who hit .319 last season, is one of the top offensive performers on the team.

The Bears' top pitchers are Paul Farmer, 4-4 in 1981, and Jerry Arnold, 4-8 last season. Arnold had 21 strikeouts in 38 SWC innings, good for eighth in the league.



staff photo by Peter Rocha

Texas A&M second baseman Brad Hisle slides headfirst back into first base ahead of the tag by McNeese State first baseman James Gallier on a pickoff try. The Aggies

host the Rice Owls this weekend in their 1982 Southwest Conference opener. Texas A&M is 11-1 and the Owls are 16-7.

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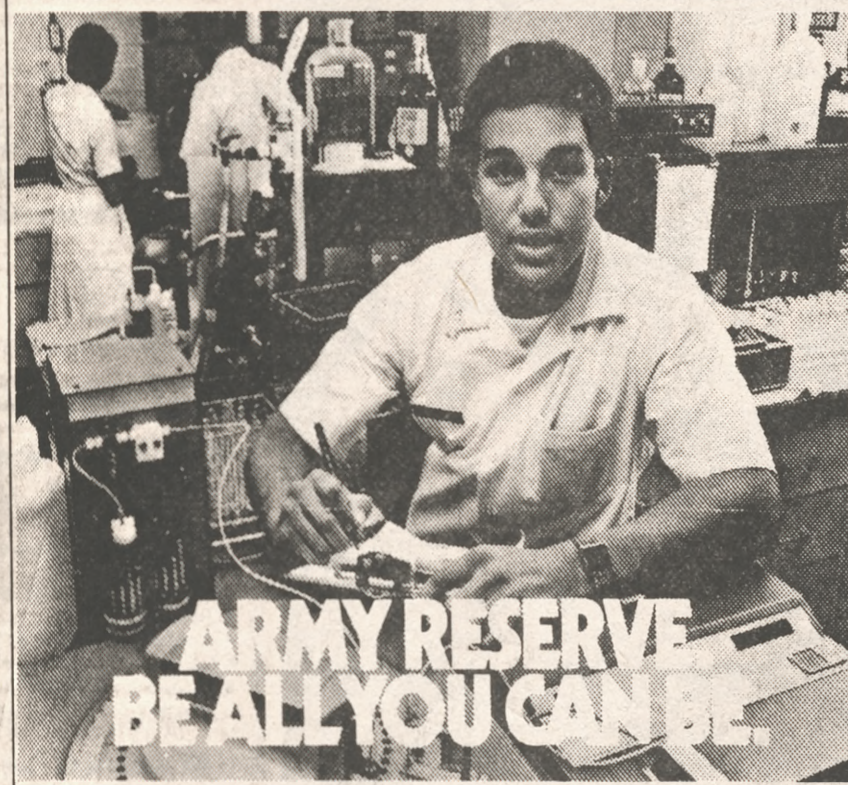
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