

SWC luncheon

Football coaches trade jokes, discuss season

by Frank L. Christlieb
Sports Editor

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Football coaching might be their forte, but it's obvious that several Southwest Conference mentors can toss out jokes with the same skills one might see in a pinpointer.

Much like a strong-armed quarterback who's always on the mark with his throws, the SWC coaches brought forth an assortment of jokes, as well as their assessments of the upcoming season, during their annual conference kickoff luncheon Friday in Arkansas.

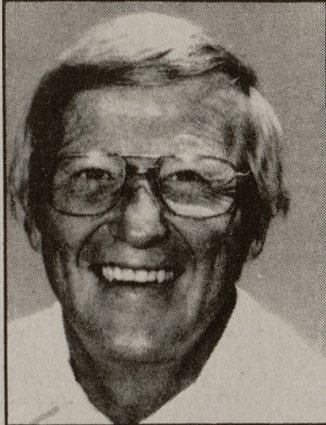
As the coaches and outgoing league commissioner Cliff Speegle took turns speaking to an audience of 700, no point struck home with greater precision than that made about the balance and competitiveness of this year's conference.

Speaking individually, in order of last year's finish in the SWC race, the coaches threw jabs at their counterparts, but each presentation contained serious tones as well.

Although Texas Tech finished without a conference victory in 1981, Red Raider defensive coordinator Dean Slaton jokingly emphasized that the coaches and players are attempting to avoid thinking about that 0-7-1 SWC record.

"It was a strange season — I have to admit that," Slaton said. "I know all these coaches up here are really glad that they all got their little piece of us last year — or big piece or whatever."

"Hopefully, the 1982 season will be a little different. We know this — any change will be an improvement, and



Lou Holtz

we're looking for several changes."

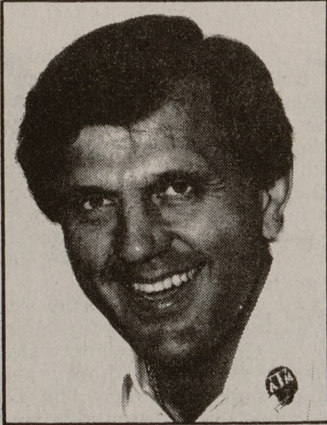
Some of the coaches, however, started their statements with jokes aimed at the host state of Arkansas and its favorite football figure, Razorback coach Lou Holtz. The Arkansas head coach has led his teams to 45 victories in five seasons at the school.

"It is great to be in Arkansas — in July," TCU coach F.A. Dry began.

"No, really," Dry continued after the laughing had subsided. "You're such great hosts — you're probably the greatest people in the world, no matter what Lou says."

Dry's sense of humor pervaded his speech, but the audience didn't mind.

"I have to admit," Dry said, speaking in what suddenly became a serious tone, "we were very fortunate last year, because we did play an ineligible player against the University of Arkansas (TCU won the game 28-24). I've never confessed that, but I think it's



Jackie Sherrill

time.

"During the game, we blitzed and an Arkansas back came right by my nose and nobody was covering him. I ran down and grabbed Mark Hatley, the defensive backfield coach and I said, 'Who's covering him?' and he said, 'God, Coach.'"

"I saw some lightning off in the east, and I said two things to Hatley. One is, 'Don't substitute,' and 'Don't leave him in single coverage again.'"

Dry's confession of the ineligible player didn't bring a quick NCAA probation, but the cracks of the next speaker — Rice coach Ray Alborn — sent the luncheon crowd into hysterical fits of laughter. However, jokes aside, Alborn said his team should have more experience and talent than in recent years.

"I think we're going to be a much better football team than these sportswriters give us credit for being," Alborn said emphatically in a not-so-serious voice.

"I think you people are in

for a rare treat. I don't know where we're going to finish, but as I said last year, we've bought all our uniforms and we've made all our trip arrangements — and we're looking forward to the season."

Texas A&M's Jackie Sherrill, who enters the conference along with new SMU coach Bobby Collins, said he's enthusiastic about the season, but also threw in a poke at the always open-minded Holtz.

"Everybody's been writing about (my) contract and they have been for the last six months," Sherrill said. "This is a true story, but when I started talking to the people from A&M I said: 'Listen. All I want is half of what Lou Holtz makes. I'm not interested in making what Lou Holtz makes; I only want to make half of it.'"

"Instead of three cars, I'll settle for one," he added, trying his best not to sound choosy. "Instead of having two country club memberships, I'll settle for one."

Then Sherrill finished by saying: "And I think I have. I don't even need stock in cable TV."

Certainly the coaches won't be joking when the 11-game regular season starts Sept. 4. During that opening weekend, Baylor faces North Texas State at home and Texas A&M starts with Boston College in Kyle Field.

And although these jobs may have gained the coaches some temporary satisfaction, rest assured that their ultimate satisfaction will only be attained by defeating those men who were the focus of their jokes at the yearly kickoff luncheon.

SWC

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this year than in quite some time. If one of them manages to work its way through the league schedule without a loss, that team should be a contender for the national championship.

"Any team will have trouble going through unbeaten," said Texas Tech coach Jerry Moore, whose debut season with the Red Raiders ended with a disappointing 1-9-1 record. "There are plenty of teams that are well-stocked."

Among the most well-stocked should be SMU. Tailbacks Eric Dickerson and Craig James, the keystones of a 1979 recruiting crop that turned the Mustangs' fortunes around, were seldom on the field at the same time last year. But alternating at the tailback spot, they combined for 2,575 rushing yards.

Those two players were somewhat overlooked nationally in 1981 because the Mustangs were on probation, could not be on television and were not able to represent the SWC in the Cotton Bowl Jan. 1. But the sanctioned part of the probation is over and Dickerson and James should get their share of publicity this year.

And fast-developing quarterback Lance McIlhenny will be back to direct the option attack. Seven members of the SMU defense will return as well and that unit allowed fewer points than any other team in the league last year.

The biggest change will be at the top. Ron Meyer, the flamboyant coach who made good on his promises at SMU, left to take the head coaching job with the New England Patriots and in his place will be the quiet, gentlemanly Bobby Collins — who came to the Mustangs from Southern Mississippi.

"This league scares me," Collins said. "From what I can tell, anybody in this conference can beat anybody else."

"Ron Meyer and his staff

built up a very good SMU program. We intend to keep that program at the top every year. There is pressure, regardless of the type of program that has been built. Personally I would rather have the pressure that

was finding the kind of quarterback who could run our pro-set offense. I soon found out how fortunate we are at Texas A&M."

Then there's Arkansas (8-4 last year with a four-point loss to North Carolina in the Gator Bowl). Here is another team with lots of starters back, including its quarterback — Tom Jones.

"It's difficult for me not to be optimistic as we approach the 1982 football season," Razorbacks' coach Lou Holtz said. "We have several all-star candidates and one of the best senior classes I've ever been around."

At Houston the always offensive-minded Cougars have their quarterback (Lionel Wilson) back as well. Houston always seems to be the mystery team in the SWC, but this year there's not much mystery. The Cougars ought to be able to move the ball.

There seem to be more strong teams in the SWC this year than in quite some time. If one of them manages to work its way through the league schedule without a loss, that team should be a contender for the national championship.

goes with a good team than pressure to win with a team that doesn't have any good players."

But when it comes to changes, the ones at SMU seem like mild tremors compared to the earthquakes that have taken place at Texas A&M University.

Jackie Sherrill was lured away from Pittsburgh to Aggieland with a large salary that caused comment nationwide, and because of the furor, his team will come under close scrutiny.

Texas A&M went 7-5 last season with a 33-16 victory over Oklahoma State in the Independence Bowl and 17 of that team's 22 starters are back. Among them is quarterback Gary Kubiak.

"In my mind," Sherrill said, "Gary is one of the best in the nation. One of my most pressing concerns when I first arrived

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Around Aggie Athletics

Head Football Coach and Athletic Director Jackie Sherrill will conclude his speaking engagements with more than 30 Aggie Clubs this summer by meeting with the groups in Fort Worth, Dallas and Houston this week. Last week, Sherrill spoke at the Southwest Conference kickoff luncheon in Little Rock, Ark., to the National Convention of the Football Writers Association, as well as an NCAA and ABC kickoff luncheon at King's Island, Ohio.

Later in the week, Sherrill visited with Aggie Club members in Austin, Lafayette, La., New Orleans and Tulsa, Okla.

Aggie freshman football players will arrive on campus Aug. 9 to begin preparations for the upcoming season. Twenty-eight freshmen are expected at the Texas A&M camp, along with several walk-ons. The Aggie varsity will report Aug. 13.

Texas A&M's first annual Photo Day will be held Aug. 14 at 2 p.m. in Kyle Field. All Aggie fans are invited to bring their cameras for a special session that will be spent with the team and coaches following the photo session with media members. Sherrill

will also be on hand for pictures and autographing sessions. He will sign honorary assistant coaches' cards for children at the event.

William H. "Dog" Dawson, a former Texas A&M assistant athletic director and assistant football coach, died at his home in Richmond Monday. Dawson lettered on the Aggies' 1939 national championship team as an end, concluding his playing career in 1940. At 6-5, 225 pounds, Dawson was one of the Aggie basketball team's leading scorers.

Dawson joined the Texas A&M football staff in 1946 and left the University in 1951 to pursue a career in the insurance business in Richmond.

Season and individual football tickets went on sale at G. Rollie White Coliseum's Window 7 Monday. Sales will continue for the seven home football games this season. The cost for a season ticket is \$77 while individual tickets are \$11 apiece. For further information, write the Texas A&M Ticket Office, G. Rollie White Coliseum, College Station, 77843-1228. Please include \$1 for handling and a note specifying the number of

tickets desired. The Fifth Annual Texas A&M Open Tennis Tournament will be held here Aug. 5-8 at the varsity courts. Included among the men's top seeds for the tourney are Rick Crowden of Lafayette, La., and Max King of Houston. Top seeds in the women's championship division are Barbara Smith of Angleton and Ellen Considine of Houston.

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