

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Line

(continued from page 15)

Ruel said after seeing last year's problems with blocking on the running attack, his emphasis this spring sought to correct that problem.

"This spring we emphasized a stronger running game, a more basic type running game and a running game that will complement what we're doing with the football," Ruel said.

"Everybody knows that the best thing you can do for your football team is to have a good running attack. You're able to control the ball better. There were something like 18 teams out of the top 20 teams last year that ran the ball better than they threw it.

"We don't believe that's necessary," he said. "(But) we believe that we ought to be able to do both well. The way defenses are playing these days, they can take away the running game by stacking up the defensive front. If you're not able to

throw the ball you're in for a long day. If they're loosening up trying to take away things from the passing game, you have to be able to run the football."

Ruel attributed last year's difficulties with the running game to injuries to backs, a possible lack of emphasis on the running game and a lack of experience.

Although the first five or six offensive linemen now have that experience, there is a depth problem, and it's possible the only solution will be to break in the incoming freshmen early. But Ruel said it's risky to have to depend on youngsters.

"You can't count on them to come in and pick it up for two different reasons," he said. "Number one is that it's their first time to be associated with it, because it's a brand new learning experience. Number two is that they're usually not physically ready to handle Southwest Conference football as a freshman.

"The skill positions usually

have a little more advantage in that area that they can step in a little quicker. The offensive line, tight end, quarterback, those positions need people who can physically handle the job."

So not only does Ruel's plan include gaining strength along the offensive front, but also finding a larger number of strong linemen for depth purposes.

"What you want is not just five or six," Ruel said. "You want 10. Then you're not in such a precarious position when somebody gets hurt. Right now, if we have a few kids get hurt, we have to worry about the success of our offense."

Softball

(continued from page 15) against Louisiana Tech."

As for McDonald's degree of recovery, Brock said most of the problems are a result of lack of playing time. McDonald pitched her first complete game in more than a month against Nebraska in last weekend's Nebraska Invitational. The Aggies won that one, 5-0.

"She's been a little bit out of practice on her rise ball, so it didn't work quite as much," Brock said. "We charted her a whole lot in the first four innings of the game, and she's trying to throw the rise and the drop, which she's well known for."

Brock said McDonald threw about 56 pitches in first four innings using both the rise and the drop. In the last three innings, she pitched the drop alone, changing only the speed of the pitch from time to time. That resulted in a total of only about 23 pitches in that three-inning period.

"Shan is famous for her drop ball," Brock said. "With her injuries and seeing her throw the drop ball as effectively as she did, that is a very, very good sign, because she's just not going



Bob Brock relieved to see Shan McDonald pitch well

ery, the team itself has benefited by learning a lesson or two during that drop ball."

ing this last road trip, Brock said. Unranked Creighton provided the Aggies with a tip on ways to improve by handing Texas A&M a 1-0 loss in the first game of the Nebraska tourney.

Brock said that game taught his team not to take anybody lightly. The Aggies beat Creighton Sunday in the championship game.

"A lot of times when we play teams, they're playing the World Series against us," Brock said. "As much as I tried to get them up for that game, they realized that Creighton had been struggling a little bit this year. Lo and behold they beat us the first game. But yet on the other hand, we turn right around and come back and play the kind of ball that we're used to playing."

"I think this past tournament taught me a lot. I was able to point out to the team what I've been saying off and on all year. And when we get to these regional tournaments and these national tournaments there's no bad games. You have to play them all the same."

The NCAA regionals are coming up May 12 for the Aggies, who will be one of two teams from this region to play in

a best-of-three mini-series. Sixteen teams around the nation will play in eight regional mini-series.

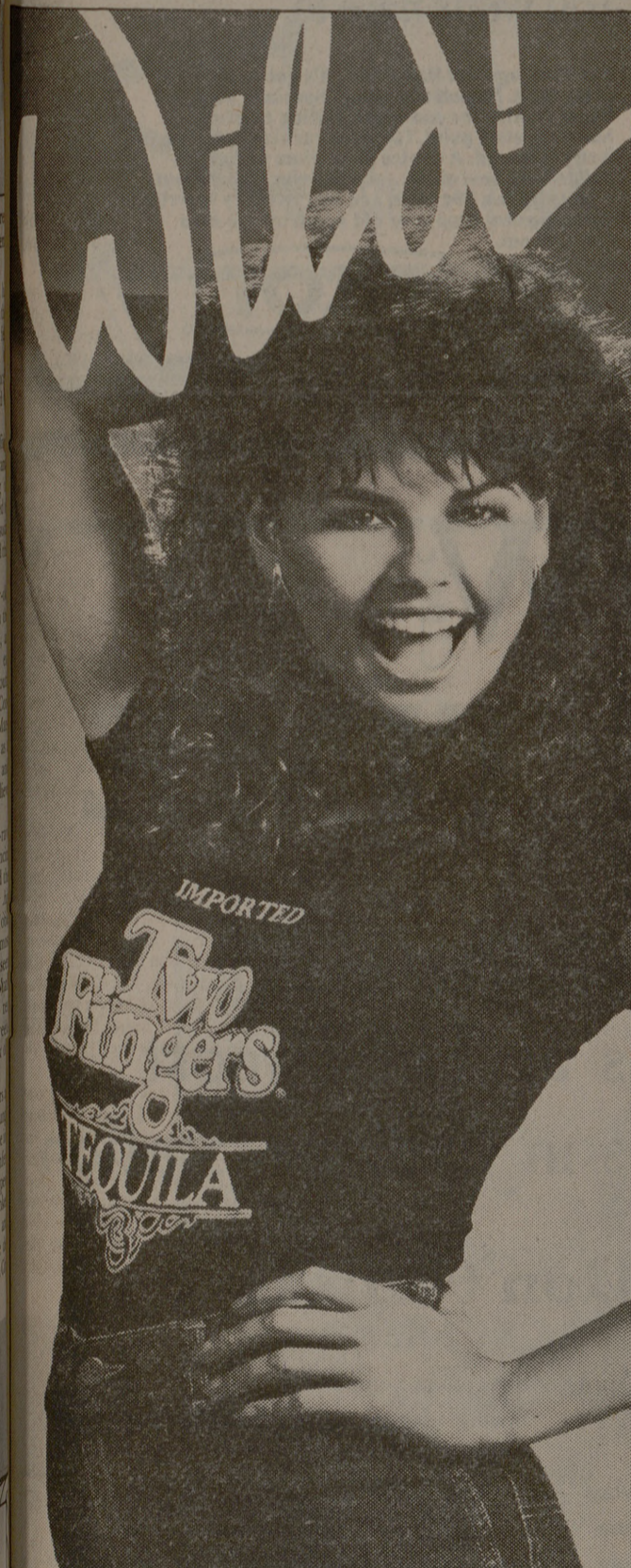
The good news for the Aggies is that they have a good chance of hosting their regional series. Brock said confirmation will probably come Monday. That's good news since the Aggies have a home record of 12-0.

The second-ranked Aggies are 33-9 this spring, and all nine losses have come on the road. Even more interesting is the fact that most of the Aggies' games have been against Top 20 teams.

Brock said his schedule has helped his team mature.

"I would say that my schedule has made us more experienced," Brock said. "But we are subject to a breakdown every now and then, because of the youngness of our ball team. But yet we haven't had many of those lately."

After today's double-header, the Aggies will travel to Alvin on Sunday to play Sam Houston State, but that will be a scrimmage that won't count as a victory or loss. Texas A&M will come home for another game against Sam Houston on Wednesday.



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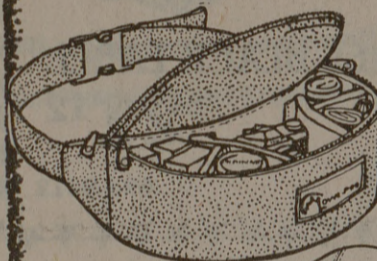


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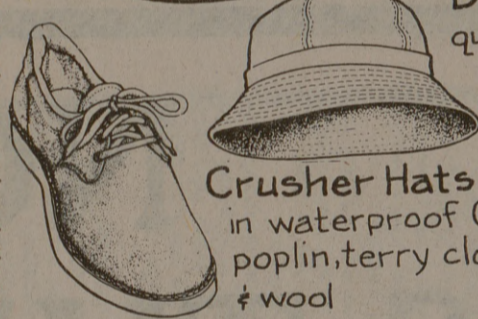
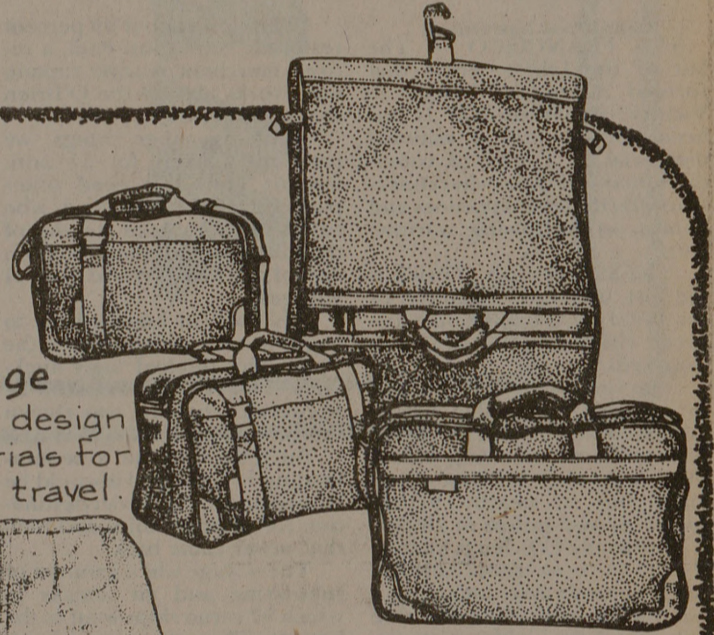
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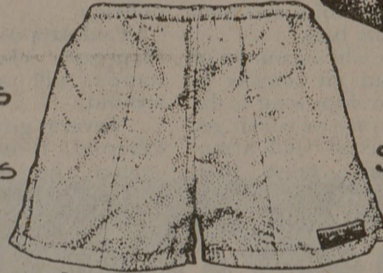
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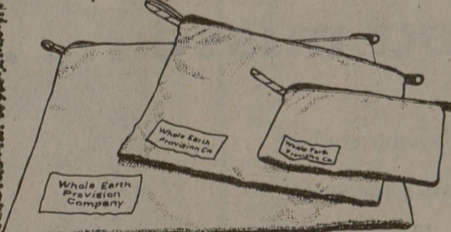


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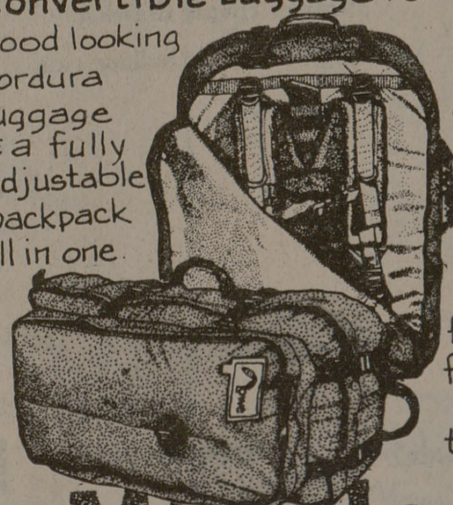
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