

Practice key to Kleine's success

Sutton eyes stardom for center

United Press International

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — Akeem Olajuwon and Patrick Ewing may or may not return for their senior seasons of college basketball in 1985, but Arkansas coach Eddie Sutton said he thinks he knows who the best center in NCAA play will be anyway.

Sutton said his own big man, 6-11 junior Joe Kleine, may be America's best college center next season — even if Olajuwon returns to Houston and Ewing plays his final year at GEORGETOWN.

"I think he's a better offensive center right now than Akeem or Pat Ewing," Sutton said of the Slater, Mo., product. "He may not be as good an all-around player as those guys are because he can't block shots like either one of them, but he can do everything they do offensively."

Sparked by consecutive 32-point outings against North Texas State and Alabama State in December, Kleine carries a 20.5 scoring average into Thursday night's Southwest Conference meeting with Texas. He has been in double figures in all 15 games, with a field goal shooting mark of .623, and scored at least 18 points on 13 occasions.

Rebounding has been another Kleine strong point.



Hog star Joe Kleine

The transfer from Notre Dame ripped down 17 caroms in a game twice this year, including a matchup with 7-footer Jon Koncak of SMU, and has maintained a 10.6 rebound average.

Kleine originally picked Digger Phelps' program at Notre Dame after his last season at Slater, but transferred to Arkansas, his second choice, after one season.

Playing time was not the problem with the Irish. Kleine started 11 of 29 games while splitting time with Tim Andree as a freshman, but averaged only 2.6 points and 2.4 rebounds in an offense designed around the talents of Kelly Tripucka and Orlando Woolridge, both NBA regulars now.

"I could have played up

there," Kleine said of his year at South Bend, "but something wasn't working. His (Phelps) system and ways just weren't for me. I couldn't see myself developing as a player. I felt comfortable with the school but not with the basketball."

Kleine, whose family is Catholic, said the factor of religion may have played a major role in his initial decision to enroll at Notre Dame. Once he decided to leave South Bend, though, Arkansas — his second choice originally — was the selection.

The transfer forced Kleine to redshirt for one year and practice daily against Razorback regulars such as Tony Brown, Scott Hastings, Darrell Walker and Keith Peterson. Those four were all drafted by pro teams, and Hastings and Walker remain in the NBA.

"I think that year really helped me develop," Kleine said. "I got to practice every day against one of the best teams Arkansas ever had. When I be-

came eligible last year, I had a year of Coach Sutton's system and his methods. I may have been in my first game, but I felt like I had more experience."

Kleine's first year as a Razorback produced a 26-4 record for the team and personal averages of 13.3 points and 7.3 rebounds while battling the likes of Olajuwon, Koncak and Purdue's

Russell Cross.

Sutton thinks the SWC, with three top centers now in residence, may have a large part of the nation's best college pivotmen.

"If he continues to develop at the rate he has been, a lot of people will think he's the best center in the country next year," Sutton said.

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WC cites best players of week

United Press International

DALLAS — Houston's Abdul Olajuwon and Annette Smith were named Monday as male and female basketball players of the week in a vote of the Southwest all conference basketball coaches.

Olajuwon, the 7-0 junior from Nigeria, led the Cougars to roll over Texas Tech and A&M last week, totaling

45 points and 41 rebounds, along with 20 blocked shots.

For the season, Olajuwon leads SWC rebounders with 14.5 per game. He's averaging 16.8 points per game and has 102 blocks in 17 games.

Smith, a junior from Bay City, set a SWC women's scoring record with 46 points in Texas' 110-54 win over Rice in Houston. Smith also set a record with 18 field goals to go with ten free throws in the game.

Rozier USFL-bound despite agent woes

United Press International

PITTSBURGH — Heisman Trophy winner Mike Rozier will play for the Pittsburgh Maulers despite a reported dispute with his agent, a spokesman for the United States Football League team said Monday.

He went to California and then on to Japan to participate in post-season all star games.

The team also has been in touch with the Rozier family and Keenist said the Mauler's No. 1 draft choice was expected to be at a team practice this weekend in Florida.

The Globe reported Sunday Trope coerced Rozier into signing an agreement with the Maulers, threatening to reveal that Rozier had taken money from the agent before his senior year.

That would have possibly made Rozier ineligible to play in Nebraska games, made him ineligible for the Heisman Trophy and would have forced his college team to forfeit games he had played in.

"We've done everything right," Keenist said. "We feel as we have all along. We have Mike Rozier under contract and he'll be playing for the Maulers."

"He was just very positive," Keenist said. "From our standpoint, it was great."

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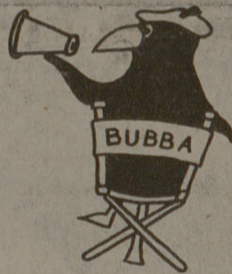
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