

Tennis

Aggies ranked 13th
in the nation
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SWC showdown for Ags

By TRAVIS TINGLE
Sports Writer

Texas A&M, ranked 12th in the nation, returns to Dischalk Field in Austin this weekend for the opening round of the 8th annual Southwest Conference baseball tournament. The Aggies, 38-16 overall, and the Rice Owls, 13-8, are both tied for second in conference play going into the SWC tournament. But Rice will go into the tournament as the second place team because the Owls won two of three games against the Aggies.

Texas (16-5) won their sixth consecutive SWC title. Friday at 1:30 p.m., the Aggies will have an opportunity to avenge those losses to the Owls, when they tangle with Rice (36-12) in the first game of the SWC tournament. The SWC tournament is a double elimination format — just two strikes and your out. The Aggies want to hang around Austin a little longer — they're beginning to get use to it. They'd also like another crack at the Texas Longhorns. Texas A&M went into last

weekend's Texas series with a chance to de-throne the Horns 50600land claim their first Southwest Conference championship since 1978.

There's no other way to describe the Ags-Horns series except by using an old-time baseball cliché. The 2-1 series win by the Horns was a "slugfest."

Texas clinched the title last Friday night with a 12-6 victory after being down 6-4 to the Aggies.

Afterwards, the Ags seemed to be staring at the scoreboard,

shaking their heads and saying, "How do those guys do it?"

The No. 2 ranked Horns did it again, capturing their 49th outright SWC title in the last 68 years.

The next day, even though the temperature was in the upper 90s, the Ags broke their losing streak against the Horns with a 10-7 win in the opening game of the doubleheader. It was the Ags their first win against the Horns since 1981.

Texas closed the series with a 13-6 decision in Saturday's second game.



Photo by Mark Berrier

Shortstop Rob Swain slides for home plate in a game against Rice earlier this season. Swain was called out on the play. The face mask was designed

to protect Swain's broken jaw. The Aggies play the Rice Owls in the first round of the SWC tournament Friday in Austin.

Athletes cope with risk of injuries

By DAVE SCOTT
Sports Editor

It can happen in an instant. On any playing field, at any time, to any athlete. In that dreaded instant, an athlete can suffer a career-ending or even life-ending injury.

Obviously, the risk of a major injury is greater in some sports than in others. Because of its very nature, football, perhaps more than any other sport, exposes its participants to a high level of risk every time they step onto the playing or practice field.

When a serious injury occurs, especially to a star player, the first reaction of fans and coaches is usually how much the loss of that player will hurt the team. "Can the team still win? Who do we have to replace him?" And usually the player himself has similar reactions. "How soon can I come back? Have I lost my position?" Little thought is given to the long term effects of the injury.

When Texas A&M quarterback Kevin Murray went down with a knee injury during the Varsity-Alumni game last month, reporters immediately nounced on how a Murray-less Aggie team would fare next season. And Texas A&M coach Jackie Sherrill was angry and upset about losing his star quarterback. Murray himself felt the same way. He worried about how soon he could come back, not about what it might be like to have to limp every morning

for the rest of his life or about what could happen if his knee was hurt again.

But Murray says the possibility of an injury is something a player must be able to cope with.

"Every time you step on the field it has a chance of happening," Murray said. "It is something you have to accept. If you can't accept it you shouldn't be out there. Worrying about an injury is something that can mess you up mentally."

In football, a knee injury like Murray suffered is fairly common, and with advances in surgery and treatment the seriousness of that type of injury has lessened. However, the possibility of an injury much more serious always exists.

New England Patriots wide receiver Daryl Stingley was crippled for life in an exhibition game in 1978 against the Oakland Raiders. On a slanting pass pattern across the middle, he jumped for an overthrown ball. He was defenseless and vulnerable for the hit made on him by safety Jack Tatum. In Stingley's autobiography, "Happy to be Alive," he recalled the play.

"He (Tatum) delivered the blow. He cracked me on the head and on the back of the neck with full force. I hit the ground with a thud and tried to get up as I had so many times before, but I couldn't move."

The incident raised a lot of controversy about the violence in football. In his book, Stingley said he wrestled with the deci-

sion on whether to sue the National Football League and Tatum on the terms that "collectively and individually they had permitted and encouraged the type of violence and assault" that led to his injury.

Stingley eventually dropped the suit and settled with the Patriots out of court. The settlement was strictly for injuries, fixing no blame, and part of the agreement was that he was to take no further legal action.

The Patriots furnished Stingley with a van fully equipped to accommodate his wheelchair and also a job in the Patriots scouting organization. Stingley was well taken care of financially, but while he was in the hospital he was apprehensive about seeing his teammates.

"For some reason I had been scared to see my teammates..." Stingley wrote. "I worried that what I represented to them was the worst thing they wanted to think about: a serious injury suffered during a football game."

Stingley also wrote that for several days after the accident he believed he would be able to come back and play football again. If he would have been able, Stingley would have risked his life on the football field again.

Another football player, an Aggie, is trying to come back to football on a less serious and less dramatic level.

Tim Ward was a high school All-America at Conroe before coming to Texas A&M to play

football on a full scholarship in 1978. When he was a freshman he hurt his neck making a tackle on Curtis Dickey. Ward said he knew something was wrong, but the coaches kept him in the scrimmage. Later that week the team trainers told him that it was just a pinched nerve and to keep working out, which he did.

He couldn't understand why one arm kept getting stronger while the other got weaker and ached constantly. It was just in the past year that Ward found out that he had actually ripped a nerve in his neck.

However, Ward had an even more serious injury sometime during his junior year when he suffered a herniated disc in his

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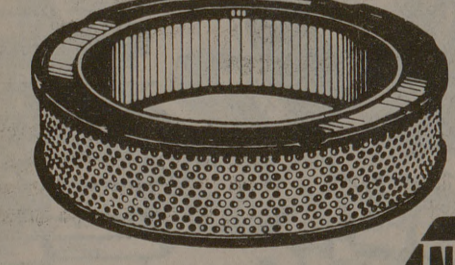


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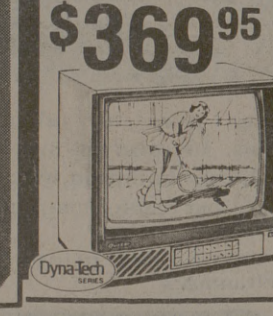
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