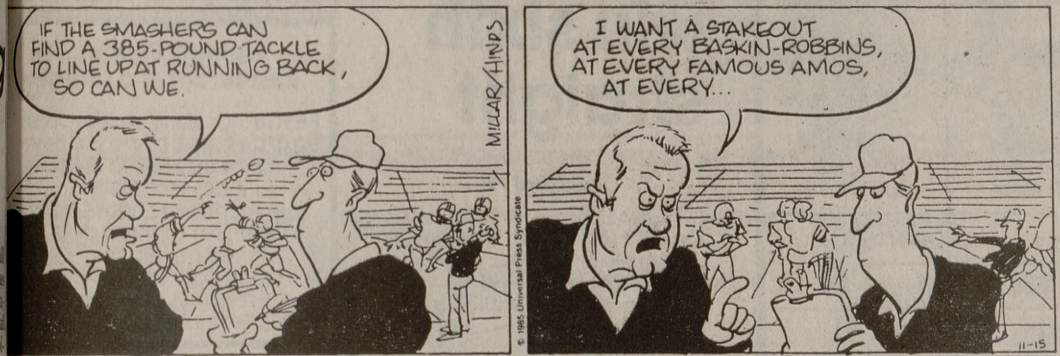


ANK McNAMARA®

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



SWC title picture blurred in four-team scramble

Arkansas, Texas, Baylor and Texas A&M still have hopes of going to the Cotton Bowl. And with only three weeks left in the Southwest Conference season, the scramble for SWC supremacy will go into full swing Saturday when Texas A&M hosts the Arkansas Razorbacks.

Arkansas and A&M need exactly opposite things to happen if they win their game Saturday. Baylor, on the other hand, needs to lose to Texas to keep its hopes alive.

Arkansas needs to win its last three games against Arkansas, TCU and Texas, while counting on the Longhorns to beat the Bears.

Baylor, on the other hand, needs to beat Rice and Texas and hope either A&M or SMU knocks off the Hogs.

This leaves Texas with the advantage coming down the stretch because the 'Horns can win the title without any help.

If Texas beats TCU, Baylor and

PETE HERNDON Sports Viewpoint

A&M, the worst it could do is tie Arkansas for first place. This would guarantee Texas the Cotton Bowl berth by virtue of its 15-13 win over the Razorbacks.

If you're starting to get dizzy, don't read any further.

What could happen if the eventual SWC champion ends up with two losses?

Once again, let's exclude the possibility of TCU or Rice playing the role of spoiler.

If Arkansas beats A&M, the Aggies can still tie for the SWC title if Texas beats Baylor, A&M beats Texas, and SMU beats Arkansas. This would leave Texas A&M, Texas, Arkansas and Baylor tied for first with two losses apiece. The Aggies would get the nod for Dallas since the other three teams have gone to the Cotton Bowl more recently than the Ags, whose last visit was in 1968.

If Rice or TCU pulls a major upset, it would throw a monkey wrench into the already baffling SWC Cotton Bowl picture.

If Rice beats Baylor and Baylor beats Texas, and A&M loses to Arkansas and Texas, the Razorbacks could lose to SMU and still go since Baylor and Texas have been to the Cotton Bowl more recently.

If TCU beats A&M and A&M beats Arkansas and Texas, then A&M could go if Rice or Texas beats Baylor.

If TCU beats Texas, it would just about eliminate the 'Horns. The only way the 'Horns could lose to TCU and still go would be if A&M, Baylor and Arkansas all lost two more games.

Can the SWC champion have three conference losses?

No. Six of the 10 combined games left for the contenders are against each other. And after examining the schedule, my math showed that it's impossible for each of the four teams to have three losses.

So who's going to Dallas?

Count on the Thanksgiving Day game at Kyle Field to tell the story. The Longhorns will either give up a key turnover that will decide the game for the Aggies or the Aggies will miss a game-winning field goal or penalize themselves all the way to El Paso.

And who's the competition going to be?

This year it looks like the Cotton Bowl officials may get an entire football team instead of Doug Flutie and his cheerleaders. Look for the Big 10 runner-up, whether it's Michigan, Ohio State, or Iowa, to be in Dallas on Jan. 1.

If that's the case, it probably won't matter much which SWC team goes to Dallas. After the Wolverines, Buckeyes, or Hawkeyes leave town, Texas football fans will be trying to forget the 1986 Cotton Bowl.

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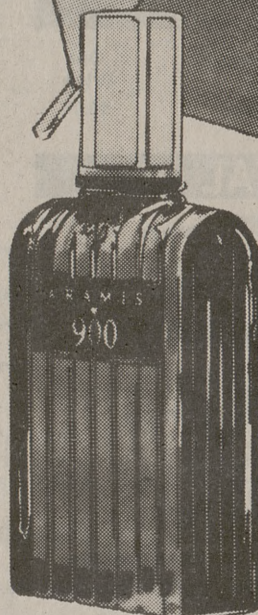
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