

Design approved for championship ring

By DARYN DeZENGOTITA
Reporter

The Texas A&M Athletic Department has approved the design for the Southwest Conference football championship ring and is taking the team's sizes this week.

Associate Athletic Director for Finance Wally Groff said the order has been placed with the Balfour company in Houston. Balfour makes all Aggie rings.

Groff expects the rings to be completed in time for presentation at the Ring Football Banquet in April.

The coaches and the team work with the ring people on the design. "We started talking to them (Balfour) in December and we had a preliminary design approved before the holidays."

One side of the ring will display the score of the victory over Auburn



and a stylized picture of the Cotton Bowl stadium. The other side will be individualized with the players name and jersey number.

"We wanted to put the big '50th' on the ring because it was a very special Cotton Bowl," Groff said. "It's going to be a super ring."

The amount of money the athletic department can spend on the ring is set forth in the rules of the NCAA and the Southwest Conference, Groff said.

"The contract award is not a bid situation; it's more of a proposal," Groff said. "We say, 'Here's how

much money we can spend. What can you do for us?'"

"Obviously, we're not going to scrimp on a conference champion. We do the same for all the sports." The ring is made of gold and the top is shaped like a stadium with the outer edges raised. The Diamonique

stone in the center will actually be square rather than round as shown in the diagram.

The Balfour company has already started on the 6-week process of forming the special dies required to make the ring. Once the team's individual sizes have been submitted, the manufacturing process will start.

Offensive lineman Louis Cheek, a 6-6, 280-pound sophomore, has the largest ring size submitted with a 15. That's also the largest sized Balfour gave the team to use.

The smallest ring size belongs to Twelfth Man member Ashley Edgington, a size 8.

On the regular squad, both kicker Eric Franklin and wide receiver Tony Thompson checked in with an 8.5 measurement.

Groff said everyone is wondering what Marshall Land's size is. The 365-pound offensive lineman measured a 14.5.

Utility buys Texas town, ends conflict

Associated Press

MONTICELLO — Texas Utilities has settled a long-running dispute with the people of this tiny Northeast Texas community by buying the entire town — lock, stock and liquor store.

The utility took the action to end years of hostilities with Mayor Harold Smith, his family and neighbors over air pollution and blocked roads resulting from a lignite mining operation used to fuel an electric generating plant.

"They got the whole town," said Smith, who owned most of the businesses in the town of 50 people. "Everything in the town is gone — the liquor store, the shops, the concrete plant, the garage..."

Texas Utilities also is getting several houses and a Church of Christ.

The purchase was made by Texas Utilities Mining Co., which produces lignite for the electric company's 1,900-megawatt generating plant just across Lake Monticello from the town.

Company officials and Smith said they believe it's the first time a corporation has bought an entire town.

"We researched it, and we can't find one time in the United States where a company bought a complete, operating town," Smith said.

Education official predicts teacher shortage

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Texas school districts would begin looking in their communities for replacements for up to 6,000 teachers who could be lost by September, says Education Commissioner W.N. Kirby.

The state now has 175,000 teachers in public school classrooms. The coming teacher competency test combined with attrition will create a shortage, Kirby told the State Board of Education on Saturday.

"We're aware of the problem of high school dropouts in this state but also have a tremendous problem

in terms of people dropping out of the education profession," he said.

About 10,000 teachers are expected to flunk the upcoming competency test. Teachers who fail will lose their licenses. Another 5,000 will voluntarily leave for various reasons, Kirby predicted.

The mandatory teacher test will be given in March, with a re-test in June. Teachers who do not pass will be barred from teaching.

Kirby said school districts might be able to lure some ex-teachers back to work. Some who left for jobs in

private industry might now be looking for work because of the economic slowdown across Texas, he said.

State education officials are talking to West German officials about a possible exchange program. West Germany has a teacher surplus, Kirby said. Under the plan, Texas teachers would go to West Germany for summer training programs and English-speaking West German teachers would help in Texas schools.

Kirby said the shortage is due, in

part, to fewer people choosing teaching as a career.

A Texas Education Agency report issued Friday showed only 59 percent of the college students who took the basic skills test for prospective teachers passed it in November.

Nolan Wood, director of teacher assessment, said officials expected higher scores.

Wood said he thought more than 60 percent of the students would pass all three segments of the test — reading, writing and mathematics.

The pass rate has never topped 61 percent since the state began giving the test to teacher training candidates in March 1984.

But Wood said he had higher expectations because 2,000 fewer people took the test last fall and test results are usually better when fewer take an exam.

Only 16 percent of the blacks and 31 percent of the Hispanics taking the test passed all three parts. Anglos had a 67 percent rate of passing.

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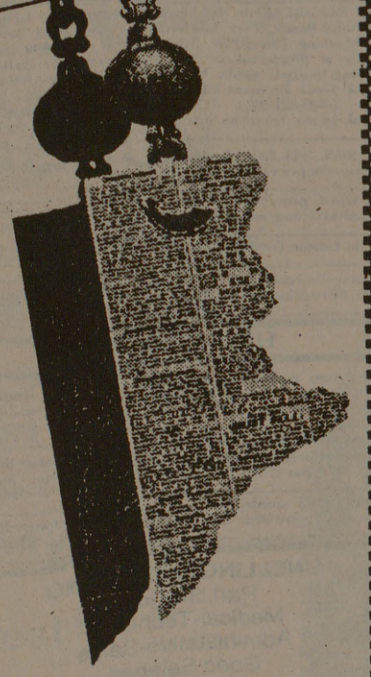
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