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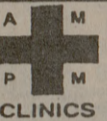
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Sports

Don't blow up on me the first week, but I'm pickin' the Huskers to win it

Traditionally, we on the Battalion sports staff do *Battalion Picks*, where we in our infinite wisdom and knowledge prognosticate concerning the games pending for Texas A&M and other, lesser schools across the country.

The results are usually less than impressive. I suppose it could be presumed that we are a staff full of egos — self-impressed enough to presume we know enough about the game to predict outcomes, and then with enough ego left over to think others actually care what we think.

I also suppose these are largely accurate presumptions. I know I like to look at the "Picks" section of the larger, more reputable papers of the state. I like saying, "See! Joe Blow agrees that Fordham ain't got a prayer Saturday against Slippery Rock."

I can also inflate my ego by thinking that by disagreeing with the pros, I remain a genius and they are magically transformed into blithering boobies.

That works fine when you disagree in private, like that of you probably do. It becomes more sobering when 23,000 *Battalion* readers get to read about your predictive attempts.

The hard, cold fact of the matter is that we aren't a whole lot more intelligent about these matters than the average *Battalion* sports reader. Many of you in Random Fandom could probably do a better job at it than we.

But we're being paid for this, so I guess it's right that we should be the ones who have to stick their necks out.

How do we choose the games that we embarrass ourselves on? If you have any ideas about it, let us know.

The best way we know is to start by picking all the games involving Southwest Conference teams, both in conference and pre-conference.

After that we throw in the Oilers and the Cowboys because of the understandably large



Hal L. Hammons
Sports viewpoint

interest in Texas concerning those particular teams.

Then we try to choose the best, most interesting matchups from around the NCAA. Usually we'll choose the No. 1 team, unless it's like Oklahoma vs. Furman or something like that. Traditional rivalries like Harvard-Yale or Army-Navy usually get chosen, too.

We encourage you to pick against us — after all, this section isn't just to bolster our egos. It's meant to be fun, so have fun with it.

Anyway, we don't have "Picks" this week for two reasons; the staff isn't in town yet, and there's only one game. But Yours Truly, for lack of a better column idea, will try.

The game, for those of you who may be new to this planet, is the Kickoff Classic in East Rutherford, N.J., between the Nebraska Cornhuskers and your own beloved Texas A&M Aggies.

Some of you, no doubt, will be joining me in my excursion to the land of the heathen up on the other side of Masie-Dixie. I hope you, as well as I, are able to hold off the influence of the Yankee hordes and remain Southern ladies and gentlemen. Or become such before you leave.

Nothing irks me more than obnoxious fans, unless it's the obnoxious fans of a team that just beat the team I was rooting for. Do me a favor and avoid imitating, for instance, some of the fans that came our way from Louisiana last September.

But about the game. I envision the Aggies being hit with the first-week jitters that have plagued them ever since I have been enrolled.

Let's face it — in the last three years they haven't won an opener yet. Nebraska is the opponent this year. I see no reason for the trend to change now.

Nebraska is a legitimate national-championship contender, ranked second in the nation by the Associated Press and third by United Press International. They feature a versatile offense and a crushing defense.

A&M has far too many question marks going into the season. Assuming that A&M could resolve enough of them to defeat a team of the Huskers' experience and ability would seem to be

Texas A&M vs. Nebraska

- What: The sixth annual Kickoff Classic
- Where: Giants Stadium, East Rutherford, N.J.
- When: Saturday, 8 p.m. EST
- Television: National coverage by Raycom-TV, with Ron Franklin on play-by-play and Dave Rowe with commentary. Covered in this area by Channel 25 (KTXH in Houston) and Channel 5 (KXXV in Waco).
- Radio: Aggie Radio Network with Dave South on play-by-play and Jay Howard on commentary, carried over Bryan-College Station's KTAM (1240 AM); Mutual Broadcasting Network, carried over local WTAW (1150 AM).
- Rankings: A&M is ranked 10th by the Associated Press and sixth by United Press International; Nebraska is ranked second and third, respectively.

overly optimistic for any Aggie fan. OK, maybe not for d.p.

The Aggies will be in desperate search for a multi-threat quarterback that they missed so badly last year. Reports from spring training indicate that Bucky Richardson may just be that quarterback, but spring practice and The Real Thing are substantially different.

They lost three starters on the offensive line and two on the defense. Sammy O'Brien, the key to the Aggs' run defense. The replacements look good now, but will they pan out in real action?

Most of the secondary is going through major reconstruction after the departure of Chet Brooks and Kip Corrington. The new guys have some big shoes to fill.

I think the A&M defense should hold Nebraska fairly well, but the Aggies will need to really shine offensively. I don't see that.

I picture a close game, a real battle on the line of scrimmage, with few points scored. Call it Nebraska 20, A&M 13.

Bears, Horns get ready for SWC McWilliams fretting over defensive backfield

AUSTIN (AP) — Before anyone starts penciling in the Texas Longhorns for a Cotton Bowl berth, Coach David McWilliams said Monday they should take a look at his defensive backfield.

"It's a sad situation," McWilliams told the Southwest Conference press tour. "I don't want you guys to break down and start crying or anything, but it's a pretty sad deal."

The depth of defensive backs lists three sophomores and three freshmen at cornerback and safety. Only sophomore Stanley Richard has any playing experience. "It's a happy pain in that we have

some good players," the coach quickly added. "We have several players who are good, we just need to sort them out. It is a major problem, however."

The inexperienced players will receive their first test early as the Longhorns open the season Sept. 8 against pass-happy Brigham Young.

"The interior linemen are as good as a seven-man front we've had in years," McWilliams said. "And the linebacking corps is as good as we've ever had. (Britt) Hager is one of the tops in the nation."

Hager, 6-foot-11 and 230 pounds,

returns in the middle for his senior season.

Tackles Steve Llewellyn, 6-6, 270, and Ken Hackemack, 6-9, 285, return from injuries that sidelined them for part of last season.

At defensive end, 6-3, 239-pound sophomore Oscar Giles is, in McWilliams' words, "as good as any sophomore I've ever seen."

Senior tailback Eric Metcalf, touted by McWilliams as a Heisman Trophy candidate, is expected to carry most of the offense, but the Longhorns have an additional threat with a group of speedy receivers, led by junior Tony Jones.

Jones hauled in 31 passes a year ago and was named the most valuable player in Texas' 32-27 win over Pittsburgh in the Bludonnet Bowl.

Senior Shannon Kelley will be the new Texas quarterback. Kelley played in seven games and started once last season as a backup to Bret Stafford, and McWilliams admits anytime you change quarterbacks it is a question mark.

"I would like to think you always have a chance to win the conference," McWilliams said. "But, we have a long way to go and a lot of things have to happen. We still have a lot of question marks."

Baylor trying to improve on 6-5 despite injuries

WACO (AP) — The Baylor Bears have the firepower to contend for the Southwest Conference football title in 1988, but injuries are beginning to haunt the Bears in fall practice.

"Last year we were reloading," Baylor Coach Grant Teaff said Tuesday during the SWC press tour. "This year we need to pull the trigger. We were within an eyelash of going 8-3."

The Bears finished 6-5.

"We can be better than that if we make the big plays. I like our defense as we enter this season. We have a lot more depth in the secondary. Our linebackers are improved and experienced," Teaff said.

"We have a defense that gets to the ball in a hurry-and is in a foul mood when it gets there."

Injuries have already become a problem.

Free safety Mike Welch has a knee injury that required arthroscopic surgery and cornerback Ray Crockett has a pulled groin muscle. Center Bobby Sign has a knee injury.

Teaff said Welch, Crockett and Sign are questionable for the Sept. 3 opener against Nevada-Las Vegas at Baylor Stadium.

"We'll have to find a way to turn the negatives into positives," Teaff said. "Last year Ed Lovell was injured and Brad Goebel developed very rapidly as a quarterback."

Teaff said the heralded blue-chip running back recruit, Anthony Ray, is beginning to work back into practice. Ray suffered a knee injury in the 1987 Texas High School All-Star game.



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