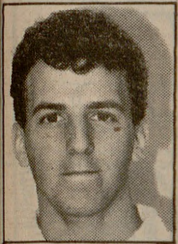


Wednesday, November 29, 1989



**Clay Rasmussen**  
Sports Writer

### Could the SWC be too tough to produce a champ?

You don't hear any more jokes about the Southwest Conference.

Remember when people referred to the SWC as the *Southwest Conference*?

But, then again I guess you could say those people were justified in pointing to the SWC as one of the weakest conferences around the country.

You have to go way back to 1969 before you'll find a SWC team finishes first in the Associated Press' top ten football polls. And when was the last time there were multiple SWC teams in the AP top ten?

That would be almost seven years ago in 1982 when both Southern Methodist and Arkansas occupied top spots.

It seemed as though the whole SWC spent the 1980s under NCAA investigations and probations. SMU was the first team in the country to suffer the NCAA's Death Penalty, banning football from SMU for two years.

Houston, Texas A&M, Texas and Texas Christian all suffered some type of sanctions in this decade.

Things looked dismal for the conference heading into the 1989 season.

But as the first SWC showdown took place in Dallas between reborn SMU and Rice (who hadn't won a game in two years), things started to change.

Rice broke its conference record losing streak and other SWC teams started beating up nationally ranked opponents like Louisiana State, Arizona State, New Mexico and Arizona.

Suddenly the SWC was a powerhouse conference. Teams not only won, but they looked impressive doing it.

Texas went into Dallas as heavy un-

See Rasmussen/Page 9

## Slocum seeks new rule for SWC officials

### Close calls concern coach

By Richard Tijerina  
Of The Battalion Staff

Four days after Texas A&M's painful 23-22 loss to Arkansas, Coach R.C. Slocum still is answering questions — not about the Aggies' upcoming game with Texas, but about The Call.

Line judge Ron Underwoods' controversial pass interference call on A&M safety Larry Horton in the fourth quarter of Friday's game has sparked another debate about Southwest Conference officiating.

Slocum said Tuesday that he would go through the proper channels after the season was over to look into the possibility of altering the SWC officiating system.

"You should just have a flat rule that a guy can't call a game involving his alma mater — that we're just not going to put ourselves in that position," Slocum said.

Underwood, a former football player at Arkansas, called Horton for bumping into tight end Billy Winston before knocking the ball down on a crucial fourth-and-three play at the A&M 19-yard line.

Five plays later, the Razorbacks scored a touchdown that put them up for good, 23-20.

It was the second time this season A&M has been on the losing end of a controversial call by an official late in the game.

In A&M's 27-24 loss to Texas Tech earlier in the season, head referee Loyd Dale, a Tech graduate, signalled play to start on a third-and-28 situation before the Aggies were all on the field following a time out.

Seeing the Aggies out of position, the Red Raiders scored on a long pass play with 52 seconds remaining in the game to win.

Two plays earlier, Dale and his officiating crew ruled Tech quarterback Jamie Gill down after A&M linebacker William Thomas caused an apparent fumble that was recovered by the Aggies.

Television replays showed that Gill did indeed fumble the ball well before his knee touched the ground.

But Slocum said the real problem with the two calls wasn't so much the calls themselves, but the fact that the referees who made them were officiating their alma-

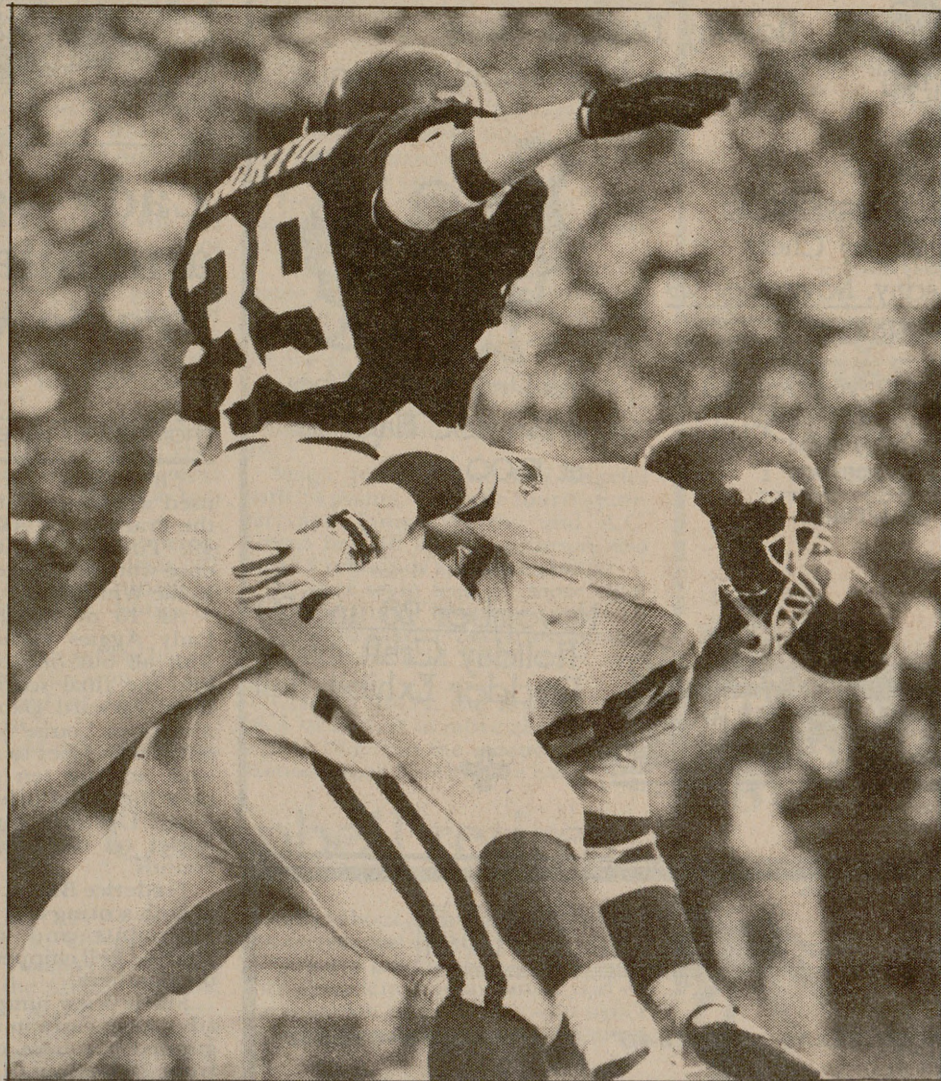


Photo by Jay Janner

A&M safety Larry Horton and Arkansas tight end Billy Winston fall to the ground in the controversial pass interference play in Friday's game.

mater's teams.

"The thing in Lubbock would not have been nearly as big a story, and the call the other day wouldn't have been big if they hadn't been a Tech graduate and an Arkan-

sas graduate," he said.

"We shouldn't put those men in that position."

Slocum said he didn't talk to either official after the Tech and Arkansas games, but he did call their supervisor early this week. Slocum told him he wouldn't question Friday's call because it was a judgement call made by the referee.

"It's really a question of whether there was contact made," Slocum said. "The ball was overthrown. It's strictly a judgement call. All Larry's concentration was up there going for the football. The receiver was incidental to the play as far as he was concerned."

"Incidental" is the key word in Slocum's argument. A former defensive coach, Slocum said he believes both the defensive and offensive player have the same right to the football.

"I've never felt that a defensive guy ought to stand there and have to let a receiver catch the ball, then you can try to tackle him and hope he drops the ball," he said. "I've never thought they should get that much protection. The ball is thrown, both teams should have equal access to it."

One of the worst things about the whole situation, Slocum said, is that because the controversy surrounds ethical problems with the officials, it tarnishes the SWC's integrity.

"I don't think it's fair to question (Underwood's) officiating under any circumstances," Slocum said. "I've been questioned all week long (from people) who see that play as us being screwed by an Arkansas guy."

"I don't think it's fair to the integrity of the game."

The same officiating crew that called the Tech game will call Saturday's game with Texas. Ironically, one of the referees, John Bible, is a grandson of former A&M and Texas Coach Dana X. Bible and a relative of former Texas halfback William Dana Bible.

But Slocum's biggest problem will be trying to repair the confidence lost in the final minutes of Friday's game. When asked if Horton might now be gunshy at free safety, Slocum said all the junior could do was pick up and start over.

"Here's a kid who thinks he cost the team the game," Slocum said. "Lance (Pavlas) thought he cost the team the game. Darren (Lewis) thought he cost the team the game. You just can't work with those emotions."

"It's just unfair to do that to yourself. I thought Larry made a great play and he did all he could do in that situation to try to break that play up. You have to write that one off and keep playing. I don't know what I'd tell Larry to do differently."

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