

The Battalion

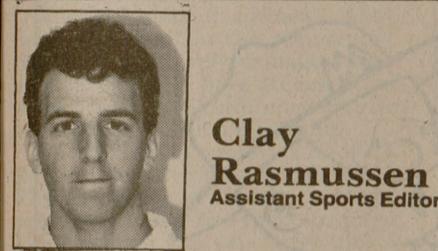
SPORTS

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Nyuck, nyuck: Stooges making mockery of SWC

Larry, Moe and Curly. In yesterday's Texas A&M-Texas men's basketball game they were known as Hooker, Williams and Shortnacy. I guess you could call them the new three stooges. New, but certainly not improved.

I thought the problems with Southwest Conference officiating ended with the controversial interference call on free safety Larry Horton in the A&M-Arkansas football game last November. You remember that call that took the SWC title and a Cotton Bowl trip away from the Aggies. I had just gotten over that one when SWC basketball got under way in January.

Then the cold, hard truth smacked me in the face like a toilet seat in the middle of the night. SWC officiating just sucks.

Many will just call me a poor sport. Others will tag me as a biased sports writer. And while these accusations may or may not be true, the facts are irrefutable.

Too many cases

Just ask Texas Coach Tom Penders. Although he might not want to talk to you on the record, he'll certainly tell anyone interested that the officials in the SWC need a refresher course.

During a heated Texas-Arkansas game Feb. 4, Texas led Arkansas 84-83 when an intentional foul was called on Arkansas' Lee Mayberry with 14 seconds left in the game. Arkansas coach Nolan Richardson stormed out of Erwin Arena in protest.

The Razorbacks went on to tie the game with four seconds left after Mayberry hit a three-pointer. Richardson returned for the overtime and the Hogs beat Texas.

The problem: Richardson should have been slapped with a technical foul. It's in the NCAA rulebook.

Ed Steitz, the NCAA chief rules interpreter, agreed.

"The rule is clear," Steitz said. "I wrote it. If you're sick, you say, 'Hey ref, I'm doubling over with pain; I have to leave the game.' If (Richardson) was sick, I think he should have got medical attention."

"But he was back in the overtime."

Nyuck, Nyuck, Nyuck (insert eye-poke here).

And if that's not enough — take yesterday's game. Please.

A comedy of errors

All you had to do was look to the Aggies' bench and watch a livid John Thornton storm up and down, making mental notes not to criticize these three stooges, at least not publicly.

Fans saw an inconsistent team of officials blunder up and down the court.

At one point in the game, A&M guard Tony Milton and Texas forward Locksley Collie exchanged elbows. The blows were aimed at their faces and while Longhorn fans and Aggie fans screamed for the call, neither Larry, Moe nor Curley saw anything.

Even Penders raced onto the floor in disbelief. Penders made his point, and instead of any of the three being slapped with a technical foul, the referees let the whole thing slide.

Milton, Collie, Penders or any combination of the three should have been called for the foul.

Still need more evidence?

With one minute left in the game, Texas guard Lance Blanks drove into the lane only to come face-to-face with A&M guard Freddie Ricks. Both went up, Ricks blocked the shot, and came down with his fifth foul.

"I know I got all ball," Ricks said. "If you look at the instant replay you'd see I got all ball. In fact, if anything, he pushed off on me."

Maybe Ricks was wrong. Or maybe we can chalk up another lousy call on the stooges.

It pains me to see A&M basketball come so close to pulling off the win only to have the officials take it away. I know I shouldn't try to pin the Aggies' basketball woes on them, but it's hard.

I guess I'm looking for an answer, but there's not one to be found. A&M and other SWC schools will just have to play harder and try to overcome the "Three Stooges Syndrome."

Broussard said the team never was

out of the lead.

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