

Randy Lemmon  
Readers Opinion

### SEC merger not only viable solution to SWC woes, secessions

No Clay, the dust hasn't settled, it only got in your eyes. You, on the other hand, seem to have lapsed into a comatose state with your opinion on the state of the Southwest Conference (Battalion Aug. 7).

The dust is far from settling. Texas A&M doesn't have to join the Southeast Conference to get a bigger piece of the television pie. With the upcoming meeting of the athletic directors from the Big Eight and the SWC, the stage is far from being set, or should I say added to, paving the way for four, five or six superconferences.

For the fat-cat television execs, such an idea is what is so alluring. Think about it, 12-team superconferences. The SEC already has 11 teams with the addition of Arkansas. All they need is one more family member.

For the sake of discussion let's say they extend their twelfth invitation to Georgia Tech, which makes more sense than A&M or the University of Texas. Southeast Conference ... a school from the Southeast ... get it?

So, where does that leave the likes of A&M?

That is what the meeting between the aforementioned athletic directors will lead to. They aren't going to admit it now. Not right before the start of the season. It would have everybody's head swimming. Especially you sports writers, who would chew on that bone in desiccating fashion, forgetting about the season at hand.

### Merger mania

I give you the Big Southwest Conference — Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Missouri, A&M, UT, Baylor, Texas Tech, TCU, Houston, SMU and Rice.

The Pac-10 picks up Big Eight rejects Colorado and Colorado St. and becomes the Totally Gnarly Pac-12. See?!

The Big Ten has already promised a spot to Penn State. Then, all they have to do is pick up one more, either Pittsburgh, Notre Dame or Iowa State. They would become the Tremendous-12.

The Atlantic Coast Conference pulls in Miami, Florida State, West Virginia and/or one of the bridesmaids that the Big Ten doesn't claim. Now we have the Awesome Atlantic-12.

Is the haze clearing, Clay?

That is four, 12-team superconferences signed, sealed and delivered. You ask, what happens to the likes of Kansas and Kansas State from the Big Eight?

Well, they were never big television draws in the first place and someone has to be left at the alter in this whirlwind of courtships, why not them? This is, as you say, in the best interest of lucrative television contracts, is it not?

### Looming dust clouds

And what about the Mid American, Western Athletic and the Big West Conferences?

Once again, television programming execs haven't been salivating over them, either. But remember, I did say four, five or six superconferences. If there is a need for two more superconferences and they have the metal to pull it off ... kudos to them.

They need to battle it out, and create their own dust, or is all this unsettled dust too much for you to take.

Coming from a sports television background, I can see how the television execs would rather have four superconferences, and with that gut instinct in mind, I think the other conferences would be left to fend for themselves.

And to blow a little more dust your way, Clay, this could clear the way for a true National Champion.

A playoff system, if you will, that takes the top teams from each superconference and plays them in a post-season playoff, a la the NBA or God forbid the NFL.

## Laufenberg stuck in role as backup

### Cowboy retains sense of humor

AUSTIN (AP) — Dallas Cowboys quarterback Babe Laufenberg has backed up the best. Joe Theismann, Doug Williams, John Elway, Jay Schroeder, Troy Aikman and Steve Walsh.

Which one would he choose if he were starting an NFL team?

"I'd sign me, probably," he says, "because I'd be the cheapest."

Over his seven-year pro career, Laufenberg also has backed up the likes of Dave Wilson, Bill Kinney, Mark Rypien and Jim Hart. Quarterback heaven, unless you're the perennial backup trying to win some playing time.

But that status has given Laufenberg a perspective few, if any, quarterbacks have had. And now he is watching two potential all-pros — Aikman and Walsh — in their younger stages.

Laufenberg reflected on a few of the quarterbacks he has played with.

On Elway (Stanford, 1978): "I just think he lifts the team, lifts the people around him," he told The Dallas Morning News. "It's almost like Larry Bird. Sometimes in the games, he makes one play that turns it around for them."

Laufenberg, a sixth-round pick of Washington, said he learned the most from Theismann. Incidentally, Laufenberg came back to replace Theismann on the Redskins' roster when Theismann suffered a broken leg that ended his career in 1985.

"I learned how to work form Theismann," Laufenberg said. "let's say you're just in a drill, throwing one-on-one to receivers. You know, you can loaf. You don't have to drive back hard. He'd go back and make every pass count. Every time he threw the ball. Somebody told me,

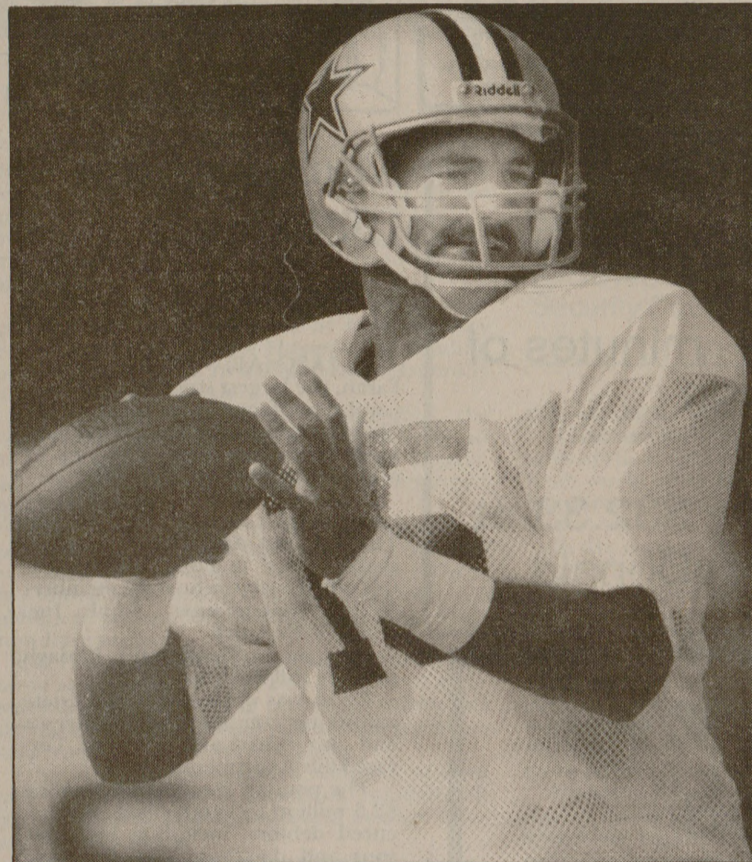


Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

Quarterback Babe Laufenberg is content with his role as a third-string quarterback behind Troy Aikman and Steve Walsh.

"Pay attention to Theismann. Don't do what he does off the field, but follow him on it."

And Laufenberg's favorite quarterback to be around 10 hours a day? The dry humor and laid back manner of Williams during the Redskins' 1987 Super Bowl season stands out.

"I remember when he was doing well with the Redskins, everybody was saying what a better player he was, how much more mature he was," Laufenberg said. "He just smiled and said, 'Hey, it's a lot easier to throw when you're standing up than on your back.' He could have

just said yeah, I'm the reason we're good. But he gave credit to the other guys around him."

On Schroeder (Redskins, 1984-85): "Great arm. I mean cannon arm. I'd say probably one of the strongest arms in the league ... He's just not the most accurate guy in the world."

On Rypien (Redskins, 1986): "I knew they drafted this guy out of Washington State in the sixth round. I didn't know who he was. I didn't know he was 6-5 and whatever. So in the mini-camps, the quarterbacks have this meeting and this guy comes in, and I said this is the quarterback meeting. I thought he was this wayward linebacker or something."

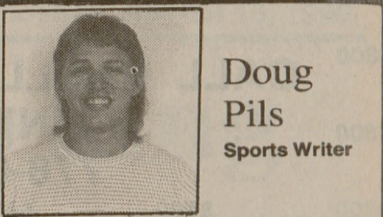
On Hart (Redskins, 1984): "It was his last year, and he just joined the Redskins. His hair was all gray and nobody recognized him. This guy walks through the locker room. I'm thinking I better keep an eye on my wallet. I've never seen him before."

Laufenberg said he sees a little bit of Theismann in Walsh: "Both have good timing and probably physically aren't the prototype quarterbacks, but they both get the job done."

Laufenberg also says he sees similarities in Elway and Aikman: "Troy's looking for the downfield throw. He wants to make the big play."

Laufenberg hopes he's more than comic relief for his teammates and a communicator to the press box from the sideline. Maybe, as a veteran observer of quarterbacks, there is an osmosis that Aikman and Walsh can learn from him.

"I'm sure I pass something along," Laufenberg said. "That's an interesting question. I hope they do look over occasionally and see something. Maybe they're picking something up. It's not like I'm a guru or something."



Doug Pils  
Sports Writer

### Oakland guns for the lead as summer goes on

They're called the dog days of summer. It's the time between baseball's All-Star game and the September pennant chase.

The August heat tends to keep injured players out a little longer and road trips can drag on forever. Teams trailing the division leaders are making deals and juggling lineups struggling to find the right chemistry for the playoff drive.

It's a time when the dreams of spring training are either fulfilled or the dreams are all that's left.

The heat has wilted the Montreal Expos' "youth movement" as the team is 9-17 since the break and nine games out after being as close as three and a half.

With the Expos' downfall, the New York Mets and the Pittsburgh Pirates are left fighting for National League East title.

Both teams are playing solid ball — but when it comes down to crunch-time in September, the experience, leadership and power that Darryl Strawberry and Howard Johnson provide will push the Mets past the Pirates.

A darkhorse in the NL East is the Chicago Cubs. The Cubbies are 17-8 since the break and Andre Dawson is making a run for Most Valuable Player.

## Denver coach suffers chest pains caused by blocked heart arteries

DENVER (AP) — Broncos coach Dan Reeves was resting comfortably in a hospital Thursday after he had chest pains due to blocked heart arteries.

Reeves, 46, was in good condition at an undisclosed hospital, his cardiologist, Dr. Randall Marsh, said.

"He has not, I repeat, he has not had a heart attack," Marsh said at a hastily called news conference. "This morning, he is just fine. I'm not worried about him. He has had a rude awakening by Mother Nature."

Reeves was admitted to North Colorado Medical Center in Greeley, Colo., Wednesday night after experiencing chest pains. He was diagnosed with arteriosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries.

Reeves was moved out of the hospital to a small private plane at Weld County Municipal Airport, which departed for an undisclosed location about 10 a.m. Thursday. His wife, Pam, accompanied him on the plane.

Sources close to the family said Reeves was being moved to a hospital in Redwood City, Calif. Spokeswomen at the city's two hospitals said early Thursday no one by that name was a patient in either facility.

Marsh said Reeves underwent tests Wednesday evening and more were scheduled. The coach is expected to remain in the hospital for four to five days, and to be off the job for two to six weeks.

"The plan at present is to try to avoid surgery," he said. "The absolute decision has not been made and probably won't be made for another day or so."

"All alternatives are being considered ... they are trying to do this without surgery. There's no rush. He's fine. We want to make sure we make the right decision."

Among the procedures being considered for Reeves is angioplasty, a technique for repairing or replacing damaged blood vessels, the cardiologist with North Colorado Medical Center said.

Marsh said Reeves' "spectacular" physical shape will help him recuperate more quickly. He said he does not expect the problem to harm Reeves' career and that there will be no restrictions when he returns to work.

A source close to the family told The Associated Press that Reeves is in good physical shape. "He exercises daily and he bicycles because his knees are bad. He

is extremely active. He eats very sensibly."

"I am asking the media to leave him alone. Let him recover," Marsh said. "I don't want to tell you where. Give the guy some peace."

When Reeves took over the Broncos in 1981, he was the youngest coach in the NFL. He has led the team to three Super Bowl seasons in the past four years, losing big all three times.

In his absence, defensive coordinator Wade Phillips has been put in charge of the Broncos, including the critical decisions on cuts and trades that will need to be made in the coming weeks.

None of the coaches or players will be allowed to contact Reeves, he said.

Reeves "was more worried about the players and the coaches than himself ... he wasn't feeling bad, and was

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—Dr. Randall Marsh, cardiologist

in good spirits," Phillips said.

Phillips, 42, was the interim head coach of the Saints for the final four games of the New Orleans team's 1985 season. This is his second season with Denver.

"I've talked to the players and coaches and they know we've lost a lot of leadership for a while ... but we just have to pull together ... everything is blueprinted, so there won't be any real changes," he said.

The players were notified of Reeves' hospitalization Thursday, about the same time Marsh and general manager John Beake informed the news media.

"It came as a shock to the players," linebacker Michael Brooks said.

### A&M netters featured in tournament

Graduation doesn't mean you have to leave Texas A&M and former men's tennis team standout Shaun O'Donovan is one to prove just that.

O'Donovan is the No. 1 seeded player in the Championship Men's Division of the Gary Stevenson Quality GMC A&M Open tennis tournament beginning 8 a.m. today and continuing through the weekend.

The tournament, held at the Omar Smith Tennis Center on the west side of campus, draws 540 entries from throughout Texas.

Sanctioned by the United States Tennis Association, the single-elimination tournament has a championship division as well as open divisions for men and women in singles, doubles and mixed play.

Other Aggies in the men's championship division include Doug Brown, Steve Kennedy and Scott Phillips, all presently on the A&M team.

Leading the Championship Women's Singles division is Aggie player Cindy Churchwell.

Churchwell is joined in doubles by teammate Tami Agassi and holds the No. 1 position in the Championship Women's Doubles division.

### Gunning above .500

About two weeks ago the NL West race seemed all but over, but the Cincinnati Reds are sliding closer and closer to the San Francisco Giants and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Reds ace starter, Jack Armstrong, is struggling with a 0-4 record and has given up 21 runs in his last five starts, while the Dodgers' Ramon Martinez continues his hot streak. The Dodger fireballer leads the major leagues in strikeouts and he's 5-0 with only eight walks in his last five starts.

One word of note in the Western Division. If the Houston Astros could work out a deal where they could play all of their games in the Astrodome they'd be the World Champs. The Astros are 35-22 in the friendly confines of the Dome. Only the Boston Red Sox and Mets, each with 36 wins, have won more.

The Red Sox still hold a slim lead in the American League East but in a division where the leader is never far above .500, it's still a wide open race.

### California feels quake

Since the break, the Baltimore Orioles are the only Eastern team playing above .500. Sluggers Randy Milligan and the newly acquired Ron Kittle are carrying the O's toward the top of the division after being nine games out.

Wednesday, right-hander Ben McDonald, the first player taken in last year's draft, became the first Oriole pitcher ever to begin his career with four straight victories.

It makes no difference, however, which team wins the AL East — because the defending World Champion Oakland A's are just too strong.

The A's are withstanding the assault of the Chicago White Sox and even the red-hot Texas Rangers can't get any closer. At the break the Rangers were 12 games behind the A's and after going 17-9, Texas has only made up half a game as the A's have matched them game for game.

Jose Canseco and the "bashers by the Bay" will be too much for any team to handle. The lineup is solid all the way to the ninth hitter and the pitching staff led by Bob Welch (18-4) and Dave Stewart (15-8) is too deep. The A's will repeat as champions as they take the World Series from the Mets in six games.

## Mavericks mum on bid for free agent English

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks weren't saying Thursday whether they'd outbid the Utah Jazz for free agent Alex English.

Both Dallas newspapers said English, late of the Denver Nuggets, has agreed to a contract with the Mavericks.

"We're out of it," Scott Layden, Utah Jazz director of player personnel, said Wednesday. "We were outbid by Dallas."

English and his agent, Ted Steinberg, had been talking with the Utah Jazz for several weeks and were said to be close to an agreement.

But the deal with the Mavericks reportedly came about after a series of discussions between Steinberg and Rick Sund, the Mavericks vice president of basketball operations.

"We don't have a deal with Alex English as we speak. Until we do I don't think it's really wise to make any comment," Mavericks spokesman Kevin Sullivan said Thursday.

Steinberg declined to elaborate on the discussions other than to say, "We are now negotiating with Dallas." Sund also refused to comment.

Published reports speculated the signing could come as early as Thursday.

English, who made \$2 million with the Denver



Nuggets last season, had been seeking a one-year, \$1.2 million deal to return to the Nuggets this season.

Chicago and Cleveland showed an early interest in the 6-foot-7-inch forward. But the Jazz emerged as the leading candidate in recent weeks.

Layden met with Steinberg and English Monday night and reportedly made an offer that could have paid the 36-year-old up to \$1.6 million this season. Sund called Steinberg later that evening to express interest.

Two factors appear to have tipped the scales in

the Mavericks' favor.

The first is money. Dallas offered a six-year, \$18 million contract in its efforts to retain Sam Perkins. Once he left for the Los Angeles Lakers, the Mavericks had plenty of room to maneuver under the salary cap, a luxury the Jazz didn't share.

The second is Fat Lever. The guard, who was acquired from the Nuggets in June, became close friends with English in their days in Denver.

Mavericks coach Richie Adubato said he would like to meet with English to discuss what his role would be if he did sign with the Mavericks.

"We need scoring off the bench and he would give us that. No question," Adubato said. "At this particular time in his career, we feel that is how he will best help our team. He's a guy who still offers you a tremendous amount of scoring."

English is one of the most prolific scorers in league history. He won the league scoring title in 1982-83 with an average of 28.4, and failed to score less than 23.8 in just one of his 10 full seasons with the Nuggets. That came last season, when he averaged 17.9 in a reduced role.

English also is just 150 points shy of the 25,000 point mark for his career.