

SWC basketball will regret Hogs' departure

It's the 1990s. And with the new decade comes change and new beginnings.

The University of Arkansas will change conferences effective in 1992.



Craig Wilson
Sportswriter

And their basketball dominance this season seems to justify their decision quite solidly.

•They are tired of being on regional telecasts.

•They want Keith Jackson to commentate their Saturday afternoon pigskin contests.

•They want Al McGuire, Dick Enberg, James Brown and Greg Gumbel to announce their roundball affairs.

And it'll happen...soon. And it's not only because of increased revenue and national television appearances that the Hogs want out of the beleaguered Southwest Conference.

The SWC happens to be one of the weakest leagues in the nation, particularly in basketball, and Arkansas is not afraid to leave it, and its sub-par teams, behind.

Some of the other SWC members have blasted Arkansas since late last year, saying the Razorbacks are betraying the other teams by departing.

Each team should look at themselves, though, and see if it wasn't actually their lack of athletic dominance and lucrative TV deals that drove the Hogs to the SEC.

There's a new perspective on college athletics and the money associated with it.

Conference chivalry and loyalty obviously left the 1980s scene along with breakdancing and leather ties.

Southwest Conference football has always been stable and, more often than not, decent overall.

Parity finally began to enter the league several years back when some teams other than Texas began to make consistent national news.

In the big picture, though, the Longhorns have always had a competitive edge over most of the conference.

And that's not good. Although the Arkansas football team was manhandled by almost everyone in the conference last fall, most people know that defensive injuries and young, inexperienced players contributed to that quick downfall.

Their dominance in 1988 and 1989 was, to Razorback fans and officials at least, proof that they needed a change for the better, competitively and monetarily.

Make no mistake, though, the Hogs are going to feel the heat next year.

The conference took a big kick in the teeth when the Hogs fled.

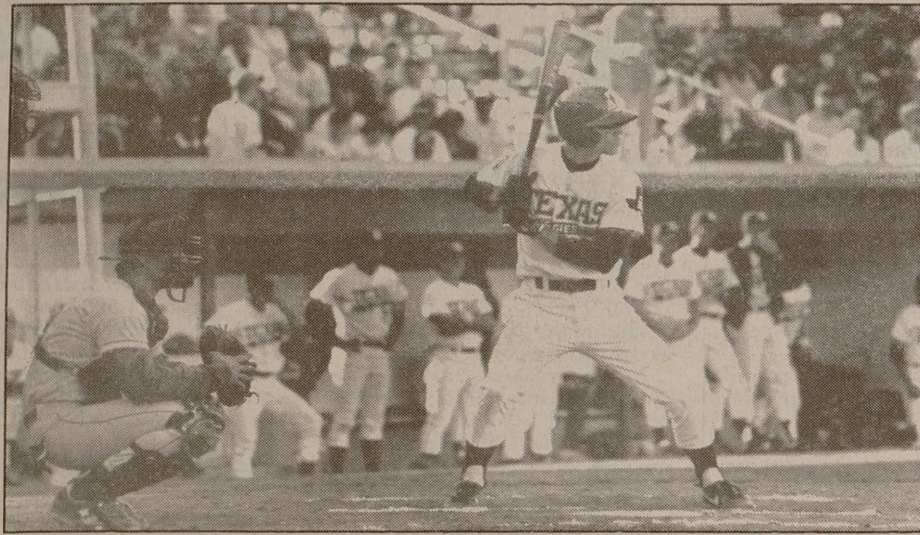
The credibility of the conference, naturally, suffered with the departure of its most recently dominant team.

The other SWC teams will try to bid a not-so-fond farewell to Arkansas in the Hogs' 1991 goodbye tour.

The Razorbacks will be hit hard and they'll be hit late, and altogether beat up.

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A&M faces SHSU at home, not on road



ALAN LEHMANN/The Battalion

A&M shortstop Jason Marshall waits on a pitch in Saturday's first game. The Aggies, who lost two-of-three to LSU host Sam Houston State today at 3 p.m.

By Alan Lehmann
The Battalion

The baseball game between Texas A&M and Sam Houston State today at 2 p.m. has been moved to Olsen Field and is scheduled for 3 p.m.

The change was necessitated by heavy rains in Huntsville yesterday.

SHSU comes into the game with a 8-1 mark after beating Houston 7-4 Sunday.

A&M (10-4) lost two of three games to Louisiana State over the weekend. The Aggies fell one place to number 13 in the Baseball America poll announced Monday.

Coach Mark Johnson said that he was glad for the opportunity to play LSU, even though his team lost the series.

"We made some mental errors to lose the games," Johnson said, "but that's going to happen early in the season. We knew it would be tough to play a team like LSU on the road in front of a big crowd."

"But we can learn from this, and I think we'll be a better team down the road because of it."

Junior Trey Witte, who was a second

baseman last season for A&M, is expected to start on the mound today. He has been impressive in his two outings this year, going 1-0 with 11 strikeouts in six innings.

Freshman Raymundo Garza, a right-hander from Richmond Terry, is penciled in for the Bearcats. He has no decisions on the year and a 5.71 ERA.

A&M took two of three games from SHSU last season.

The Aggies won the first Huntsville meeting 4-2 on a three-run homer by Chad Broussard. The Bearcats won the second in Huntsville 5-2, while the Aggies took the only Olsen Field meeting 5-2.

A&M is 7-1 at home this season and have an overall record of 361-97-1 (.788) since Olsen Field opened in 1978.

Aggie third baseman Travis Williams, hitting .308 this year, was three-for-five in Saturday's first game, including a double and a three-run homer.

Mike Hickey, a sophomore outfielder, continues to lead A&M at the plate with a .422 average. The transfer from Oklahoma also leads the club with three homers and 15 RBI.

Sports Spotlight:

Center to boost recruiting, attendance

By Scott Wudel
The Battalion

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a two-part series on A&M's Special Events Center. Part two will run Wednesday.

Last March Texas A&M University officially made a commitment to improve its basketball program.

First, the A&M Board of Regents approved plans for a multi-million dollar special events center to replace G. Rollie White Coliseum as the basketball team's new home.

Later that month A&M Athletic Director John David Crow hired 30-year old coach Kermit Davis Jr. from Idaho to rebuild the program and become the Aggies' coach of the future.

Davis has arrived and begun his work. Next September work will begin on the 14,500-seat complex that will adorn the westside of the A&M campus.

The special events center is targeted for completion in time for the 1993-94 basketball season.

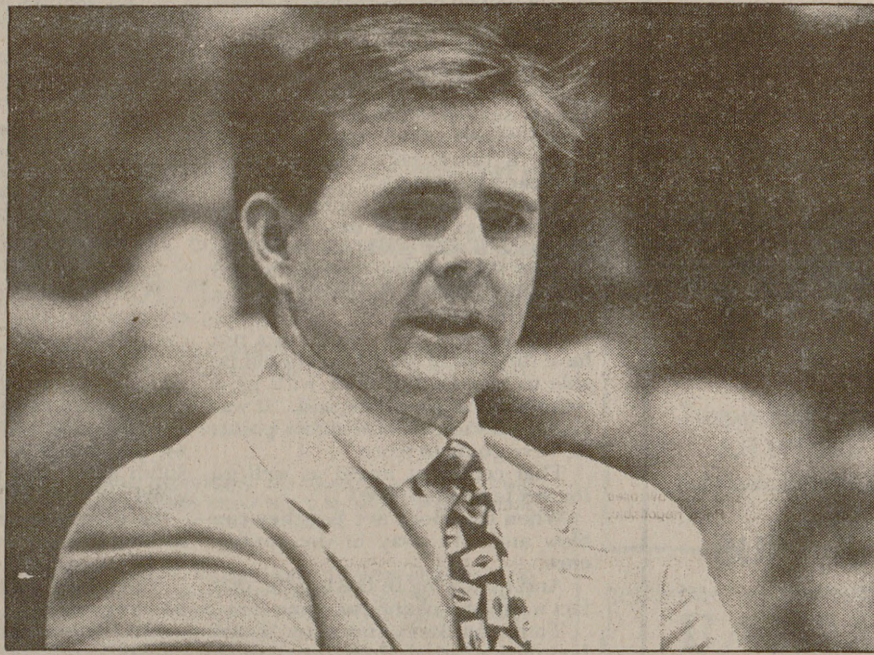
Davis said the facility will help the school and its athletic program.

"I told people when I came here I would have loved the A&M job if there had never been a plan for the special events center, and I meant that honestly," Davis said. "But I think what the special events center can do for this school is make it a Top 25 program."

Davis said his staff's main recruiting tool is the academics and the life after basketball at A&M. But he admitted some of his early signees, who were also considering such schools as Colorado, Oklahoma, Vanderbilt, and Stanford, compared the places they would be playing in.

"Say what you want to," he said. "The academics are important, but young kids, 17 and 18 years old like we all were, look at material things."

Davis said the thought of playing in a brand new 14,500-seat arena really in-



JAY JANNER/The Battalion

Texas A&M basketball coach Kermit Davis Jr. will soon have the help of the new special events center when it comes to recruiting.

terests recruits.

"I think some of the kids we signed early are obviously impressed by the academic standards at Texas A&M and that's probably the main reason they chose it," Davis explained.

"But in the back of their minds, they saw the plans and understood they would play in that arena and be the first class to do it."

"I think it's real critical for our program."

Davis said the new arena will help his program draw some of the bigger names in college basketball.

"We've really tried to upgrade our schedule and we're going to get some better teams in here," he said. "It's going to be difficult, but that's the way we want to sell it as far as getting people here to watch."

A&M Athletic Director John David Crow was not prepared to comment on the new arena.

Getting people to attend A&M basketball games has been a problem for years.

G. Rollie White Coliseum, the home of Aggie basketball since 1954, ranks as one of the emptiest facilities in the conference this year.

A&M is averaging crowds of less than 2400 per SWC game this season, down from 2,514 last year.

A&M's attendance, compared to the rest of the conference, is similar to its place in the SWC standings.

The University of Texas leads the pack by bringing in more than 13,000 fans per game to its homecourt of the Frank Erwin Center in Austin.

The Arkansas Razorbacks, currently ranked third in the nation, are drawing more than 9,000 fans per game.

The only SWC teams ranking below A&M in attendance this season are the University of Houston and Southern Methodist University, which attract just more than 2,100 basketball fans each.

The new 14,500 special events center will be the second largest facility in the Southwest Conference, bowing only to Austin's Erwin Center, which can hold 16,231 spectators.

A&M's Coliseum, once nicknamed "The Hollerhouse on the Brazos," has a capacity of 7500. Only two facilities in the Southwest Conference hold less — TCU's Daniel Meyer Coliseum (7,166), and Rice University's Autry Court (5,400).

G. Rollie White has grown old in its 37 years of service. As it grows older, so grow the costs of its upkeep.

Associate Athletic Director Wally Groff said no exact records are kept on the costs of maintaining the facility, because both the Athletic and Physical Education Departments use the building and each take a hand in the maintenance of it.

Groff said if a problem in the Coliseum exists with something pertaining to the Athletic Department, the Athletic Business Office handles the repairs.

Groff added that the Coliseum is a state facility, therefore the state pays for its maintenance.

The building will remain intact and be used after the new arena is built.

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