

## UH to begin play in new conference

□ The Cougars will compete in 12-school Conference USA.

CHICAGO (AP) — Conference USA, a new 12-school league made up mostly of teams from the Great Midwest and Metro conferences, will begin basketball competition this season, its organizers said Monday. Alabama-Birmingham, Cincinnati, DePaul, Marquette, Memphis and St. Louis from the Great Midwest will join Louisville, North Carolina-Charlotte, Southern Mississippi, South Florida and Tulane of the Metro in a league that will have championships in 18 sports. Houston of the Southwest Conference will begin participation in 1996, the first year

six football playing members (Houston, Cincinnati, Louisville, Memphis, Southern Mississippi and Tulane) will compete for a championship. Men's basketball will be divided into three divisions — Red, White and Blue. The first conference tournament will be held at the end of next season in Memphis, followed in 1997 by Louisville. The new league will not receive an automatic NCAA tournament bid until 1997. Monday's announcement at a downtown Chicago restaurant — the league's headquarters will be in Chicago for the first year — culminated nine months of planning, officials said. The league will officially begin operations July 1, the day after the Great Midwest and Metro are officially dissolved. "Some schools are public,

some are private, there are different sizes," said Dr. V. Lane Rawlins, president of the University of Memphis and the conference chairman of the board. "There are different processes and some of the difficulties were how we would finance it. Strangely enough we didn't have much conflict on the name. We looked at several thousand names and finally picked one." The league presidents also picked a new commissioner — Michael Slive, who held the same post with the Great Midwest the last four years. One of first major business considerations was to secure television contracts for basketball and football. Conference USA has a six-year agreement with ESPN to do basketball, including a game of the week.

## Golf team shoots for SWC title

□ Rodriguez is tied for the lead in individual competition.

### Staff and Wire Reports

The Texas A&M men's golf team will go into today's final round of the Southwest Conference Golf Championships in Richmond in second place, just four strokes behind the front running University of Texas. Senior Anthony Rodriguez is currently in a five-way tie for the lead with a one-under par score of 143. As a team, the Aggies shot 587, with a 292 in the first round and a 295 in the second round. "We are really going to be grinding out there," Rodriguez said. "We have a good chance to win, but we have to give a

team effort." The championships are hardly a two-team affair however, as both the University of Houston and Texas Christian University are both only one stroke behind the Aggies at 588. A&M's Ryan Dreyer shot a 145 over the first two rounds to place eighth and Dru Fenimore shot a 146 to take ninth place. A&M coach Bob Ellis said the Aggies will have to keep their eyes on their own games to win the tournament. "We need to keep our minds on our business," Ellis said. "We can't watch the other teams. Anthony and Ryan are in their last SWC tournament and they're really pumped up. They all realize we can win this thing." The Aggies last took the title in 1987.

## Wilkens to coach Dream Team in '96

ATLANTA (AP) — Lenny Wilkens wasn't invited to try out for the Olympics in 1996. On Monday, he was invited to coach the team at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

The announcement, rumored for months, came at the end of an NBA regular-season in which Wilkens moved ahead of Red Auerbach to the top of the NBA list for coaching victories.

"I do look forward to participating in this huge event," the Atlanta Hawks coach said. "Certainly, being an assistant coach on the 1992 team whetted my appetite to do it. It's just a tremendous honor."

USA Basketball president C.M. Newton said three assistant coaches will be chosen in June — one from the NBA and two from college — and the first group of players will be picked in late July or early August.

The 57-year-old Wilkens recalled the end of his college career with the Friars when he was the MVP in the NIT, but wasn't invited to try out for the Olympic team.

"It was a big disappointment at the time," he said. "Every youngster in college would have loved to be on the Olympic team. I never thought much about it later."

## Awards

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guished Letterman's Award. Dillinger, a psychology major and member of the A&M soccer team was recognized for maintaining a perfect GPR. Johnson, active in Aggies for Education, Operation Others and Aggie Athletes Involved, is a three-time GTE scholar and graduating member of the Aggie basketball team.

Randall, an aerospace engineering major and a member of the A&M swimming and diving team, maintains a 3.88 GPR. Dr. Karl P. Mooney, associate Athletic Director for Academic Affairs, said that A&M has a graduation rate of 68% and that 72% of the athletes that finish their eligibility graduate.

Mooney explained that A&M degree programs have stricter curriculum guidelines than other schools, requiring an average of 135 hours and usually require at least six years for an athlete to complete.

He stated that institutions allow students to repeat courses without penalty. This system allows students to earn higher grade point ratios. Waguespack, who earned football academic award honors last week said success in academics will prepare athletes for what lies ahead.

"As student athletes, we are preparing ourselves for the future," Waguespack said. "Soon, we will have to hang up our uniforms and put on suits for nine-to-five jobs."

## Rodriguez: National Champs?

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A&M Aggies football team will be the national champions!

I think 56 years is long enough in between national championships for the football team. With all the returning starters and the bright prospects coming in, this is going to be the year for the 12th Man.

Several keys will be involved in order for things to go as planned, but none of them are out of the ordinary. Not only will A&M need to control their own destiny, but also they may need some help from other strong football programs in the country.

First, A&M is going to need a wonderful senior season out of Corey Pullig. He is going to have to show his experience of finding the open receiver and getting him the ball on a frozen rope. A&M now has the explosive receivers for Pullig and it will be up to him to get the ball to them.

Also, the young linebackers must be ready to step in for the departed Armstrong and Reggie Graham and keep up the Wrecking Crew defense. This defense could become one of the stingiest in the nation in total yards and scoring defense.

Some college preseason polls have A&M ranked as high as No. 4 in the nation and "long time A&M fan,"

ESPN commentator Lee Corso has even picked the Aggies as the national champs. This could be a blessing in disguise for A&M or a booby trap. A&M will need for the teams ahead of them to lose because of several factors.

There is the schedule factor. Now let me make sure I got this right. A&M plays Tulsa, Middle Tennessee State, Louisiana State, Colorado, and the usual SWC foes this year. Even though the Colorado game looks appealing, no other teams look like they will help A&M impress the national writers who make up the Associated Press. Besides Colorado might not even be a strong team because their star players have left for the pros.

Also, the Aggies may get caught up on all the national championship hype that surrounds them. By being ranked so high, many teams will be playing their hardest in hopes of being the team to ruin the A&M dream of a national championship. The toughest opponent for the Aggies will be themselves and how they will be able to stay focused on the game, rather than the hype.

When A&M wins the national championship on January 2, 1996, it will be a celebration like no other for the Aggies. However, the celebra-

tion could quickly turn sour if both McElroy and Mitchell decide to forego their senior year at A&M and enter the NFL draft.

Unless both are serious enough to pursue their degree or if they want to finish their Aggie tenure and hope for better draft position, I see both of them leaving after next year. Not only will they have to look forward to having millions of dollars in the NFL, but they will also have a national championship ring on their finger and no other strong intentions to play their senior season in college.

Hey, I don't know about you, but I am not planning to go to Dallas for New Year's and watch the Aggies play in the Cotton Bowl. I'd rather spend my New Year's in Tempe and watch the Aggies battle some poor school for the national crown in the Fiesta Bowl.

For the football players, I think they should get ready to receive a fat national championship ring to go along with their undefeated season rings and 1993 SWC Champions ring. Oh yeah, and also have someone order a big 1995 so that we can place it next to the 1939 on the national champions area on the Kyle Field stands.

Good things come to those who wait. For the Aggies, 56 years is a long enough.

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