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**Baylor success: Take nothing for granted**

By Wes Swift  
 THE BATTALION

For 21 years, Grant Teaff patrolled the sidelines as the Baylor University head football coach. He led the Bears to eight bowl appearances and won more games than any coach in the program's 96-year history.

In short, Grant Teaff was Baylor football. "I think Grant Teaff will be remembered as one of the five or six best coaches ever in the Southwest Conference," Chuck Reedy, Teaff's successor as Baylor head coach, said. "That's not just from a coaching standpoint, but from his overall impact in the conference."

Teaff came to Baylor in 1972 after heading the Angelo State University football team for three seasons. The task ahead of him was daunting. Teaff had to turn around a program that had won only three games in as many seasons.

Just as challenging was finding the players who would turn around the program. Baylor was a small school in Waco and had to compete with the conference's powerhouses — the University of Texas and Texas A&M.

Walter Abercrombie, an All-American running back for Baylor from 1978 to 1981, said Teaff made his biggest strides as a coach despite the lack of strong recruits.

"I think that he (Teaff) always played with a lesser physically talented team at Baylor," Abercrombie said. "But he always had players

who were coachable and he used his motivational skills — which I think were his biggest asset — to make them play their best."

The coach's skills came through during his first year at Baylor. Teaff's team went a surprising 5-6 in 1972. The team's success earned Teaff the SWC Coach of the Year Award, an honor he would win five more times before he retired in 1992.

It was in the 1972 campaign, Teaff said, that he learned everything about Baylor and SWC football.

"That's when I found out a lot of interesting things about Baylor," Teaff said. "I learned that there was a big rivalry between Texas A&M and Baylor, but there wasn't with Texas because they had beaten Baylor so much."

But Teaff's teams challenged Texas' dominance. In 1974, Teaff led his squad, 4-3 at the time, against the Longhorns at Floyd Casey Stadium. Down 24-7 at the half, the Bears stormed back in the second half to win the game 34-24.

Abercrombie remembered watching the game as a teen.

"I just watched him during an interview after the game," Abercrombie said. "You could hear him talking about his coaches and saying how he gave all the credit to his players. That really made an impression on me."

The Bears finished 8-4, winning the SWC title and a trip to the Cotton Bowl. But Baylor's best teams were still to come.

For Teaff and Baylor, though, hard times came before the good. The team was near the end of a 2-8 season in 1978, with only the game against the nationally ranked Texas Longhorns remaining.

The Texas game, however, proved to be a turning point for the Baylor football program and furnished one of the most intriguing stories in SWC lore.

Before the game, Teaff told his team about two Eskimo fishermen who were ice fishing. The older Eskimo, a veteran ice fisherman, was catching a horde of fish, while his younger counterpart could catch nothing.

When questioned by the younger Eskimo, the older said the secret to his success was to keep the worms warm. He opened his mouth to reveal a bunch of worms wriggling inside.

After telling the story, Teaff pulled out a nightcrawler and told his players, "Today men, I'm going to keep the worm warm!"

Then, Teaff dropped the worm into his mouth and swallowed it.

Whatever Teaff's motivations were, Abercrombie said, they worked. The Bears charged onto the field and slammed the Longhorns 38-14.

"The locker room went crazy," Abercrombie said. "Guys were throwing trash cans and banging their heads against the wall. I don't think anyone could beat us that day."



Courtesy of the Baylor Sports Information Department  
 Baylor running back **Walter Abercrombie** turns up field in a 1980 game. Abercrombie is the Bears' all-time leading rusher.

**Two-way star Walker did it all for Ponies**

By Philip Leone  
 THE BATTALION

Clear your head and think about Southern Methodist University Football. What comes to mind?

The "Pony Express" of Eric Dickerson and Craig James? The "pay-for-players" scandal? The NCAA-sanctioned Death Penalty in 1986?

Now travel back to the days when helmets were leather and free of facemasks. Go back to a time when football was played in "black and white," when young roughnecks played the game on dirt fields with bloodied noses and kicked-in teeth.

In the 1940s, when the Southwest Conference was gaining momentum, a glow surrounded the "Hilltop" in Dallas as SMU football captured the nation's attention with the exploits of one remarkable player — Doak Walker.

Put simply, Walker was "the man" for the Mustangs from 1945 to 1949. No. 37 played halfback, quarterback, defensive back, punter and placekicker, and returned kick-offs and punts.

If that was not enough to prove his versatility, Walker was also a sub on the SMU basketball team and played centerfield for the school during baseball season. Walker did it all and did it well.

Walker remembers fondly the wide-open game of his college playing days, and said he never minded the toils of two-way football.

"It was wild in those days because you never knew what was going to happen out there — you really had to keep your head up," Walker said. "We never minded playing both ways. I guess we just didn't have the time to sit there and think about how tired we all were."

Playing both ways did not slow Walker down. In four seasons as a Mustang, the three-time consensus All-American scored 288 points, picked off eight passes as a defen-

sive back and had a 29-yard kickoff return average. With his speed and "helter-skelter" moves, Walker led his team to consecutive SWC championships in 1947 and 1948.

After the 1948 season, Walker was awarded the Heisman Trophy as the nation's top college player. The honor was a great moment in Walker's life, but he says it was something that simply added to the special times he had while attending SMU.

"The Heisman was more of an Eastern award in my day, so it took awhile for me to truly appreciate what it meant," Walker said. "It just added to all the other great experiences I had. Playing for SMU was something special because Dallas didn't have a kind of professional team then, and we were the only football ticket in town."

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Courtesy of Baylor Sports Information Department  
 Former SMU running back **Doak Walker** poses with the trophy which bears his name and is awarded to the top running back in the nation.

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