

Humble beginnings for SWC

By Kristina Buffin
THE BATTALION

It all began at the Oriental Hotel in Dallas on May 6, 1914. On that day, representatives from Baylor University, Southwestern University, Oklahoma A&M College, Texas A&M College, Louisiana State University, the University of Arkansas and the University of Texas were present at an organizational meeting held to propose a new collegiate athletic conference.

This new organization would become what is now the nation's fifth-oldest surviving collegiate alliance, the Southwest Conference.

The charter members were Texas A&M, Texas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma A&M, Southwestern, Arkansas, and Baylor. Rice joined in 1915 in the first year of official play, but sat out for two years and then returned in 1918. Louisiana State never decided to join the conference.

In 1915, Oklahoma and Baylor tied for the first SWC title, but the Bears had to forfeit their piece of the championship because of an ineligible player.

The conference was the brainchild of Dr. W.T. Mather, a professor of physics and chairman of the University of Texas athletic council, who was named the first president for the Southwest Intercollegiate Conference.

Texas Christian University entered the scene during the 1923 season and Oklahoma A&M left in 1925. The University of Houston joined the league in 1972, SMU in 1918, and Texas Tech in 1958. Oklahoma left the SWC in 1920 and Arkansas withdrew in 1991.

During its 80-year history, the SWC has produced five Heisman Trophy winners, five Outland Trophy (for defensive linemen) winners, three Vince Lombardi Trophy recipients (for linebackers) and one Jim Thorpe (for defensive backs) award winner. The SWC has also turned out 212 All-American selections and five national championships.

The first national championship to be won by a SWC school was TCU in 1938 and then Texas A&M went on to win the title in 1939.

The Heisman Trophy winners included Davey O'Brien of TCU, John David Crow of Texas A&M, Doak Walker of SMU, Earl Campbell of Texas, and Andre Ware of Houston.

"It was great having all the kids from Texas spread among six teams and nobody else," Barney Welch, a SWC official for 25 years, said. "Not only do we supply the SWC now but we also supply the PAC-10, the SEC and the Big Ten. If you watch television you will see a bunch of Texans among the college teams."

By 1992, the SWC boasted the eight teams that now make up the conference and who will part ways after this season.

SMU

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The Detroit Lions drafted Walker out of college, and a year later he was reunited with Texas Longhorn great, Bobby Layne, who was traded to the Lions from the New York Bulldogs.

With Layne at quarterback and Walker at halfback, the Lions became one of the NFL's dominate teams in the 1950s. Both players are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Walker and Layne were two players who were instrumental in the establishing the SWC as a major force in college football. By gaining exposure through the national media, the two Heisman winners also helped spread the conference's popularity out of the region and throughout the United States.

With the SWC coming to an end after this season, Walker, though saddened by the termination of the once mighty conference, feels that the break up was bound to happen because of financial reasons.

"The league was just in a different era when I played. The game wasn't so much associated with money and business like it is today, and I think the break up was going to happen eventually because things were starting to decline. Maybe it was time for things to change, but I still think the whole thing is just a shame."

BAYLOR: Teaff's leadership fueled Bears' resurgence

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lines with a 128-105-6 record and became Baylor's athletic director. One year later, he left Baylor to become executive director of the American Football Coaches Association, ending a relationship with the school that lasted nearly 25 years.

Abercrombie said Teaff's legacy to Baylor will be felt for quite some time.

"He took a little ol' school on the Brazos River and turned it into a football program," Abercrombie, who still works with Teaff at the AFCA, said. "Not only that, but he made it respectable, even prominent, on a national level."

Teaff's departure from the sidelines ended a 37-year coaching career that covered the heyday of the Southwest Conference. While Teaff was at Baylor,

22 SWC teams finished in the Associated Press Top 10, and SWC teams appeared in 68 bowls.

Teaff said he has nothing but positive memories about his years at Baylor and the SWC. He said he is excited about Baylor's entrance into the Big 12, but admits to being a bit nostalgic for the SWC.

The coach remembered when the Bears last played Arkansas before the

Razorbacks left for the Southeastern Conference in 1991. Teaff wore a tie that day because, as he said, "You wear a tie to a funeral."

Teaff said he will be part of a special funeral this weekend when Texas A&M and Texas clash.

"I will be watching the game this weekend, and I'll be wearing a tie," he said. "This is the end of a great tradition and a great conference."



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