Great Or Horrid?

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Thresher Sports Editor

Writing an article about a Rice sports event before the activity has taken place is usually a foolish thing to do, both because Rice is a member of the Southwest Conference, where tough rivalry breeds many upsets, and because the Owls’ showing in a given event traditionally has little to do with past performances.

Although writing about prospects for the coming season based on vague remembrances of this year’s results is a magnification of this problem, it is in the nature of Thresher Sports Editors to go out on their traditional limb as early as possible. And so armed with pre-planned excuses and appropriate apologies, we forge on.

Rice’s sports year can be fairly well summarized by comparison with the famous little girls of whom the poet writes, “When she was good, she was very, very good; / But when she was bad, she was horrid.”

In track, for instance, Rice is in the process of building a dynasty capable of competing with national powers like UCLA, USC, and New Mexico. Already the varsity has the second best mile relay time in the world, and all three relay teams have been invited to Los Angeles’ Coliseum Relays on May 13.

With a little luck in Austin Saturday, the team will earn student manager Mike Carter a new watch for the third straight year. Carter says, “I sure hope so—the championship watches get awfully rusty in a year.” If the Owls pull out this year’s meet, the strong corps of freshmen should produce a winner for a few years to come.

In tennis, the nucleus of one of Rice’s best teams in recent years will return in the persons of John Pickens and Butch See-wagen. This year has seen a victory over Trinity, another SWC team title, and a first place in our own Rice Invitational Turney. Although next year’s team will have little depth, Coach Sammy Giammalva has a knack of producing better players each year, so net prospects must be considered rosy.

Baseball poses something of a problem. The Owls’ great pitching staff of juniors Ray Hooten and Bill Palmer, and sophomore Ronnie Henson have been hurt by weak hitting, especially against SWC teams, although we have a 13-9-1 over-all record.

These fine mound workers will be back next year, but a really successful team will require a comeback from a few of this year’s team and the early development of part of this year’s promising fresh crop.

The basketball team presents new hope in the form of a brand-new coach, Don Knodel from Vanderbilt, and a wealth of talent from a strong freshman team. The boys seem to have considerable respect for the well-liked Knodel, and are anxious to improve after the disasters of the past two years.

We come at last to the enigma of football. The Owls show each year that they are capable of breaking anyone by soundly trouncing a couple of fine teams. Unfortunately, we in turn are easily defeated by the average teams, to produce a generally bad record. This is particularly maddening to students because it is football, and only football, that friends at home are interested in. Rice’s failure to live up to its potential is thus a large factor in the student’s dissatisfaction with athletes. Furthermore, prospects are dim for us this year because we open the season against bowl winners UCLA, Tennessee, and LSU.

But Ye Olde Thresher Sports Editor has saved the day this year. In a rash moment at dinner one night, I foolishly agreed that should the Owls win but four games during the coming campaign, I would submit my frail body to the ravages of three days of spring football workouts.

Now having a positive, honorable goal rather than mere victory or “Rice’s Honor” toward which to work, it is likely that the Owls will come through with at least a 6-4 record.