The wise old men of the press box who claim to know football best have built up a standard repertoire of clichés to explain the oddities of the game. One of these bits of nonsense pays tribute to the Longhorns. Averages by stating "the breaks tend to even out."

If the Rice Owls are a bit skeptical, they can hardly blame them. No bounce of the football can explain the 7-3 record of Rice's Blue-grey game, the most serious of which is located in Billy Cox's wrist.

The separation in the senior quarterback's arm is a by-product of a year in which he had a large part in the department too. The outstanding player of the 1961 Sugar Bowl, all-conference as a sophomore, engineer of a superlative upset of Texas, Cox meant leadership and spirit as well as ability. In that respect this is tantamount to saying "money in the bank."

The OWLS of 1962 were a puzzle even before the loss of Cox, but must rule now as several national powers. Inset in the Blue-grey game was reminiscent of the 1963 team; in others it looked more like the 1966 eleven.

No two years could have been more opposite: from 1-7-1961 to 7-3-1962, the Owls went to a 7-3 record in '65 that came within a matter of minutes and eleven points of being 0-7-1.

The '62 Owls have inexperienced but promising tackles, and great promise at fullback—the twin forces that resulted in a 3-7-1 record in '65. That same year a veteran quarterback duo (Jon Schmable and Alvin Hartman) returned, and the Owls were rated more, the same as this year: dark horse contenders.

The Sorrell details of that future team have been repressed in the memory, but 1966 was a golden year.

Picked about the same as the year before, the Owls did develop a winner. No one who saw the '61 Owls ever will deny that the outstanding feature of the ball club was a driving determination. Three times they stopped Baylor on the one-inch line. They drove downfield against a heavily favored Ole Miss, four times to be repulsed, and still to return again and score. Twice they held Cotten, Collins, Saxton, Poage, and deep in Rice Territory to defend a proud Texas team, the second time in the fading minutes.

It was the fine spirit of these Owls which impressed more than their ability. Many of the names were the same in '61, but the game wasn't. Gone were the Kings, gone was Stroud, and gone was the spirit of '60. And again in '62 it seemed as if the Owls had regaled their old spirit, epitomized by Cox once again, but now the leader is gone.

Quo vadis? The hopeful side of the Blue-grey game is the spirit of future Owls. It is the style is indispensible: he runs as if an inborn instinct guides him. The manner with which he guides his interference is one of his greatest talents; his high-stepping; yet swift stride is another.

FULLBACK LOOKED as solid as the cast on Cox's arm. Piper, Wayt, and Martindale are solid up-the-middle threats, and could be better runners than they showed. Poag gave Cox good balance and a keen sense of finding holes, should surpass the graduated Jackson this season.

1962 Preview: The Wrist and The Rest

Where Jackson will be missed most is at linebacker. Although Piper played creditably there, the rest of the cupboard is lacking nobly.

At wingback Candler was his usual dependable self, and while he won't make any all-conference teams, he should turn in a bad performance all season. His punting has established a new record, and although his average won't surpass the departed Bob Wayt's by much, Candler's will be accompanied with far greater consistency. Wayt had a talent for balancing the 55-yarder with a 25-yarder.

FLEMING was the big news at running back, but Ronnie Graham is capable of adding more power to a potent backfield. If Fleming is faster than Rice halfbacks of recent years, and can run the inside play as well as the outside.

The Owl end coaches have often been noted for the toughness of their drills, but the ends certainly justify the means. Red Bale consistently turns out the best end crop in the SWC, and this year is no exception. That new team is a potential All-American candidate among them, too, and Gene Raetz hopes to follow in the illustrious footsteps of Williams, Howton, Crawford, Dial, Jones, Burrell, etc. Jerry Cox, the senior, is one of the best. Rice is not as well off on defense and defense; no opponent will go around them.

They may not have to. Tackle is unquestionably the weak spot in the Owls. The ends' backfield improving, it is, will be fatal. Louis Mazurans offensive blocking was impressive, but defensively Graham is the key. Rice is stronger at center, and strong enough on offense to be a dangerous defending team. The Owls have a center so important that he may be the key to the Owls defense.

The interior line is stronger than any other line, and the Owls have just the club except for fullback. In this respect the Rice line is much like the one of 1960: proven guards and centers, unknown tackles. Fritts, King, and the conference matenials. This center is adequate offensively but must improve in the vital defensive linebacker play.

Again the rules season has been reversed. A week ago football called a spell; now it spells a cast. Quarterback, once the strong point, still can be if—and the biggest "if" of the year, the difference between 3-7-3 and 7-3 records—Kerbow and McReynolds as well as Cox. The Owls have a center as good as Cox could. The forced move of Kerbow to quarterback may not be as damaging to the offense as it might have been expected; Cox himself is an adept blocker and is not inside running threat.

Kerbow may well be the best in the Southwest at running to the outside, but that wouldn't make out for missed blocks from his halfback post. At quarterback he will still be able to utilize his running and passing skills, but the pressure of blocking won't be as great. Also his offensive variety will increase, for at quarterback he'll have the additional option of pitching out or passing to the halfback.

Even without Cox, then, the Owl offense may not suffer greatly. Cox, while not as fast as his two-year alternate, was a better blocker and a better play-caller. Both could be superlative on good days.

If McReynolds develops, Neely will have the option of switching to another role, using McReynolds with both offensive units, wide-carding on defense. This was Darrell Royal's method of handling all-conference Mike Cotten last season.

McReynolds undoubtedly is headed for greatness in his years at Rice, but must it he thrust upon him in the Tiger's den before 68,000 bloodred screaming fans in Louisiana's answer to Batonn?