Subs sink TCU as Owls soar high

By BILL KENNEDY
Thresher Basketball Analyst

In a year that will probably go down in Rice sports history as the Year of the Might-Have-Been, Saturday’s basketball victory over gargantuan, highly-rated TCU was especially gratifying. The Owls demonstrated more team balance against the Horned Frogs than this reporter has ever seen in a Rice basketball team.

Rice has traditionally been a team consisting of one or two stars surrounded by a more or less interchangeable array of spear-carrying flunkies. But the 1967 model Owls have reaffirmed the fact that basketball is essentially a team sport in which individual heroics must be subordinated to smooth team play.

The TCU game showed how the Owls’ new corporate image has spread even unto the reserves (who play so much that they can hardly be considered second-stringers in the usual sense at all, and are perhaps better termed “semi-starters”). Almost one-third (28 out of 89) of Rice’s points against TCU were scored by semi-starters Farrar Stockton, Bob Rule, and Jim Hubenak.

Rule’s performance deserves special mention, as the 6’ 4” soph guard displayed a great repertoire of ball-handling moves. On one play, in which Rule, guarded by three TCU players, faked a right-handed jump-shot and then sank a beautiful southpaw-underhand shot, the protective undergarments of the three Horned Frog basketeers were seen to hang in mid-air for seven full seconds.

The Owls also showed a marked disrespect for the Rice tradition of blowing leads when faced with pressure defensive tactics like TCU’s full-court press. Thanks to the passing and dribbling of Rule, Williams and Inselman, Rice broke the Frogs’ press with a minimum of problems every time.

The Owl five came through with the big play—a long Ivey basket, a ferocious Stockton rebound, a Doty steal—everytime TCU seemed about to pull ahead. Making such plays is, to use an old sportswriter’s cliche, the name of the game.

All was not perfection, of course, as the Owls were frequently outmuscled under the boards by the Frogs’ tank-sized post men. The sight of TCU forward James Cash (6’6”, 220 lbs.) getting four straight shots at a crucial point in the second half was not a pleasant one. Rebounding remains the Owls’ biggest single problem.

Still, the Rice squad proved Saturday that they can play with any team in the SWC and have a fair shot at a first division finish.