Owls see their Doty in SWC games

By BILL KENNEDY
Thresher Basketball Analyst

The preliminaries are now over and the Southwest Conference race has begun in dead earnest.

Biggest surprise of the non-conference schedule has, of course, been the Owls. Rice stands fourth in the conference with a mark of 3-7. The Owls have made believers of many observers who had earlier scoffed at talk of a roundball renaissance at Rice under Coach Don Knodel.

The pre-conference schedule has shown the 1967 model Owls to be a far deeper, better balanced team than last year’s conference door-mats. Along with expected soph starter Greg Williams, two more varsity rookies, 6’4” guard Bob Rule and 6’7” post man Jim Hubenak, have, momentarily at least, cracked the starting five.

Hubenak seems to have found himself in the Owls’ rousing 88-69 victory over LSU in the Poinsettia Classic, as he scored 16 points. Rule, who was thought to be a year away from any sort of regular spot, has thus far been the surprise of the squad with a tremendous 57.5 percentage from the floor.

The rapid development of these sophomores has given Rice much added depth. The enthusiasm with which the younger players have gone after the veterans’ jobs has also increased the hustle coefficient of the team as a whole.

Coach Knodel promised at the beginning of the year that everyone on the team would be given an opportunity to play his way into the starting lineup. He has certainly kept his word.

Keeping pace with the soaring sophs has been senior Bill Doty who is currently second in SWC scoring, sporting a glittering average of 19 points per game. He has also hit on an excellent 54.7% of his shots from the floor.

Doty’s importance to the Owls goes beyond the game statistics, however. He is the only man on the team with muscle enough to fight it out under the boards with such SWC monsters as A & M’s 6’9”, 230 lb. Ronnie Peret and TCU’s 6’6”, 220 lb. James Cash.

As the success of the Green Bay Packer-size Houston Cougars attests, basketball is more and more not just a game of tall men, but of strong, tall men. The undernourishment of the Owls will surely cost them some games this year.

On the strength of their performance so far, however, it is equally sure that the Owls could easily hustle their way up as high as fifth or sixth in the SWC.

“Don’t tell anyone, but we won two more.”