Rice's honor has been defended almost as weakly on the athletic field as was the song of the same name in the recent election. A look at the Southwest Conference history books indicates that only Texas and Texas A&M have been doing much homework, and the Owls are definitely not in line for any honors.

Baseball is almost too embarrassing to mention: Rice has never won a Southwest Conference championship in that sport, and has succeeded in outscoring the University of Texas only 15 times in 130 meetings.

ALTHOUGH THE OWLS have squeaked through to a pair of ties for the basketball crown since 1945, that war year saw the last unduplicated win for Rice on the hardwoods.

Track hasn't produced a winner since before the war, and golf, poor golf, hasn't chipped in with a champion since 1939.

Only football and tennis have upheld their share in the Rice program—at least, if winning is to be the criterion—as football has brought titles in 1946, 1949, 1953, and 1967, and tennis has been a consistent producer in recent years.

ALL THIS IS NOT background for a barrage against Rice athletic policy. Only a glance at relative sizes of the SWC schools and a study of its by-laws suggests that it is necessary to understand the difficulty in producing steady winners at Rice. Scholarships in this conference are limited according to enrollment, and Rice is allotted less overall grants than Texas has for football alone.

Thus, although a "major sports sweep" (football, track, baseball, basketball) has only been accomplished once in SWC history, Texas has often grabbed three of the four.

And it was Texas, naturally, who swept all four, tying for football and basketball (both with Rice) and winning track and baseball undisputedly in 1953-54.

The best Rice has ever done is win two of the four in one year.

ALL THESE FIGURES may turn out to mean nothing. On the other hand, they may be a fascinating background for the Year of Plenty. It is easy to get overly optimistic about Rice sports, especially football, which in recent years has had a habit of collapsing despite all promising signs.

But at first glance, the Owls have the potential to win five of the six sports in which they'll compete next year. Likely they'll be favored in a couple of them and picked no worse than second in a third.

TENNIS SEEMS the surest bet. Fritz Schunck returns as number one man; in fact, the top four singles players return, and a fine freshman team will be available for variety play next year to give the Owls an unprecedented wealth of tennis talent.

The rest, dark horse, however, is track. So rarely have the Owls been a contender in this sport that attention is generally given to a few outstanding individuals and team chances are never mentioned.

All this should change when a freshman team that has whipped both A&M and Texas comes on the scene, and when the Swift Sophs of this year are veterans. The departure of Fred Hansen will cost the Owls heavily in the field events, but Warren Bratloff may be able to fill the 16-foot vaulter's shoes.

BASEBALL NEXT YEAR is the usual enigma. But these freshmen that we keep mentioning are omnipresent, and they've got a good baseball team, too. With the starting outfield returning, plus three more newcomers and at least three pitchers, the Owls have the strength to be a contender. If the freshmen help. Some pitching help is needed, but the fresh have it—and hitters too. Last month Ronnie Waldo blanked the Texas Yearlings, 5-0, in Austin. This baseball team could be a sleeper.

Then there's golf.

In basketball the Owls have their problems. A few of them are Franks, Pultz, Fisher, Puryear . . . All will be back for Texas' Longhorns, bidding for another crack at Cincinnati and the NCAA playoffs. They may well get it; they'll be favored beyond doubt, and rightly so. But as long as the Owls have Kendall Rhine, they're a threat to beat anyone. Texas suffered much more heavily through graduation than did Rice, although no one in Austin is crying, and both schools will get help from their freshmen. For Rice, the question mark is Doug McKendrick: if he can hit from outside, the Owls will be the 'Horns' equal.

THAT LEAVES FOOTBALL, which we'll put off for another issue. Here, too, there is so very much potential. However, the competition is far stronger than in the other sports, and somehow something is lacking here that isn't lacking elsewhere.

Whatever's missing, we hope it's found before we're too old to care.