Jess Neely Has Fabulous Record Of Grid Success

By RONNIE KLINE

Considerable personnel are necessary to conduct a major collegiate athletic program. In college athletics, the principal acclaim is accorded the fine young men who actually compete. We of the Thresher would like, for six weeks, to take you behind the scenes to the men that “run the store.”

Jess Neely, Athletic Director and Head Football Coach of the Rice University Owls, has a fabulous record of gridiron successes and service to his profession. A 1924 graduate of Vanderbilt University, where he was a star end and halfback, Neely was head coach at Southwestern of Memphis and at Clemson College before becoming top mentor at Rice in 1940.

HIS RECORD of seventy Southwest Conference victories is unmatched in the annals of conference history. In thirty-four campaigns as a college head coach, Neely has compiled the impressive record of one hundred eighty-eight wins, one hundred forty-two losses and sixteen ties. The all time dean of SWC head coaches lists four major bowl successes among his greatest gridiron victories. Under Neely, Owl teams have won two SWC titles outright, and they have earned a share of two others.

According to Mr. Neely, this year’s Owl eleven could be the greatest yet. This, in itself, would seem quite a statement from the head coach of a team competing in the most hectic and unpredictable conference in the country. Yet, coming from the usually very conservative Neely, the statement is even more surprising and perhaps a bit revealing of the “new look” Rice Owls.

WHEN ONE recalls the relatively unexciting “run three and Punt” teams of the past, he will quickly realize the change that occurred last season in Coach Neely’s football philosophy. Gone are the cautious days of punting on the enemy thirty-five. With this new brand of wide-open football, Coach Neely has bred an exciting, gambling outfit which could easily be the greatest and most flashy team in Rice history. Like his coaching record, Mr. Neely’s service to the coaching profession has certainly been brilliant. He is a former president of the American Football Coaches Association, a top honor in his field. While serving several years as a member of the NCAA football rules committee, Neely has become an “able and popular lecturer at grid clinics from the East Coast to Hawaii, including three times at the world’s largest coaching clinic conducted by the Texas High School Coaches Association.”

A NATIVE OF Smyrna, Tennessee, he received the LL.B. degree from Vanderbilt in 1924. He and his wife Dorothy have two children—Joan and Mary—residing in California and Dallas respectively. When not on the practice field, Coach Neely finds additional pleasure on the golf course and is a member of Braeburn Country Club’s “Hole In One” Club.