Horns Want Blood

By STUART GLASS
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Rice wants a strong winning record to commemorate Coach Jess Neely's silver anniversary; Texas, following Arkansas' 14-13 upset of the 'Horns last week, wants blood.

The Owls, with a top bowl bid (the Cotton Bowl wouldn't be too bad), to celebrate New Year's Day; Texas would like to break the discouraging tradition of never having won in the new Rice Stadium. The closest they came was a 14-14 tie in 1962 against the Owl team which won only two games. The Longhorns were even tied by Alabama, 3-3, in the 1960 Bluebonnet Bowl thriller.

So the stage is set for one of the highlight games of SWC play and the pivotal game for the Owls this year—pitting once-beaten Texas, number six in the nation, and eager to get back on the winning track, against Rice, with a 2-2 record, trying to bounce back from a disappointing early showing.

But pre-conference records can be ignored when Rice and Texas battle. Upsets, a strong characteristic of the Southwest Conference, have occurred regularly in this series. Although the Longhorns lead in victories 30-19 since the two teams began playing each other, Rice has a 15-14-1 edge over the past 30 years. And this has been since SWC football has been considered national powers, dating back to a single Saturday in Indiana, in 1934, when Texas beat Notre Dame and Rice beat Purdue—both major upsets.

This year's clash promises to be a wildly defensive one. As of right now, the oddsmakers favor the 'Horns by eight points, (but this margin may very well end up consisting of four safeties).

Texas has the top defense in the conference, allowing an average of 168 yards per game total offense. Their offense is second best, with 399.5 yards average, behind pass-happy Baylor.

Rice's statistics are far less impressive so far. The defense is fourth best—256 yards per game—and the offense is third from last with 207.5 yards average.

But the Owls' defense is far stronger than it looks on paper. The offense's inability to control the ball has caused the defenders to log most of the games' playing time.

Neely has been encouraged by improvement in the anemic attack, however, stating that the team played "more as a unit" against SMU. And improvement by the offense is a definite necessity against a Longhorn team which is characteristically greedy with the ball.

Specifically, the contest should be a battle of line backers and punters. Malcolm Walker and Russell Wayt will take on Tommy Nobis and Fred Edwards, replacement for the injured Timmy Doerr, and both sides are eager to prove that they are the best combination in the SWC.

Soph Chuck Latourette, second best punter in the conference, and Ernie Koy, third best, with 40.5 and 39.5 average respectively, will match kicks—probably better.

The keys to victory will be ball control and field position; a single error or break should loom large in the outcome. It was unnecessary mistakes, such as having 12 men on the field, which cost Texas a win over Arkansas, handed Stanford the triumph over Rice.

Physically, both teams are reasonably fit. The better mental attitude could win out, and the Longhorns' coach Darrell Royal is a master at psychology. Following the Arkansas loss, Royal declared that he "felt sorry for Rice."

But Neely does not need to go to great lengths to get the Owls ready for this one. Mental preparedness grows like toadstools for the Texas game, and the team is not afraid of the Teasips.

The "Pray for a Miracle" and "Mercy" slogans of two years ago don't apply for this Saturday. Rice is capable of winning and they know it. They also know that Texas won't die if they're behind in the last quarter.

Two touchdowns should win the game. Whoever hits first and hardest will get those two scores, and whoever keeps hitting until the final gun will hold on to the margin.

Texas has shown it can do this. A lot of people think Rice can; Saturday would be a good time for the Owls to prove it.