Owls tackle tapered Texas talent

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They wouldn’t have the nerve.

But they’re going to do it: they’re coming to town.

But not as a mighty horde that once swept like locusts from their breeding ground in Austin: they will not descend this year.

Surely this isn’t Texas, the Colossus of the North, Lord of the Southwest, the oppressor of the weak, the sportswriters’ darling.

They have their nerve: they aren’t ranked number one. They aren’t even undefeated. And yet they claim to be the Texas Longhorns: the University of Texas, with their voluptuous blonde cheerleaders, their orange-lighted tower, their “Hook ’Em Horns” and their New York’s lease on the Cotton Bowl.

And now we learn they are human; if you cut them, they bleed; if you hit them, they hurt. And how they have hurt. Eleven starters injured this year. Super-Bill Bradley who once walked on water across the sports pages of the nation:

now he can barely walk on the ground.

And their sparkling record: 2-3. Their game against USC, with Bradley demonstrating the wondrous things a football can do when you try to dribble it. And the “important” game, when they battled Arkansas all the way down to the opening kickoff.

And it’s strange. Strange, because this is the first time in recent history that Rice supporters need not be ashamed, the first time the Rice team hasn’t been hopelessly outclassed. There will be no “Pray for a Miracle” ribbons this year.

Remember 1962? The Owls winless, the Longhorns undefeated, and the score 14-14.

And last year? The Owls 24-point underdogs, the Longhorns still in the title race, and the score 20-17.

And this year? The Owls looking better than in recent memory, and the Longhorns weaker than we’ve dreamed. They have their nerve.

After two heartbreaking weeks, it’s time.

Rice 24, Texas 14.