Baseball; diamond in the rough

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Since anyone maintaining the view that the universe in which we dwell is inherently rational (that is, that there exist predictable natural laws which control its operations) finds this year's sporting scene at Rice entirely incomprehensible, it is indeed fortunate that there exist those of us who believe in ghaesties, ghoulies, lang-legged beasties, and things that go bump in the night. For it is the particular function, or rather duty, of those of us who are in direct communication with the occult world to enlighten, so far it is possible to enlighten, those who have eyes but see not and who have ears but hear not, and to chronicle without bias the true motives and causes of those events which to the common lot of men seem baffling and meaningless.

For if the football season seemed puzzling and the basketball season frustrating, what can one say of this year's baseball team?

Perhaps the best word is schizophrenic, for if one consults the SWC baseball standings in the newspaper, one's heart leaps up to behold Rice leading the league with a 14-4 record—in total season's standing. Should one look a little farther, though, in the SWC-games-only standings, Rice's familiar little name pops up in its traditional cellar position.

Of course, Rice's record isn't all that bad, when one considers that three of the Owls' losses have been to powerful SMU, a team which, thank goodness, the Owls need not play again this year. So, although the Owls' title hopes have been dealt a severe blow (Rice now has four conference losses, and it is rare that a team with more than five losses wins the crown), the worst part of the season would seem to be over.

Let us hasten to point out, though, before rejoicing becomes too wide-spread, that in the fine Rice tradition, no sooner do the clouds lift, than the sky falls.

The pitching staff, which has been so impressive most of the season (with the exception of the 15 runs allowed against SMU) has been struck by injuries this week as Ron Henson began running a fever and Bill Palmer acquired a sore shoulder; the pitching situation was so grim, in fact, that in Tuesday's game Andy Rooker, the center fielder, was called in to pitch the final inning, which he did without giving up a hit.

Another problem the team has been suffering, at least in SWC play, is acute feebleness at the plate. Much of this can no doubt be traced to the fact that three starters (Hugo Hollas in left field, Doug Nicholson in right field, and Frank Mandola at first base) are also trying to hold starting football berths during spring training. The wonder of the matter is that they even manage to drag themselves onto the field. Team captain Andy Rooker, moreover, who had been counted on to shake off his disappointing junior year and regain the form that made him all-SWC as a sophomore, has continued his slump at the plate, although his defense and base-stealing speed have definitely been assets to the 1967 team.

And so, there is still faint hope for Coach Osborn's charges to win their first SWC crown ever. A good start would be to sweep the upcoming series from Texas A&M.