Lew CLA looms large in NCAA play

By BILL KENNEDY

Although all rebellions within the Thresher Sports Department have been put down by the most potent of all weapons — flattery, your Friendly Neighborhood Basketball Analyst retains sufficient strength to take one parting look at the recently deceased basketball season before it — and your F.N.B.A. — sink into permanent oblivion.

For Rice, of course, it was the season that almost was, as the Owls closed out with a string of agonizing, last-minute defeats. This fact has been repeated with monotonous regularity, perhaps obscuring the real significance of the season, for ’66-’67 was almost surely also the breakthrough year for Rice basketball.

Success breeds success (spelled “r-e-c-r-u-i-t-i-n-g”) and it’s a cinch that a somewhat higher percentage of the nation’s gangling young student-athletes will now opt to study under Professor Knodel. After all, few coaches can boast a 700% increase in victories in their first year on the job.

Despite the famed Rice abhorrence at looking beyond the hedges, it might be well to take a glimpse at the NCAA tournament. This can be considered a practice exercise because if the Knodel Plan to subvert the SWC works on schedule, the Owls may well be in the tournament in the next few years.

This season’s SWC representatives, the beloved SMU Mustangs, face the unappetizing task of playing number 2 ranked Louisville in their tournament opener. Like most SWC teams in recent years, the Ponies’ doom in the NCAA is virtually certain (a trend that may be reversed in part by the integration of the conference).