**Ags Will Be Up For This One**

**By RONNIE KLINE**

After seven games of the 1961 football season, the Rice Owls, preseason favorites for the SWC crown, have now been virtually eliminated from any chance at so much as a tie. What happened to the Owls cannot be answered in any brief manner, but we might well consider some of the factors which tell the story of a rather mediocre 4-3 season to date.

**AFTER VIEWING** the Owls’ magnificent 16-3 victory over now fourth-ranked LSU, this writer remarked that no one in the country could have beaten the Big Blue on that steamy evening of September twenty-third.

The line play was beyond description; the running game, although slowed by the usually outstanding Chinese Bandits, was more than adequate; the passing game, lost in the shuffle of last Saturday’s rain, was sharp and superb.

But then came the Sunday morning post-game report: Cornet—hurt, Ligon—hurt, Anthony—hurt, Raesz—hurt; and so the list read like the obituary of Carla’s aftermath.

**PERHAPS THE GREATEST** line in Rice history became a quagmire of injuries before the season really got started. Since LSU, Cornet has been hurt, re-hurt, and hurt again; Blume is now hobbled; Jackson—a bruised hip; Cadell—a broken nose; Rees; Alborn; Malin—the Rice football squad has become a mass of tape. and tape doesn’t win ball games, particularly against the caliber of Owl opposition. The injury factor has certainly been of incalculable importance.

**BUT WHAT ELSE?** What happened at quarterback is a mystery. At the climax of last season, the Owls were blessed with not only the best signal caller in the Southwest, but also a one-two passing combination which surpassed in ability even the great Hill-Ryan duo of 1957.

Perhaps the injury problem which has so riddled the Owl line has resulted in substantially less protection for Cox and Kerbow. They certainly have not looked as sensational as last season; but we rather think the fault, if one could deem it a fault, lies not with the players and their ability.

The experience, depth, desire, and leadership of the 1961 squad is as great as last year—in some respects. Here again, we see the importance of that injury factor—less protection and blocking for those backs who must score the points.

**TO WHAT ELSE can we look?** Well, Rice has never been noted for its fan appeal on the field. Off tackle, through the middle, a few end sweeps—this is typical Rice football; and for many years, it has paid off in handsome dividends.

In the past couple of years, however, we have noticed a sweeping change in college offensive football—wing T’s, double wing T’s, men in motion on every play, slot backs—an endless variety of formations.

Last season, Coach Jess Neely also became a little daring, and look at the success with which he met! What about this year? We may be wrong; but from the stands, the Owls have not used the variety this season; They’ve returned to the old days of run three (sometimes two—and on Saturday last, on one occasion—one) and punt.

**IF YOU’VE GOT THE power,** this is a great offense, because, with three downs, the first down is usually made. But with all these injuries, the Owls do not have the power so evident against LSU.

Things approached the ridiculous Saturday! Obviously ordered from the bench to be cautious, Owl quarterbacks sent our backs into seven and eight man Arkansas forward walls that knew we wouldn’t pass.

**NOW, I’M THE FIRST** to admit that conditions on Saturday were not too conducive to a passing attack, to say the least, but the downpour didn’t slow down the Pigs. They threw nine times and completed five for sixty-eight yards, a very commendable performance even in perfect weather.

The point is this: Arkansas certainly realized we were not going to throw at all. Hence, our backs plowed into immovable seven- and eight-man lines all afternoon. We never tried to “loosen up” the defense. We just “ran three and punted” and prayed for a break that never came. With all those injuries, we just can’t overpower an eight-man line.

**SO IT ALL ADDS UP** to this: injuries have forced the Owls to give up that advantage of a powerful line. The lack of “keep ‘em guessing” offensive maneuvers (which might minimize the effect of losses due to injuries) has hurt the Owls even further. Now, the 1961 season can still end on a happy note.

Victory over A&M, TCU, and Baylor would yield a successful 7-3 year—very respectable! Let’s hope the Big Blue has a few surprises for the Aggies and that some of those injuries have healed. A&M has been rough all year, but we can be rough in turn. The Farmers, having defeated us only three times in sixteen years, will be up for this one.

So must we.