

schools like Notre Dame, Penn State and Pittsburgh, the advantages of being an independent are financially and athletically rewarding.

They can pick and choose athletic schedules and can be invited to any football bowl game which isn't locked up by two conference winners, as is the Rose Bowl.

In basketball, usually a handful of independents are selected for the national tourney while two or maybe three schools from each conference are invited.

But overall, according to most coaches and administrators, the pluses outweigh the minuses in being involved in a conference.

Oregon, which was a member of the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Athletic Conference from 1916-1958, was an independent from 1959-1963 before hitching up with the Pacific-8 Conference. And, according to former Oregon football coach Len Casanova, the conference life is much better than the life of an independent.

"Being part of a conference is important," says Casanova, who took the Ducks to the Rose Bowl at the end of the 1957 season. "It has been proven over the years

that there are very few teams outside of Notre Dame who are established independents."

Oregon was very successful as a member of the PCC, going to a handful of bowl games and posting a string of winning records in football. The success also carried over to basketball and to other sports at Oregon.

The PCC broke up after the 1958 football season because of NCAA-imposed sanctions on UCLA, USC and Washington. According to Orlando Hollis, then-Oregon faculty representative to the PCC, the three schools' sanctions were not well-received by the conference and therefore, they left the conference.

"We had a very detailed rule book in our conference about what schools should and should not do," says Hollis. "When those three schools pulled out of the conference, there was nothing anyone could do so it was in the best interest to dissolve the conference and split the money in the conference fund."

Almost immediately after the conference split, Washington, California, UCLA, USC and Stanford joined forces to make up another conference. That conference was soon to be the Pac-8.

After four years as an independent, the Ducks joined the Pac-8 in 1964 — it was the beginning of a successful marriage which is still strong today.

"Oregon thought that in the long run being a member of a conference and having a shot at the Rose Bowl was the way to go," says Hollis. "It was the correct decision at the time."

The Pac-8 was long regarded as one of the premier conferences in almost every sport. And then when Arizona and Arizona State journeyed from the Western Athletic Conference and joined to make it the Pac-10, the conference's reputation as being the best overall athletic conference went almost unchallenged.

"Both Arizona schools are good teams and both have good facilities," says Casanova. "It was financially a good move but now it makes it tougher on recruitment."

Arizona State Athletic Director Dick Tamburo also feels the switch was a good maneuver.

"Financially, it was a smart move by us and a smart move by the Pac-10," says Tamburo. "We've been rewarded by the move but we have also done our share of contributing."

By Steve Turcotte

Portland glides past Rockets

HOUSTON (AP) — Calvin Natt scored 26 points and Darnell Valentine added 24 to lead six Portland players in double figures as the Trail Blazers defeated the Houston Rockets 122-104 in a National Basketball Association game Tuesday night.

Ralph Sampson led the Rockets with 24 points and 12 rebounds.

Portland never trailed except for a brief 2-1 deficit at the start. The Blazers broke from a 10-10 tie with 8:07 to go in the first quarter and outscored Houston 22-9 for a 32-19 lead at the end of

the period.

The game marked the homecoming of Clyde Drexler, who helped lead the University of Houston to the NCAA finals last season. Drexler, who scored three points, drew cheers from the crowd when he entered the game.



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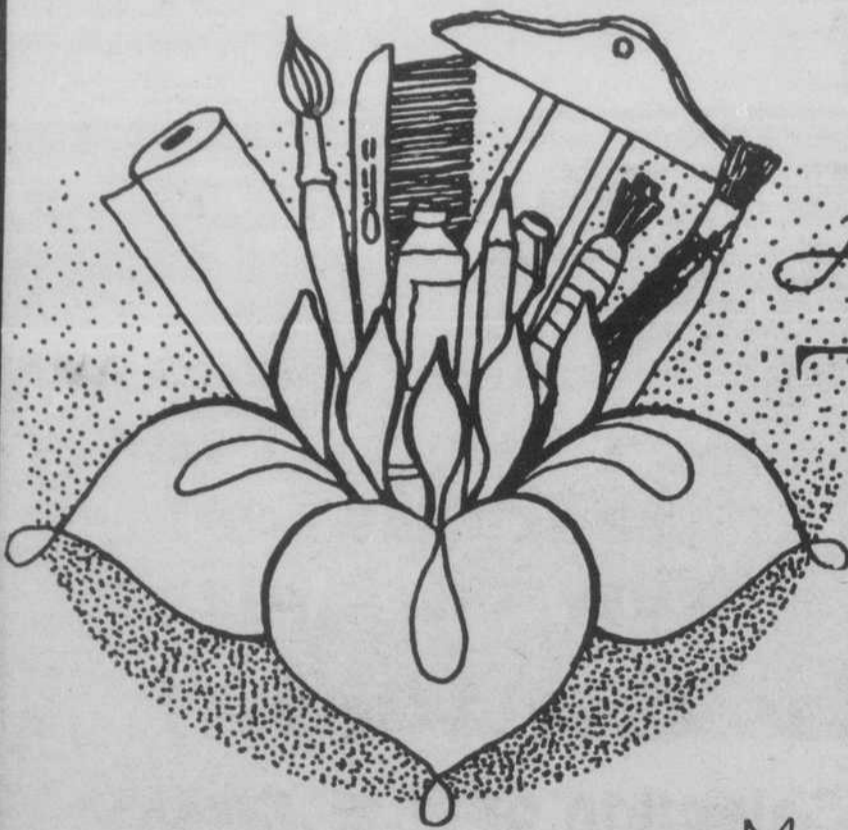
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