

Wrestling and roundball: An interim appraisal

At midseason the grapplers look like front-runners, and the basketballers, despite a prolific scoring trio, again appear to be also-rans

Photos by Mark Miller

The University of Oklahoma wrestling team, as has become its happy habit, should contend for the national championship this year, along with Oklahoma State, Michigan State, Lehigh, and Iowa State.

The Sooner basketball squad, true to recent custom, will not.

Coach Tommy Evans' grapplers staked their claim to prominence by running away from defending NCAA king Oklahoma State, 18-11, in Norman on Jan. 7. Splendidly conditioned and aggressive, the Sooners lost only a close call to Michigan State the first half of the season, emerging from a taxing Western trip unscathed.

Meanwhile, coach Bob Stevens' cagers got away to an unimposing 6-11 start, including four losses in seven Big Eight Conference games. They were formidable offensively, but the defense allowed points at what sometimes was an alarming pace.

The wrestlers are trying to keep

alive a streak of 12 straight years during which Oklahoma has produced at least one individual NCAA champ. Greg Ruth, who has moved on to law school, did it last spring at 160 pounds. Wayne Wells, a lithe, fiercely competitive junior from Oklahoma City John Marshall High, is given the best chance this season, at 152. He has not lost at this writing.

Another John Marshall product, Bryan Rice, is added proof of the coaching ability of one Virgil Milliron. Milliron, winner of several state high school titles in succession, also sent the Sooners 123-pounder Rice, like Wells a Big Eight champion last year, and 145-pounder Dick Haxel, considered by Evans potentially the best wrestler on the team. Another Milliron-coached scrapper, John Eagleston, has been pushing 160-pounder Cleo McGlory for a starting spot, making all the road trips as an alternate.

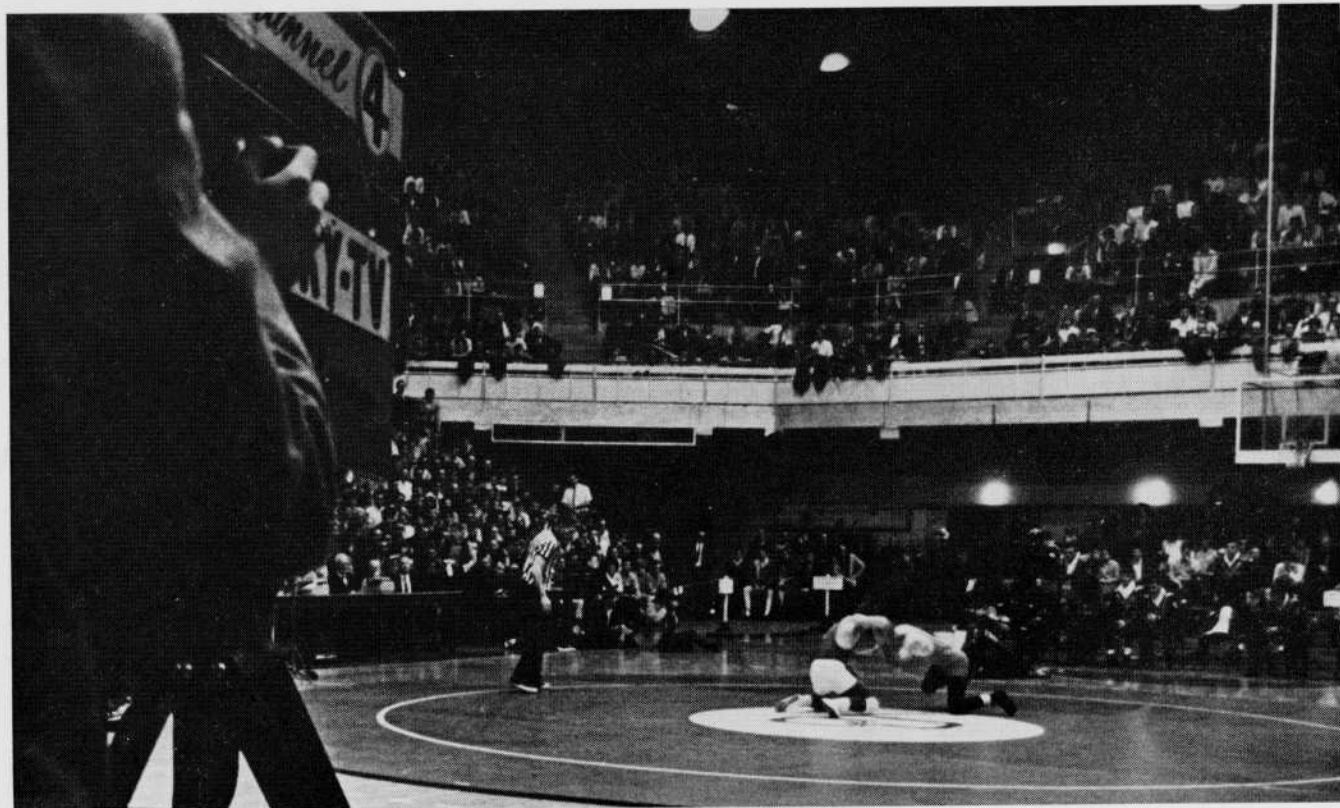
Ah, McGlory. A fine broth of a

Negro from, of all places, Stillwater. He did not enroll at Oklahoma State because he wanted to get away from home, and Oklahoma State's loss is Evans' welcome gain; through eight bouts, McGlory was unbeaten, winning five and drawing three. Improving his mat techniques steadily, he was the most pleasant surprise.

The 1966-67 Sooner squad is typically home-grown. Only two of 11 members of the tournament lineup are from out of state, and one, Ismail Al-Karaghoul, called, simply, Sam for obvious reasons, reported for tryouts unsolicited. Sam is from Iraq.

The approach is typically OU: be in top shape, always gun for the take-down, try then for the fall. It is the theory of Evans and his predecessor, Port Robertson, that you can pin a lot of opponents you might not otherwise even beat. The strategy worked for Port, and it works for Tommy. The former Sooner great has won two na-

Television cameras focus on the first meeting between OU and OSU wrestlers at Norman in January. A capacity crowd saw the Sooners win.



tional crowns in six years—a .333 batting average and better than anything you'll find in the big leagues of baseball. Last season, the Sooners were third, behind Oklahoma State and Iowa State.

"We're as strong from the middle weights on down as we have been in some time, maybe ever," Evans says of his current juggernaut. "The upper weights are not as strong, but we could improve there. Bud McDaniel, a junior from Norman who wrestled just one bout last year, might come on strong at 177. Tony Bennett, who has been wrestling at heavyweight in the nine-weight duals, ought to be more effective at 191. At 115, we'll probably add Tom Penington, a sophomore from Tulsa Central, for the tournaments. I think very highly of him." The 1965-66 team, admits Evans, was a little tougher, but the difference might not show in the NCAA meet "because Bill Lam was out with an injury." Lam, incidentally, now coaches at Norman High School, and his squad is ranked high in the state among the larger schools.

The early victory over Oklahoma State, achieved before a howling throng of nearly 6,000 and an area television audience, made it two straight over the hated Cowboys. Rice,

130-pounder David McGuire, Al-Karaghoulis, Wells, McGlory, and 167-pounder Roger Mickish all turned in Sooner victories in the 72nd edition of the Bedlam Series. Oklahoma swept the first three bouts, and it was downhill from there. "Every match was a turning point," Evans said after the match, "but if I had to pick out individuals I'd say I was most worried about Sam and Cleo. They really came through."

Back to basketball. Coach Bob Stevens, the Big Eight's nattiest dresser and jumpiest bench rider, sports an explosive front line in 6-8 center Don Sidle and 6-3 Willie Rogers and 6-4 Jim Johnson at forwards. But this one-two-three punch encounters thorny sledding against balanced clubs like Kansas, Colorado, Iowa State, and Kansas State. The guards are young and erratic, and even unheralded Hardin-Simmons had a gay old time flustering the Sooners with a full-court press and winning. When Oklahoma was able to get the ball across the 10-second line, it had the problem half whipped offensively.

Sidle, who along with Rogers is out of Dallas, is leading the conference in scoring and is pressing Iowa State star Don Smith in rebounding through the forefront of the schedule, and his

smooth inside moves delight Field House fans. The Sooners do not have much size to put alongside Sidle, however, and opponents often give them a solid pounding under the backboards.

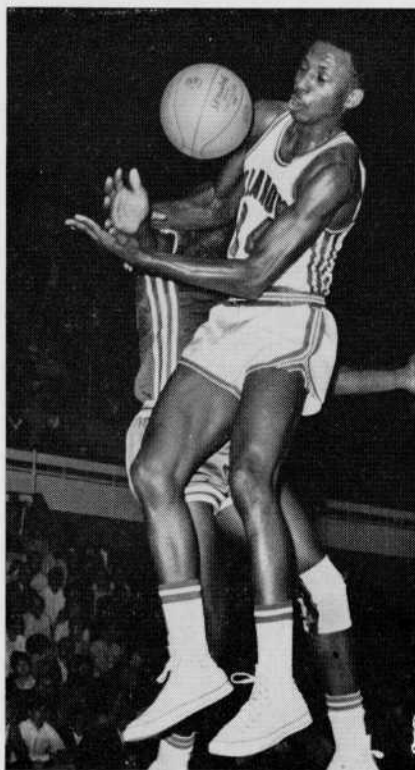
The defense gives up 90 points about as often as not, and Sidle and his front-line helpers can not score fast enough with their go-go-go attack. The holes in the defense are most glaringly apparent on the road, where a visiting team supposedly concedes 10 points to the home folks. And bench strength is pretty much non-existent. If a starter finds himself in foul trouble or suffering through a bad night, relief is hard to find.

Kansas is the closest thing in the league to a national power, holding down a spot in the Top Ten each week going into February.

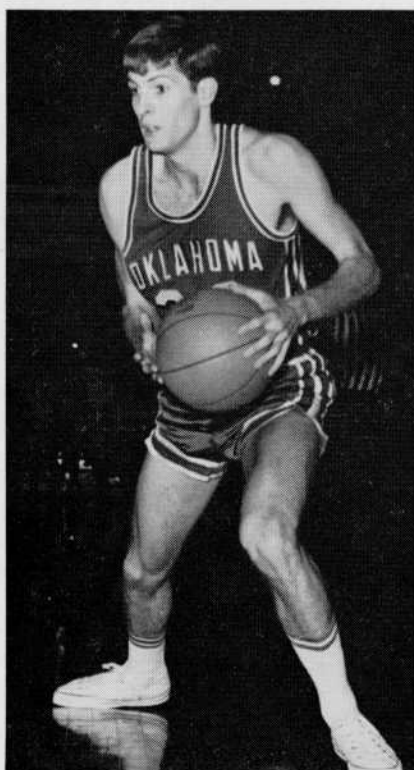
The Sooners finished in the first division of the Big Eight last season, earning Stevens a one-year extension of his contract, which originally was for four years.

The 1965-66 freshman squad did not noticeably fortify the 1966-67 varsity, but next winter it could be a different story. The frosh, featuring 6-7 Tom Hampson from Valparaiso, Ind. and 6-6 Garfield Heard from Hogansville, Ga. are 3-1, including a win

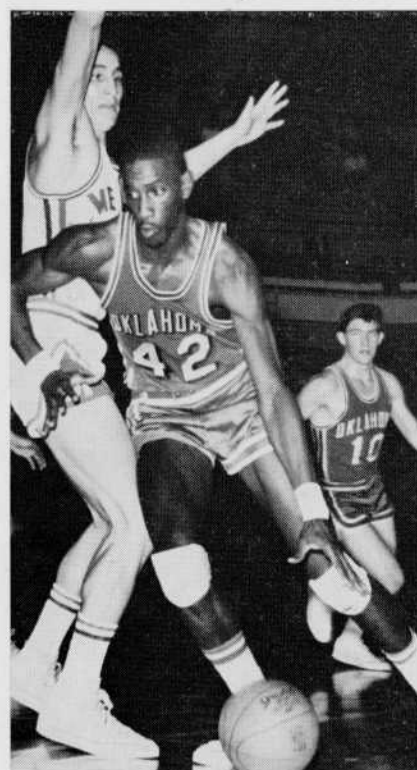
WILLIE ROGERS—17-point average



JIM JOHNSON—18-point average



DON SIDLE—23-point average



over the Tulsa rookies, and show considerable promise. The 228-pound Hampson and the 195-pound Heard should beef up the varsity if nothing else, and ought to step up the overall scoring ability, too. Sidle and Rogers are juniors, while Johnson will run out of eligibility. Gary Kizziar, a sophomore from Oklahoma City Northwest, is small (5-10) but developing rapidly at a guard spot, and another soph, 6-2 Joe Holladay from Duncan, might answer the other guard question eventually.

Norman crowds come to life when Ben Hart, the sure-handed football split end, enters games as a substitute. As a basketball player, Hart is a pretty good football player, but his natural ability enables him to be a fair rebounder and adequate ball-handler. Tommy Evans says he would like to have Hart wrestling for him. Evans does not need help as badly as the cagers, though.

On Feb. 4 in Stillwater, again before television cameras which carried the match to thousands of Oklahomans, the Sooners continued their domination of the OSU Pokes, winning 19-13 in certainly one of the most thrilling



The cage team's one-two-three punch are (from left) Willie Rogers, Jim Johnson, Don Sidle.

meetings, at least as far as OU fans are concerned, in the long rivalry. Tony Bennett, giving away 40 pounds to Wilhem, the OSU heavy, overcame a lead of 8-2 with less than three minutes to go, slapped a cradle on him for three near-fall points, released the cradle then wrapped him in it once more for another three points and a 10-8 lead. With one second left Bennett climaxed the comeback with a body-press pin for five points. Going into the final bout, the Sooners led 14-13 and everything was riding on Tony. The Pokes had wrestled much better than the earlier meeting and appeared to have the match. Wilhem had hung on to beat Bennett at Norman, 4-3.

In the evening's first bout, Rice won 10-8 at 123 on riding time; Jimmerson turned the tables on McGuire at 130, 6-2; Al-Karaghoulis again prevailed, 8-6, on riding time at 137; NCAA champ Davis surprised our Haxel with a pin at 145 (score is now 8-6, OSU); Wells put OU back in front with a 9-2 romp over Rogers at 152; OSU's Stone drew with McGlory, 1-1, at 160; Mickish made it 14-10 OU with a 14-8 win over Drenbenstedt; Fozzard tightened it at 14-13 with a 6-1 win at 177 over McDaniel before the clinching bout.

The Sooners are now 11-1. Individually, they are led by Wells (12-0,

Heroes of the first OSU battle were (from left) McGuire, Rice, McGlory, and Al Karaghoulis who with Wells and Mickish won over their Poke opponents in the Norman clash.

48 points), followed by Rice (12-0, 40), Mickish (11-1, 38), Haxel (9-3, 31), McGlory (5-1-6, 27), Bennett (7-5, 27), McGuire (7-4-1, 25), Al-Karaghoulis, (7-4-1, 25), and McDaniel (5-5-2, 23).

The wrestlers were part of a very successful weekend of OU sports. The basketball team upset Colorado, 71-66, Saturday afternoon at Norman on regional television, knocking the Buffs out of first. It was the best game of the season for the Sooners, who made only eight mechanical errors. In no other game have they unleashed fewer than 20. Their defense was successfully evident for another innovation, and the possibility of salvaging the latter part of the season appeared brighter. The swimmers won also, 55-48, at Kansas in heading for their 13th straight aquatic title in the Big Eight. This could be Coach Jay Markley's greatest team. And Coach J. D. Martin's track team, into the indoor season at Pneumonia Downs, the drafty course under the stadium, wracked the cooperative OSU Pokes and the TCU Frogs in a triangular, 87½-50-12. The freshman roundballers won too, 94-70 over a Ft. Smith (Ark.) Junior College team. The only blemish on a peaches-and-cream weekend was the rapidly improving gymnastics team's close decision to Air Force. Coach Russ Porterfield's boys have improved spectacularly despite their continuing losses and should contend in another year. *END*

