



*On New Years Eve, the night before the 1968 Orange Bowl, the Big Eight champion Sooners acquaint themselves with the turf and presence of the stadium for the first time. Lights bathe the players in the silence of the deserted old edifice as Fairbanks talks to them about the next day's game. Above right, the offense runs its precision patterns to the clapping tempo of its teammates and coaches at the end of the field. With flawless execution, the Sooners ran against Tennessee in the first half the next night with almost identical ease.*

The photographs on these pages and the one on page 18 are by Ned Hockman, director of OU motion picture production and recognized also as an accomplished still photographer whose work has been shown in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.



## PROUD TEAM, PROUD SEASON

Second in the nation but first in the hearts of their emotionally wrung *aficionados*

Now that we've all this time on our hands—something like two months—before spring football practice, a pleasant way to pass the hours, so empty without the voices of Curt Gowdy and Paul Christman to fill them, is to savor the season just past. So while all the Stillwater grads are polishing those gauche orange-and-black state auto tags, why not curl up with some old Chuck Fairbanks Football Letters and drift into reverie?

The Sooners of 1967 are a team to revel in. They won ten of eleven games, often with drama, more often with devastation; they captured the Big Eight title; they were voted the second best team in the country, and they beat Tennessee in the Orange Bowl. We should have known. Fairbanks was quoted by Bill Connors as saying, before

the season began, that he had "always been lucky and a winner," which has to be either the most creditable statement by a public figure in 1967 or the most massive understatement since a recent Playmate was described as "a typical American girl."

In building such a gleaming season, the Sooners drew heavily on two of their most conspicuous resources, heart and desire, terms worn smooth through endless and tiresome usage by coaches and sportswriters but still laden with meaning and importance. It was these two immeasurable intangibles which, blended with skill, brought OU from behind to win against Kansas (14-10) and Nebraska (21-14) and held off surging Missouri (7-0) and Tennessee (26-24). The Sooners usually dominated their oppon-



ents, however, with chilling execution as demonstrated in scourges against Washington State (21-0), Maryland (35-0), Kansas State (46-7), Colorado (23-0), Iowa State (52-14), and Oklahoma State (38-14). The lone loss to Texas (7-9) was even valuable for it was in the Cotton Bowl that the team became aware of its potential strength. The team gained coherence against the Longhorns, and it played consistently, formidably, and sometimes awesomely the rest of the season.

The causes for concern in August became causes for celebration by December. Each of the pivotal points—the offensive and defensive lines, the punting, the sophomores, injuries—turned into strong suits, none more spectacularly than the offensive line, coached by Buck Nystrom, one of the stars of an outstanding staff. Nystrom is an emotional giant of a man who

imbues his charges with courage, determination, and pride. His line, green with sophomores, performed with brilliance. The Sooners led the country in rushing much of the season and finished first in the conference. Vince Gibson of Kansas State called it the “best coached offensive line I’ve ever seen.” It was at least a miracle.

The defense was equally impressive. Under the direction of another master coach, assistant head man Pat James, it led the nation in point prevention, built around magnificent Granville Liggins, best nose guard in the nation.

The player of the year was quarterback Bob Warmack. One of the nation’s most underrated men-under, a kid who went through almost two full seasons without a nickname (it’s Wicked Worm now) and who is so skinny, Frank Boggs points out, that

*Empty now as the last minutes of January 1 slip by, the OU dressing room at the Orange Bowl was only moments earlier a scene of exultation and celebration. The shouts and echoes have drifted away now. Only Coke cans, towels, and torn tape remain.*

he has to wear the number 11 jersey, Warmack was undeniable in 1967.

OU’s avoidance of injuries was crucial. As it turned out, not one starter was ever injured. The Sooners were solid all year. This would be remarkable for a marching band; for a football team it’s incredible.

The season ahead is another matter. There’s Notre Dame, North Carolina State, and Texas for openers, but it is unnecessary to burden oneself with such now. This is the time to reflect on the 1967 team and to envision the recruiting fruits it is certain to bring. The ’67 Sooners—they were among the best of OU’s great teams. END



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*Bob Warmack (left) began the year by being voted the outstanding back of the Alumni-Varsity game; in December he made the all-conference team, and to top things off, he was named the outstanding player in the Orange Bowl, the trophy for which he is not fumbling in the above photograph. In addition he set a number of records along the way in directing the Sooners on 34 touchdown drives, 22 of which were more than 60 yards. In 1967 he broke Claude Arnold's season marks for passing and total offense with 1,136 and 1,355. By the time he graduates next year, he will hold practically every Sooner offensive mark. In the photograph at right are coaches Pat James (left) and Chuck Fairbanks, bearing the Orange Bowl trophy with obvious pride and enjoyment. Fairbanks not surprisingly was named as one of football's coaches of the year. Not a bad beginning, eh?*