

FOOTBALL

In the year Fairbanks Two, there are probably very few college football teams as good or better than the University of Oklahoma Sooners. Unfortunately, six of them are on the OU schedule. Notre Dame, North Carolina State, Texas, Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska have, like the Sooners, the potential to be among the best in the nation this season. This makes OU's goal of equalling the success of 1967 as formidable as the task Hubert Humphrey faces in November, although the Sooners do appear to have a better chance to be where they want to be in January—in a bowl, that is—than does Mr. Humphrey.

The Sooners' offense will again be potent. The backfield, with the exception of the departed Ron Shotts, is intact. Its key, Bob Warmack, who already holds a bevy of school offense records, is back for his senior year. The league's leading rusher and scorer, junior Steve Owens, is at tailback with promising Marcellous Johnson, a junior college transfer, his back-up man. The spectacular big-play back, Eddie Hinton, sporting a magnificent Afro haircut, is at wing, and Mike Harper and Rick Baldrige will alternate at fullback.

The offensive line, despite the losses of all-league tackle Bob Kalsu and center Bob Craig, will be strong. Tight end Steve Zabel and split end Joe Killingsworth are juniors and returning starters. Ken Mendenhall, a

starting guard last year, moves to center, his high-school position, and Bill Elfstrom will replace him. Byron Bigby, weakside tackle starter in 1967, will move to Kalsu's strongside spot, and Jack Porter, on the second team last season, goes to Bigby's old position. Ed Lancaster will again handle weakside guard.

The defense, though seven of last year's eleven starters return, will be the unit which must improve the most. The reason is that Granville Liggins has graduated. This season fans will have an opportunity to see just how good Liggins was. Ken Davis, a junior college transfer, is being called upon to fill Liggins' strong, quick, middle-guard cleats, and it's quite an assignment. The middle guard must be good enough to take the pressure off the Sooners' lightish linebackers, returning Don Pfrimmer and sophomores Steve Casteel. The defensive tackles, starters for the past two years, Dick Paaso and John Titsworth, are seniors, and Jim Files, a defensive end, is back at his post. Another juco transfer, Larry MacDuff, will be at the other end. Gary Harper returns at monster, unflappable veteran and Steve Barrett is again at safety, and Bruce Stensrud, a junior, returns at a cornerback. Joe Pearce, another junior, who saw action last year, will take Bob Stephenson's place at the other corner.

The team's lack of depth is a con-

cern to Fairbanks. He has complained that few players are pushing the starters for positions, and this is not encouraging. Last season OU amazed the medical world as well as the football world by completing an 11-game schedule with no injuries to speak of. Not one starter was ever sidelined. It would seem unlikely that such good fortune could rest on the team two years in a row; a bridge club occasionally has a player on the injury list and football is somewhat more physical.

Last year OU won the close ones in the conference, slipping by Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska in games that could just as easily have gone the other way. Jeanne Dixon would be hard-pressed to predict a 7-0 mark for the league winner in 1968. Conceivably two losses might mar the records of the front-runner (or runners). The Big Eight is a deep, talented conference now, and a majority of the games will likely be very, very close among the six (OU, NU, CU, KU, MU, and OSU) teams that have a shot at the title.

If OU is to achieve national ranking and win or place high in the league, which is required if a bowl is to be realized, it will have to come out of its opening three games, in which the Sooners will be no more better than even money, at 2-1, and win at least five of the seven conference games. It's a big order. □

Bob Warmack, quarterback, elusive and confident, must again demonstrate his ability to lead the offense if the Sooners are to soar

