

BASKETBALL

About mid-January, following a slow and somewhat disappointing start by his team, basketball coach John MacLeod was talking about Missouri—a team the Sooners would meet a couple of days later. It was obvious that MacLeod considered this one of the big ones:

"It could be our most important game of the season. Missouri is 11-1, the league favorite and rated 18th nationally. If we can win, it will push our conference record to 2-1 and could turn the season around for us."

The Sooners did win—by a point, and in doing so brought their record closer to the .500 mark (six wins, seven losses). A week later, with an impressive win over Oklahoma State, they were second in the conference (3-1) and were looking more like the team Coach MacLeod had been saying they could be.

Biggest problem of the Sooners in the first half of the season was that they were a second-half team. They had looked very good or very mediocre, partially due to the dependence of the team on sophomores. "We've had to break them in fast," says MacLeod, "because of the number of injuries."

WRESTLING

Sophomores are Key to Season

Lost the first half of the season because of injuries have been senior Charles Hardin and junior Paul Crowell, two forwards on whom MacLeod was counting heavily; Rick LaCour, sophomore guard, and Russell Burks, junior forward. Larry Fernando, a junior guard, has been lost to the team because of scholastic ineligibility. That's five players—or a team, as MacLeod points out.

Sooner stalwarts have been, as expected, Bobby Jack who is also leading scorer, Scott Martin and Andrew Pettes. Kirby Jones, John Gorman and John Yule have also been seeing regular action as have sophomores Ted Evans and Tom Holland. Five of the regulars are seniors, accounting for the most extensive recruiting effort put together since MacLeod has been at OU. High school players recruited this year could be playing next year since the Big Eight has accepted the NCAA ruling which would allow freshman players in varsity football and basketball.

Leading the recruitment drive are assistant coach Dennis Price, now in his third year with the team, and freshman coach Joe Ramsey, the newest addition to the staff. Ramsey came to OU last spring from Robert Morris Junior College in Carthage, Illinois, where in four years he compiled a 125-25 record, one which won't be easy to match. He's working on it though. At mid-season the freshman Boomers were 5-0.

MacLeod's forces end regular season play against Missouri on March 11 at Columbia.

About the same time MacLeod was talking about Missouri, wrestling coach Tommy Evans was talking about his team's third opponent, California Poly. Had he been asked last fall to list problems which his wrestlers might encounter during the season, he could have started down the '71-'72 schedule.

OU met fourth-ranked Oklahoma State first and sixth-rated Oregon State next. One of the country's top small college teams, California Poly, was third on the schedule and was a team feared by Coach Evans, particularly since they had beaten Oregon State in early season, 18-17. In two previous meetings, OU had failed to beat the small college power.



Top left: Starters for OU basketball are (from left) Bobby Jack, John Gorman, Scott Martin and Ted Evans. Andrew Pettes, another starter, gets instructions from MacLeod. Top right: It may not look like it but wrestler Gary Breece (in white head gear) is in control. Below: Callard gets a fall.



The Sooners easily could have had a 0-3 record following the first three duals and still have been a good team. Their performance was closer to that which distinguishes Evans teams, however, and they came up with a 2-1 record instead, losing only to Oklahoma State, 15-22.

OU in pre-season polls was rated number five, and they meet every team rated above them (Iowa State, Michigan State and Washington in addition to two duals with Oklahoma State).

This is the second year in a row that Oklahoma's wrestlers have faced the season without the previous year's top winner. The team record was 9-7 last year, and for the first time in 17 years, OU failed to have a national champion.

Don't bet on that happening again. The number one prospect to challenge for a championship will be Gary Breece, an outstanding wrestler at 118. It was Breece who enabled the Sooners to win over Cal Poly. He had the flu and was playing against doctor's orders but he took his opponent, the defending NCAA small-college titlist,

by a 13-4 count. Breece, third in the NCAA last year, had opened the season by pinning Ron Thrasher of Oklahoma State.

A second prospect for the title is Jeff Callard, a freshman from East Lansing, Mich., who wrestles at 167. Callard fashioned an unbelievable 65-0 record his last two years in high school, and during his senior year pinned 33 of 35 opponents.

Others who should perform consistently for Coach Evans are seniors Bill Beakley, Tom Corbin and heavyweight Bill Struve. All are wrestling well and should place high in the nationals. Completing the senior roster are Joe Boone at 134 or 142 and Bill Speer at 150.

Likely regulars for the remaining weights are sophomore Eddie Webb at 126, freshman David Breece (Gary's brother) at 134, sophomore Mike Gilpin at 158 and junior Warren Reid at 177.

The Big Eight championships will be held in Stillwater this year on February 25 and 26. The NCAA championships begin March 9 in College Park, Maryland. JKF

**Coaches
MacLeod and Evans
could have a
very good year,
but they'll need
a little help
from their friends.**