

# The Sports Review

By Harold Keith



The chief Sooner ball carriers—left to right, Beryl Clark, Orville Mathews, L. G. Friedrichs and Jack Jacobs

**C**OACH TOM STIDHAM wants a sharper Sooner running game this fall.

"Our rushing attack last year had three very definite weaknesses in spite of the fact we won ten games," Stidham says, "We lacked 'climax' runners, we had a poor weakside attack and our downfield blocking was mediocre.

"Hugh McCullough pretty well typified all our best backs last year," the Indian rumbled on, "He was a terrific hitter. He always got us the two or three yards we needed for a first down. But we had no runners capable of going all the way from scrimmage, the kind that either makes a touchdown or loses ten yards on every play."

This fall the Sooners have a very fine potential "climax" runner in Orv Mathews, the Chickasha sophomore. Mathews ran 100 yards in 9.6, 220 yards in 21.2 seconds and 440 yards in 49.6 seconds, the first two of which are Oklahoma high school records that still stand. The Chickasha Rocket is perhaps the fastest high school runner ever developed in Oklahoma with the possible exception of Ira Davenport of Tonkawa who ran 100 yards on a dirt track in 9.8 seconds way back in 1908, several years before Mathews was born.

And Mathews is more than just a very fast runner. He follows interference beautifully, hugging his blockers until he gets the last ounce of protection out

of them. He has a deceptive spin which he employs when hit by a tackler. He has the makings of a good safety. He is a very tough, well-knit boy for a 165-pounder and seldom gets hurt. Also, he loves to play football.

Jack Jacobs, the stolid Creek Indian youth from Muskogee, is another dangerous runner. Weighing 185 pounds and standing six feet tall, Jacobs isn't as fast as Mathews. Nobody on the Sooner squad is, for that matter. However Jacobs should become a fine running back after a few games. He hits well off-tackle, taking his openings fast and hand-fighting the tacklers off. He has a trick of throwing his legs away from a diving tackler and he is perhaps the finest punter and forward passer on the squad among the new backs. He's what you mean when you say triple threat.

**N**EITHER Mathews nor Jacobs is entirely ready. No sophomore back is, for that matter.

"The finest triple threat back in the game can never be more than a five-minute player if he can't block, tackle and defend against forward passers," Backfield Coach Dewey "Snorter" Luster says, and that's logical.

"Pass defense is particularly important nowadays," Luster points out, "It's something you can't teach in a single afternoon to a boy coming up from high school. He's got to learn that it's a

cardinal sin ever to let a receiver get behind him or two steps ahead of him. He may have to give them a short pass sometimes, but never a long one. He has to be taught never to turn his back on a ball but to keep the passer in view at all times. He mustn't let a clever end fake him out of position.

"Although a defensive half's main duty is to stop enemy forward passes, he's also got to learn to meet all running plays from the outside. The average kid wants to dash straight at the ball-carrier and bust him. That's wrong. He'd only be a set-up for a lateral. We were able to beat Rice at Houston last year because their defensive left half covered from the inside on a running play. He wasn't even close enough for us to block when Red McCarty took a lateral and ran through his territory for our touchdown."

Last year, the Sooners gained 1,405 yards in ten games rushing. They ranked 34th in the Nation in this department although they were first in defense against running and second in percentage of forward passes completed. Fordham had the top running outfit with 2,849 yards followed by Tulane with 2,781, Pitt 2,449 and Tennessee 2,248.

The Sooners had their best running day against Kansas with 205 net yards gained. They were held to 80 yards rushing by Tulsa, 63 by Rice, 62 by Iowa State and 25 by Tennessee.

The brilliant Sooner forward passing attack, judiciously blended with the best running plays, was what made the Oklahoma offense click. The foe never knew what to expect.

So Stidham and his helpers are really working on that Sooner running game. They are stressing blocking, particularly downfield blocking. All the players not only block the first man, but are given secondary blocking assignments down the field ahead of the ball-toter. The idea is to shake loose "climax" runners like Mathews.

Until the arrival of Capt. Lawrence "Biff" Jones in 1935, Oklahoma had had weak running teams for several years. Ad Lindsey's 1930 aggregation with Clyde Kirk and Mike Massad cleaning out ahead of Guy Warren and Buster Mills was the last real running team the Sooners had before Jones. Stidham's teams have stayed up with the Jones standard on running and are surpassing it in defense and forward passing. Definitely, the Sooners are headed in the right offensive direction.

The figures on the rushing attack of the last seven university teams are available and are interesting. Here they are, figured in net yards which means the yards lost have been subtracted from the yards gained:

YEAR	COACH	G	OKLA.		OPP.		MARGIN
			RUSH	YDS.	RUSH	YDS.	
1932	Hardage	9	919	1,667	—748		
1933	Hardage	9	1,034	1,086	—52		
1934	Hardage	9	1,203	1,022	+181		
1935	Jones	9	1,488	617	+871		
1936	Jones	9	1,195	811	+384		
1937	Stidham	9	948	536	+412		
1938	Stidham	10	1,405	433	+972		

Stidham says the Sooners are going to throw the football more this fall than ever. That means there will be more Oklahoma forward passes this autumn even than last fall and the Sooners averaged throwing 21.3 passes per game last season.

How good will the Oklahoma passing be with Hugh McCullough, Bob West and Otis Rogers, the three best throwers, gone? McCullough had the highest percentage of completions in the nation last year, West, the big Cheyenne, was almost as good and little Rogers wasn't far behind either.

The team retains most of its better receivers, fellows like Bill Jennings, John Shirk, Frank Ivy and Alton Coppage. It lost a corking catcher in curly-headed Gene Corrotto, who is now assistant football coach at Bartlesville, and also in Howard "Red" McCarty, who won't play this year because of a slowly mending broken hip sustained in the Oklahoma Aggie game at Stillwater last year.

Who are the best throwers on the squad this fall? Probably Beryl Clark, Jacobs, L. G. Friedrichs, Mathews and Seymour. New receivers being developed include Ray Mullen of Seminole, Louis "Tree Top" Sharpe of Checotah, Lyle

Smith of Fairview, Maury West of Oklahoma City and J. S. Munsey of Norman.

Oklahoma has always had a dangerous forward passing game, thanks to Bennie Owen's shrewd development of the art back in the old days. The Sooners have been noted for such great passers as Claude Reeds, '13, Spot Geyer, '15, Skivy Davis, '20, Phil White, '20, Bob Dunlap, '33, Jack Baer, '37 and McCullough. Also for such sticky-fingered receivers as Glenn Clark, '11, Homer Montgomery, and Hap Johnson, '15, Jap Haskell and Tarz Marsh, '20, Roy LeCrone, '27 and Jack Harris, '34.

If Stidham and his aides can build 75 per cent as good a forward passing game as last year's, they will have done a pretty fair job and given their running game a valuable complement. And if they can construct fully as formidable a passing game this year after having lost throwers like McCullough, West and Rogers, the Sooner attack should be even more dangerous than last season because of the additional running strength that should commence to show after the first three or four games. But that's asking a lot in one year. The University will realize its greatest capitalization on the new crop of backs when these backs are juniors and seniors in '40 and '41, provided a strong line can be developed then to protect them.

The American Football Statistical bureau's ranking of the six leading forward passing teams in the nation last year:

	G	ATT.	PASS COM.	PASS INT.	HAD	YDS GAIN	PCT. COMP.
T. C. U.	10	201	108	7	1,641	.537	
Oklahoma	10	213	108	16	1,082	.507	
Columbia	9	157	76	11	936	.484	
Yale	8	196	92	15	1,080	.469	
Missouri	9	172	79	23	1,215	.459	
Navy	9	202	87	16	1,132	.431	

First casualty of the year for the Sooners was nobody else but Lawrence "Jap" Haskell, veteran line coach starting his 12th year of service, who will be out with a sprained larynx until the opening of the quail season.

Haskell blew out his vocal bearings two weeks before the Southern Methodist game trying to make the Sooners hear him give calisthenics commands with the south wind blowing thirty miles an hour against him.

In spite of Haskell's volume handicap, the line coach retained command of the salty slang for which he is famous here.

For instance, during the opening lap around the field, Haskell thought he saw Gilford Duggan, senior left tackle, dogging it.

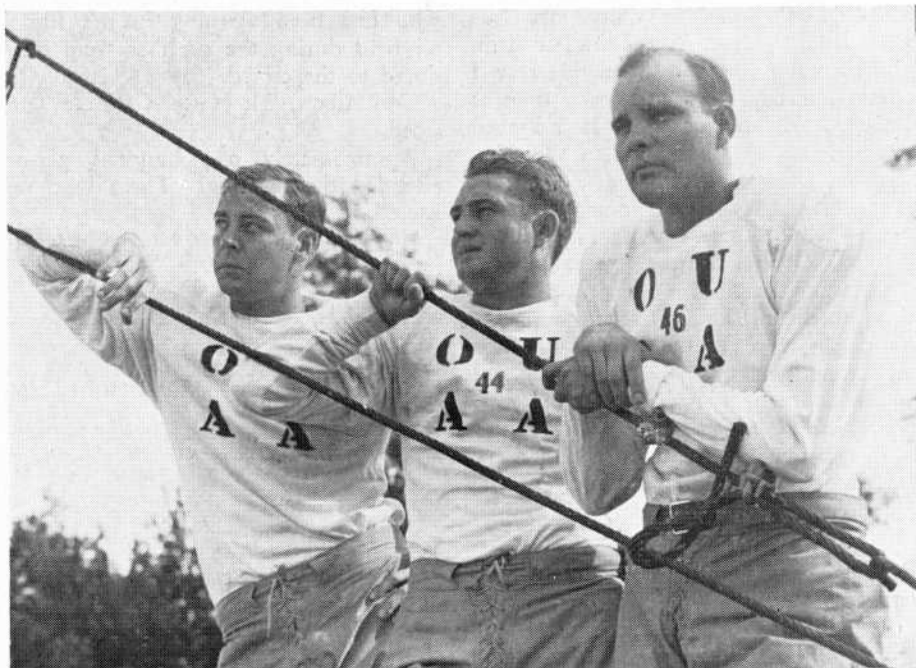
"Watch that single-footin' in there, big Doog!" he wheezed hoarsely, and the tackle caught cleanly, obediently broke into an elephantine trot.

How good is Coach Lynn Waldorf's Northwestern Wildcats and their new sophomore star, Bill deCorrevont?

Pop Warner was quoted recently in the *Chicago Herald-American* as saying Northwestern had the most powerful football team he had seen in years. He picked them to win the Big Ten conference championship in a breeze with Michigan second.

Baron Creagor, of the *Tulsa World* staff, reveals a new angle on deCorrevont.

"Although deCorrevont didn't show much in the principal spring practice game the public was invited to last April at Evanston, in a practice game a week later with the same lineups, when the public wasn't there, deCorrevont ran wild for seven touchdowns," Creagor wrote.



Oklahoma's veteran ends—left to right, John Shirk, Alton Coppage, Frank Ivy