

Publicity Fruit From the Orange Bowl

By Frances Hunt

IT would take a couple of statisticians with ruler and adding machines a month to figure out just how much national publicity the University of Oklahoma gained from the Orange Bowl game, and even when they handed in a report, it wouldn't tell the whole story.

About 9,000 clippings from out-of-state papers have traveled back to the University's news bureau by daily mail since before Christmas, and more are still coming. Any newspaper reader who hasn't read about the game must be one who limits his reading to the want ads, stock market reports and Sunday comics.

Since there are only 13,000 daily and weekly newspapers in the United States, and since no clipping bureau subscribes to every paper, it's fair to estimate that at least one newspaper yarn on the Oklahoma-Tennessee game has been published for every paper. Among those out-of-state clippings actually on file at the University, there are about four and a half stories for each of the nation's 2,000 dailies. As for inches of space received—they haven't been counted because it's too big a job.

Even society editors made frequent reference to the game, which attracted socially prominent spectators from cities in all sections of the country.

Action photos taken with high-speed cameras, pretty-girl pictures, Miami beach photos, sports columns, Winchell columns, cartoons, rotogravure sections, photos of the Sooner band, dope stories predicting the score, and hundreds of straight news stories about the Sooner-Vol combat were printed. Every move of both teams for days before they left Knoxville and Norman was chronicled. Of course every paper with a sports page printed a spot news story of the game itself. Then for days after January 2, follow-up stories, photos and post-mortems appeared.

IN fact, the one picture that stood out above all the others in popularity with newspaper editors, judging from the number of clippings received, was a syndicated photo of Jim Thomas happily bringing in his catch from a day of fishing, after the game.

The headline says, SETTLES FOR A COUPLE OF FISH. Below the picture was further explanation: "Oklahoma's football varsity was decisively defeated by Tennessee in the Orange Bowl, but when the Sooners extended their visit, Jim Thomas, guard, left Miami with a couple of trophies in the way of 45-inch sailfish captured in the Gulf Stream."



E. T. Hoberecht, student sports writer, surveys the deluge of newspaper clippings about the Orange Bowl football game that flowed in from all parts of the country.

About two hundred papers printed this piece of feature art, most of them using it in the week between January 10 and 17. At least one paper, the *Huntington* (Indiana) *Herald-Press*, offered it to its readers as late as January 24. It was printed in cities as far apart as Quincy Massachusetts, Santa Barbara, California, and Centralia, Washington, all customers of NEA service.

About twelve hundred clippings of photos had been sent to Norman by the end of the first week in February.

Sports writers may be surprised to know that only about 130 of these were "action shots" showing play during the game. "Queen art" surpassed this figure. Virginia Crawford, Tennessee girl who reigned at Orange Bowl festivities, was pictured in a single pose in about 150 papers. Small papers such as the *Cherryville* (North Carolina) *Eagle* and the *Point Pleasant* (West Virginia) *Gazette*, were using it as late as January 19. Besides the single pose, Miss Crawford appeared in some twenty papers in another picture, kicking a ball held by Chief West, Oklahoma Indian player; about eighty times with Waddy Young of Oklahoma; and another 25 times with Gene Corrotto.

The stadium itself was pictured in thirty papers. A shot of Tom Stidham and Waddy Young together appeared at least 85 times. Young and Bowden Wyatt of Tennessee were photographed in a layout published by about fifty country weeklies. At least sixty cartoons, some of them featuring Young, also were printed.

ONE of the most popular pictures was that of the Tennessee boys loafing under the palms. This publicized Tennessee, but of course Oklahoma too—and also the pleasures of life in Miami. A similar photo showed Sooner players soaking up the sun atop a fishing boat, before practice. Strangely, this lazy scene was rushed out to a number of Associated Press papers by Wirephoto. Another popular A. P. shot headed BOYS, TAKE A LOOK AT THAT WATER, showed Young, Shirk and Bowers gazing out to sea, though barred from swimming by Stidham, who, the editors, said, was "sunburn-conscious." The beach scene included two palm trees and two bathing beauties.

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nal was one of the distant papers that printed a large picture January 1 of Young and Shirk at a table under the palms. The *Journal* headed it, TENNESSEE OUGHT TO SEE THIS, and commented further: "Here is one of those pictures that football coaches are apt to paste in locker rooms. It shows Waddy Young and John Shirk, Oklahoma ends, engaged in a bruising battle of backgammon. The Sooners meet Tennessee tomorrow in the Orange Bowl game at Miami."

The *Miami Daily News* published a whole rotogravure section devoted to the game on New Year's Day, and the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* gave a page of roto pictures to the Sooners and Vols the same day. An Orange bowl picture also made the roto section of the *Atlanta Journal*.

Two weeks later the *Miami News* printed in its roto section a 10-by-13-inch photo of the Orange Bowl crowd and the city surrounding. The photo was taken from a Goodyear blimp. Underlines read: "The greatest sporting crowd ever assembled in Miami is shown in this remarkable aerial photo seated in Roddey Burdine stadium for the Orange Bowl football game. In the background are Miami's bayfront skyscrapers, Biscayne bay, part of Miami beach and the Atlantic ocean."

Best publicity agents for both Sooners and Vols were the Associated Press writers and the Miami News Service, which makes a business of glorifying Florida.

About one hundred newspapermen worked in the press box during the game. A few of the best known names were Damon Runyan, International News Service; Jack Kofoed; Sid Feder, A. P.; Walter Stewart, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; Everett Morris, *New York Herald-Tribune*; Jack Bell, *Miami News*. Ted Husing broadcast the play over C. B. S. H. J. Aronstam, United Press staff correspondent in Miami, wrote reams of copy before the game and covered the contest itself.

A newspaper clipping is hard to tag definitely, for it may be a news story, a personal column, a piece of "art" or a combination of the three. But as nearly as can be determined, the number of signed columns of comment, prediction, censure, advice, and sports dope in general numbered about 975.

Most prolific commentators were Eddie Brietz, who writes "Sports Roundup" for A. P. papers; Whitney Martin of the A. P., the man who insisted Oklahoma would win the game; Sid Feder of A. P.; Grantland Rice, North American Newspaper Alliance, who picked Tennessee to win but predicted after the game that Oklahoma in the 1939 season will have

enough men back "to hold its own against anyone." Drew Middleton, A. P. writer who thought Tennessee would win; and Walter Winchell.

Winchell in his usual brisk style said Tennessee would "whip Oklahoma." After the game, he wrote: "New Yorkers who heard Ted Husing broadcast from Florida's Orange Bowl said the static gave him a lisp which made 'Sooners' sound like 'Thooners'... And 'Tennessee'?"

Three or four hundred of the columns were published only in the writers' own papers. "Jack Bell's Sports Desk" in the *Miami News* gave unlimited space to the game, and Fred Russell, writer of "Sideline Sidelights" in the *Nashville Banner*, wrote at length on the Sooners as well as the Vols. Several columnists quoted Harold Keith, '29, sports publicity director for Oklahoma.

Tennessee was favored generally by the predictors. However, besides Whitney Martin, at least one other columnist, Bill Braucher of New York, thought Oklahoma would win. Braucher's column, clipped from the *Bridgeport (Connecticut) Post* of December 28, doped the Sooners to win, 14 to 0. He wrote: "We like Oklahoma to beat Tennessee in the Orange Bowl at Miami, though the two clubs are of equal merit. This forecast is based on the idea that a wrestler can beat a pitcher. The wrestler is Waddy Young, the Sooners' redoubtable end, and we expect him to throttle the passing attack of George Cafego. Another part of the guess is that Cafego will not get to first base if he tries cracking into the Oklahoma line."

Parke Carroll, sports editor of the *Kansas City Journal*, went down to Miami and wrote back: "So far as the game is concerned, your suntanned correspondent believes Oklahoma has at least an even chance that it will be a low score contest. Tennessee will not run over the Oklahoma line. The Vols do not have the power to stage a sustained drive of 50 or 60 yards through the big Sooner forwards. They may do it on a long pass or a reverse that is executed to perfection."

Humorist H. I. Phillips in his "Sun Dial Column" in the *New York Sun*, included among his remarks January 5, a dispatch from "Miami Max" as follows: "The visitors who went from the track to the Tennessee-Oklahoma football game got pretty befuddled. I heard one fellow complain because the football scorecard didn't have past performances and saw another try to bet \$2 on Tennessee 'across the board.'"

President and Mrs. Bizzell were photographed often during their stay in Miami. The best photo of them among clippings received showed them watching

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the game, accompanied by their young grandson from New Orleans. President Bizzell's picture also appeared in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* just before Christmas, with a special interview he gave during his visit to the Crescent city en-route to Miami.

The Orange Bowl was mentioned in the "Traveler" column of a paper as far from Miami as the *Toronto (Canada) Globe & Mail*. Society-page readers in the wintery city were informed that "more than 32,000 fans will pass through the palm-bordered gates of the Orange Bowl stadium Monday for the clash between the elevens of Tennessee and Oklahoma.

Society columnists who mentioned the game included "Sally Forth" of the *Atlanta Constitution*; "Rosalie," writer of "Socially Speaking" on the *Miami Herald*; Jean Barry Adams, writer of "Tabbing the Town" in the *Charlotte (North Carolina) News*; and 'Evie' Robert, writer of the "Eve's Rib" in the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*. Miss Roberts found the game thrilling, the Oklahomans "no slouches," but the most heart-touching angle to her was the presence of Freddie Snite in his iron lung.

Hugh Hough's column in the *Miami Herald* in the Sunday edition of January 8 had some of the most interesting post-game observations. Hough felt this way about it all::

"Looking back over the gridiron encounter, more enjoyable as a slugging match, which took place here last week, a few hints for next year's Orange Bowl might be recorded:

"Suggest to ticket scalpers that they listen to reason and not to rumor.... Charge higher prices for those seats in the shadow of the press box Arrange for a private work stall for Damon Runyan so that his multitude of friends, admirers and nuisances can't bother him.... See that Walter Winchell gets a seat off the 30-yard line, even if W. W. is not unhappy on the 30-yard line, being no chiseler himself... Arrange for a larger armada of airplanes to drag signs over the bowl, furnishing something to watch during excessive times-out or the stepping off of 15-yard penalties.

"Have all 17 or 18 native bands learn at least one piece in advance so that they can play it in unison when the gala day comes.... Bar announcements over the public address system which smack of personal publicity.... Why not let the Ted Husing broadcast come through the Bowl P. A. system to the customers who pay as well as out over the radio to those who don't? Make more of a to-do in presenting to the crowd the educational heads of the competing colleges, a college president being almost as important as a coach or the visiting mayor on even a football day. ... In selecting teams to play the game, consider the bands of the likely schools as well as the team, thereby continuing the fine spectacle supplied by

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the Tennessee and Oklahoma musicians... Keep the hawkers, squawkers, salesmen and concessionaires where they belong, which is not between spectators and the events they have paid to see... And make the same arrangements as this year with the weather bureau."

Even a novelist wrote about one of the Sooner players. Philip Wylie stepped in to write "The Madding Column" for Helen Muir of the *Miami News* on January 7, and gave all his space to his version of how the Rod and Reel club played host to the Oklahoma players at dinner and a fishing trip in the Gulf stream. Wylie went as one of the escorts, for three reasons: he was too small to play football in college; his younger brother did play tackle, but is dead now; and Wylie didn't know much about Oklahoma or the people there.

Wylie watched Jim Thomas hold an Allison—a big tuna—on his line for an hour and three-quarters without getting tired. Then the Allison kinked the leader wire with his tail and snapped it.

Wylie tells the rest of the story:

"We just sat there. I waited to hear the Oklahoma boy curse. Or see him cry. I've seen men—old enough to be his father—cry like kids when the leader came back broken. Jim turned toward me. 'Kind of discouraging, isn't it?' he said gently. And afterward he added with a grin, 'Anyway—I can tell 'em all about the big one that got away—can't I?'"

"They lost the game—those kids. But they've got something out there they didn't lose. And this yarn actually has the perfect ending, too. Not ten minutes later Jim hung a sailfish. And we boated it. And then, as if the fates wanted to repay him for that tough break, another sail came along and Jim caught that one, also. And those were the only two sailfish caught by all the Oklahoma squad—and all the Tennessee squad—in their day at sea. The two top fish. Jim was given the prize that night.

"I might add that the boys got sick, too—all of them—more or less. I offered to take them back to shore for a swim. 'We came out to fish,' they said. 'We're having a keen time. Excuse me for a minute.' And when they came back—still smiling: 'Best time we ever had!'"

"Nope. I won't forget that day. Ever."

All in all, the huge stack of nine thousand clippings about the Orange Bowl is ample proof that Oklahoma made itself well known nationally by the trip to the Orange Bowl.

And next Fall, whether the Sooners win, lose or draw, it is quite likely that Oklahomans traveling in New York or San Francisco or Chicago will be able to find a story about Sooner football in the Sunday morning sports section without having to thumb through the whole paper to find a one-paragraph item buried in the ads.