

Sooner Sports

By HAROLD KEITH

For mystery and fast action, the Tucker eligibility drama rivals the fiction products of our better novel writers

Manhattan, Kansas,
January 2, 1942

BIG SIX ELIGIBILITY COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY RULES GERALD TUCKER INELIGIBLE FOR ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION AT OKLAHOMA. RULE MADE ON ARTICLE ELEVEN. RULING REQUESTED BY A MEMBER INSTITUTION.

DR. H. H. KING

The above telegram, sent to Professor Walter Kraft, Oklahoma's faculty representative, bluntly notified Sooner athletic authorities that Gerald Tucker, Oklahoma's 200-pound 6-foot 4½-inch sophomore basketball phenom from Winfield, Kansas, was ineligible for athletics at Oklahoma for life because Oklahoma had violated the migrant rule, which is rule eleven in the Big Six Conference code.

The conference eligibility committee represented to have made the ruling is composed of Mr. King, the Kansas State faculty representative, W. W. Davis of Kansas, and H. B. Bergman of Iowa State.

Mr. Kraft quickly put in long distance telephone calls to both Mr. King and Mr. Davis and discovered several irregularities concerning the decision which he explained to the Oklahoma Athletic Council at a special meeting Sunday afternoon January 4. Among them were:

(1) Oklahoma had not been given a hearing by the eligibility committee, nor an opportunity to present its side of the argument on the migrant rule question. The wisdom of such a hearing was evident at a later meeting before the entire conference when Oklahoma presented new evidence that speedily killed the migrant rule charge.

(2) Two of the three members of the conference eligibility committee that pronounced Tucker ineligible were from what turned out to be complaining schools and this raised a serious question of propriety.

(3) Mr. King misrepresented the vote

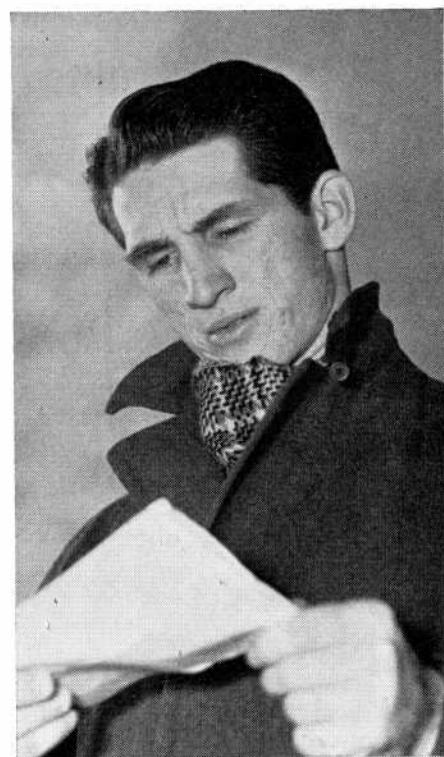
of one of the committee members, Mr. Davis of Kansas, who told Mr. Kraft that he had never voted to disqualify Tucker on the basis of the migrant rule, but because of the residence rule. Mr. Davis repeated this at the Kansas City meeting, asserting that "Mr. King apparently misunderstood me over the long distance telephone." Yet Mr. King's original telegram had stated that the three-man eligibility committee had unanimously barred Tucker because of the migrant rule. Mr. Davis is one of the three members of the committee, therefore the migrant rule and life disbarment decision *wasn't* unanimous and even appears to have been confused during the hasty long distance telephone poll Mr. King made to ascertain it.

(4) Mr. Davis's disavowal of having voted on the question of the migrant rule raises the question of what "member institution" requested the ruling on the *migrant statute*, as Mr. King's telegram claimed. It wasn't Kansas and it apparently wasn't Iowa State, and Nebraska and Missouri weren't polled. Did Mr. King, the chairman of the eligibility committee, take it upon himself to raise the question?

(5) No school made any objection to Tucker's eligibility until after the player had participated in five non-conference games in December, averaging 15.4 points per game. This appeared, to Oklahoma, a deliberate attempt to get Tucker just before the Big Six Conference season began early in January. Why wasn't the player protested before Oklahoma's first game with Southern Methodist at Norman December 13?

In the face of all this improper procedure Oklahoma protested the decision vehemently and demanded a hearing before the entire conference membership, declaring she would play Tucker in the opening game against Kansas unless given a chance to defend herself. Mr. King granted the hearing which was scheduled for Kansas City on Monday, January 5, the day before the Oklahoma-Kansas basketball game at Lawrence.

MEANWHILE, Big Six territory newspapers aired the unusual case thoroughly. Oklahoma drew both support and excoriation from the press. The Sooners absorbed their most vitriolic journalistic flaying from Dan Partner, an able writer and member of the *Kansas City Star's* sport staff who formerly played football at Kansas State and worked on a Manhattan newspaper. Partner wrote several scorching indictments of Oklahoma in the *Star* and warmly defended his alma mater. Oklahoma writers, particularly those from Tulsa and Oklahoma City, were sympathetic to the Sooner side. Oklahoma got its most considerate treatment from an out-of-state newspaper from Bob Busby of the Lawrence, Kansas *Journal-*



BARRED AND UNBARRED

Gerald Tucker is notified that he is permanently ineligible ... and later that it seemed to be a mistake

World, although one of the complaining schools is located at Lawrence.

At the Kansas City meeting, Mr. Kraft presented an important piece of evidence that quickly killed the migrant athlete charges against Tucker. That portion of the migrant rule that Oklahoma was held to have violated reads: "It shall be the duty of the authorities of such institution (Oklahoma) to ascertain through correspondence the validity of the reason or reasons for such transfer." In disbaring Tucker for life, the conference eligibility committee (with the exception of Mr. Davis of Kansas whose vote was misrepresented) had held Oklahoma did not comply with this section of the rule.

But Mr. Kraft showed at Kansas City the copy of a letter he had written to Mr. King on November 19, 1940, a few days after Tucker enrolled at Oklahoma, officially appraising Mr. King of Tucker's enrolment and asking Mr. King for information regarding any irregularity in the transfer, in accordance with the conference rule. Before he wrote the letter, Mr. Kraft had talked to Tucker and learned the player had left Kansas State simply because he didn't like the school.

Mr. Kraft also presented at Kansas City a reply from Mr. King in which the latter pleaded for time and suggested the Oklahoma athletic director, who was then Tom Stidham, correspond with the Kansas State director concerning the migrant rule. Meanwhile Oklahoma changed directors and in the resulting confusion, this was never done. Here lay Oklahoma's only

vulnerability in the migrant charge, and it was a technical one. Someone in authority at Norman should have followed the matter to its full conclusion.

However, the fact that Mr. Kraft had promptly asked for the information on the transfer showed Oklahoma was acting in good faith and although the rule puts the burden of ascertaining this information upon Oklahoma, Oklahoma held it sent the original letter promptly and that had Mr. King co-operated as promptly, instead of delaying the matter, there would never have been any controversy over the migrant rule.

The language of the rule placed the responsibility upon the "authorities" of the two schools, and did not specify athletic directors, which was why Mr. Kraft wrote Mr. King instead of Mike Ahearn, veteran Kansas State athletic director. The faculty men clearly are in control in the Big Six organization, so Mr. Kraft appears to have been correct in his initiation of correspondence with Mr. King. If further evidence of this is needed, who tried Tucker at Kansas City? It certainly wasn't the athletic directors.

Once this evidence was presented, the Big Six faculty representatives quickly and righteously dropped all charges connected with the migrant rule, including the life disbarment. It was the only fair thing to do and in no wise represented charity to Oklahoma. The fact that Tucker had been in residence at Norman for one year and one month after his enrolment before playing in his first basketball game, helped. So did his grades. The lad is an excellent student, making nearly all straight A's and B's in his courses in the Oklahoma College of Business Administration and leading both the basketball team and his pledge class at Phi Delta Theta fraternity in scholarship. Oklahoma was instructed to again request information concerning Tucker's transfer, this time from the Kansas State athletic director. This was done and Mr. Ahearn replied promptly, officially giving Kansas State's consent and declaring he knew of no irregularity concerning the transfer.

However, Mr. Davis, the Kansas faculty man, introduced the further question at Kansas City of whether Tucker was eligible under the residence rule. This had been the basis of Mr. Davis's objection all through the case, and Oklahoma gives him full credit for sincerity, Mr. Davis having called it to Mr. Kraft's attention by letter during the Christmas holidays while the Oklahoma team was on a long road trip into the East and North. However, it would have been far more fitting if the Kansas faculty man had written the letter in November, before Tucker had played in any games.

Oklahoma pointed out that Tucker had attended school 13 months in residence at Oklahoma before playing his first basketball game, that he had transferred, after seven weeks of the first semester of 1940

at Kansas State into precisely the same courses at Oklahoma, finishing the last eleven weeks of the semester at Norman and taking his finals and obtaining his grades from Oklahoma.

However, the conference faculty men unanimously voted Tucker ineligible on that portion of the residence rule which defines a semester of residence as any semester in which the student has not withdrawn from school within four weeks of the date of his registration. Tucker stayed seven weeks before leaving Kansas State, and the Big Six dads therefore credited his first semester to Kansas State although most of it was spent at Norman where Tucker's final examinations were taken and his grades given.

Oklahoma protested that this portion of the residence rule, written in 1928 when the Big Six was formed, was designed solely to prevent tramp football players from enrolling at a Big Six school, playing through the football season, withdrawing from the university at the football season's close and enrolling the following autumn and playing another season without penalty, which had been a popular custom in the old days. Oklahoma emphasized that this rule had never before been applied nor was ever meant to apply to an athlete honorably transferring from one school to another. The Big Six interpretation meant that the first four weeks at one school count more toward a semester of competition than the last fourteen weeks at another school, which Oklahoma held was unreasonable.

Also, Oklahoma maintained that instead of applying to Tucker's enrolment at Kansas State, the rule was intended to apply only to Tucker's enrolment at Oklahoma. Tucker did not withdraw at Oklahoma within four weeks after he enrolled at Norman; in fact he did not withdraw at all from Oklahoma, thus completely satisfying the rule when applied to his registration at Oklahoma. In other words, the rule, in its present equivocal form, did not stipulate to which of a transfer's two institutions it referred. In fact, there is no evidence that this rule was ever intended to apply to transfer students, anyhow.

After hours of argument during which Mr. Kraft of Oklahoma for a time had strong support around the Big Six council table on Oklahoma's interpretation of this point, a vote was taken and Tucker was declared ineligible until the second semester 1941-42 which means he cannot play until the Missouri team invades Norman February 7.

Although Oklahoma accepted this decision, it wasn't generally popular over the state nor on the campus, where it was the general opinion that the conference had resorted to extreme interpretation of a phrase of the residence rule written for an entirely different purpose to save the face of its eligibility committee which had obviously erred on the migrant clause.

At any rate, the decision was final and meant that Tucker must pass a third semester of almost perfect classroom work at Oklahoma before becoming eligible for competition the second semester.

The case may actually prove helpful by causing a revision of parts of the Big Six code which are now ambiguous. Both the migrant rule and the residence rule need to be clarified. Also, the duties of the eligibility committee should be expanded so that an accused school may have a hearing before the committee before action is taken. Another suggested revision would forbid hasty telephone polls by the eligibility committee, provide a voting plan that would eliminate voting errors, and require protesting schools to get their claims before the conference before a protested player participates in varsity games. Also, membership on the eligibility committee should not be for life, but a definite term fixed and membership passed around to the different schools. At present the eligibility committee is composed of faculty representatives of what Big Six newspapers call the "Little Three," Iowa State, Kansas and Kansas State, whom many followers of Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri regard as the non-progressive bloc of the league.

Herb Allphin Is New Swim Coach

A new coach is blowing up the waterwings for the Oklahoma swimming team this season.

His name is Herb Allphin, he is the University's new physical education instructor and he formerly coached swimming at Kansas.

Allphin's current worry is Oklahoma's finest swimmer last year, Mike Travis, the young Jewish lad who won the Big Six breast stroke. Travis is back but can't practice pending recovery from a foot ailment.

The new coach was cheered when Bob Danielson, brawny back-stroker who was out of competition last season, joined the squad. Other new arrivals include Al Gamez, the South American free-styler, and Bob Joels, a promising sophomore from Clarinda, Iowa.

Other swimmers hard at work include Ziegler McPherson, crack junior back-stroker; Ken Lampkin, sophomore diver from Hobart; free-stylers Joe Andrews, Bob Chadderdon and Joe Cheek; back-stroker Gene Kiefer and breast-stroker Leo Slazer.

Martin and Richard Jacobson, wide-shouldered sophomore twins from Oklahoma City, also have joined the squad and begun training. They are breast-strokers.

The tentative swimming schedule:

- Feb. 2—Oklahoma Aggies at Norman (M).
- Feb. 7—Oklahoma Aggies at Stillwater (S).
- Feb. 9—Kansas State at Norman (M).
- Feb. 16—Nebraska at Norman (M).
- Feb. 23—Nebraska at Lincoln (M).
- March 6, 7—Big Six meet at Ames (F, S).

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Sooner Sports

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Track Team Meets Nebraska Indoors

Anxiously awaiting the return to form of Plato Andros, their Oklahoma A. A. U. shot put champion, the Oklahoma indoor track and field squad is busily practicing for its dual meet February 21 against powerful Nebraska at Lincoln.

Andros, a 215-pound Greek boy, last June pushed the shot 47 feet 7½ inches as a freshman to win the state A. A. U. title. However, he reported back from the Christmas holidays with a flattened knuckle on his throwing hand and can't start practicing for a few days yet.

Andros injured the digit while working in the oil fields during the holidays. "I'm teaching him now to lead with his right and swing with his left," Coach John Jacobs laughs.

Six Sooner lettermen are busily running and jumping. They are Bill Lyda, Big Six indoor 880-yard champion and record-holder; Dick Smethers, Big Six two-mile indoor champion and record-holder; Orv Mathews, Big Six outdoor 100-yards champion; Donald Benson, 440-yards; Ray Mullen, high-jumper and Archie Walker, low hurdles.

Sophomores now reporting include hurdlers John Sharpe, Carthage, Missouri; Son Wright, Waurika; Bob Hodges, Enid; half-miler Hoyt Burns, Washington, Oklahoma; two-miler Bill "Chigger" Pruet, Norman; and weight-heaver Andros who lives at Oklahoma City. Sprinter Dale Mitchell, Cloud Chief sophomore; hurdler Bob Lunsford, squad man; shot-putter Homer Simmons, squad man and Ken Farris, a transfer from the Northeastern State College at Tahlequah, are also out.

The Oklahoma schedule:

INDOORS

Feb. 21—Nebraska at Lincoln (S)

Feb. 28—Big Six meet at Kansas City (S).

OUTDOORS

March 28—Texas Relays at Austin (S).

April 18—Kansas Relays at Lawrence (S).

April 24, 25—Drake Relays at Des Moines (F, S).

April 30—Oklahoma Aggies at Stillwater (Th).

May 9—Colorado at Norman (S).

May 16—Kansas State at Norman (S).

May 22, 23—Big Six Meet at Lincoln (F, S).

June 15, 16—National Collegiate meet at Lincoln, Nebraska (F, S).

June 26, 27—National A. A. U. meet at Dallas, Texas (F, S).

Tucker Star of Road Trip

After its 57-34 defeat of Southern Methodist University, Coach Bruce Drake's young Oklahoma basketball team made a tour of the East and North, playing four formidable teams. The scores:

Oklahoma 36, St. Johns 47 at New York.

Oklahoma 32, George Washington 28 at Washington, D. C.

Oklahoma 26, DePaul 40 at Chicago.

Oklahoma 42, Bradley Tech 47 at Peoria, Illinois.

Gerald Tucker, Oklahoma's gifted sophomore center, was the team's star. In the St. Johns game, played before 16,082 fans at Madison Square Garden, Tucker scored 19 points, more than one-half of the total garnered by the entire Oklahoma team.

After that game George Kirksey, United Press sports writer of New York, wrote: "If Gerald Tucker, the lanky Oklahoma center, isn't the best collegiate basketball player in the country, then he's the best sophomore performing on the court this season."

Against George Washington, Tucker was unstoppable. With three minutes left to play, and George Washington leading 28 to 21, Tucker suddenly scored three field goals. Sophomore Dick Reich's rebounder gave the Sooners the lead and a free throw by Tom Rousey and a set-up by Bob McCurdy clinched the verdict for Drake's boys.

Tucker whipped in 14 points in the defeat to DePaul at Chicago, and dunked 11 against Bradley Tech to close the trip, besides feeding, guarding and passing flawlessly.

With only 24 hours to prepare an offense against the formidable Kansas Jayhawkers of F. C. "Phog" Allen after the Big Six verdict disbaring Tucker for conference play the first semester, Oklahoma was thumped roundly at Lawrence by Kansas, which won 54 to 32.

However one week later Oklahoma defeated Kansas State at Norman 47 to 40 with Paul Heap, 6-foot 4-inch guard whom Coach Drake quickly moved into Tucker's pivot post position, scoring 14 points on spin shots and rebounds to spark the Oklahoma triumph. Reich also came through with six field goals while A. D. "Ug" Roberts, acrobatic forward, hit 11 points and Bob McCurdy, Purcell sophomore, gave an amazing performance rivaling those of the great Marvin Snodgrass, Oklahoma's "Human Handcuff" of 1938-40. McCurdy rode Jack Horacek, Kansas State scoring ace, so cleverly that Horacek got only three shots at the goal all night, sank one basket.

Allphin Taught at Oklahoma City

Herb Allphin, Oklahoma's new swimming coach and physical education instructor, isn't a stranger to Oklahoma, having served as physical director at Oklahoma City Classen high school from 1921-23 and at Oklahoma City Central high school from 1923-25.

The new Sooner aquatic tutor took his B. S. in physical education at Kansas and his M. A. at Iowa. From 1925 to 1940 he was physical education instructor at Kansas and started competitive swimming there. He came to Norman this fall from

his job as aquatic director of the Fort Worth, Tex., Y. M. C. A.

In 1936 Allphin went abroad to study swimming pools of Central Europe. There he found that children learn to swim early since school lasts almost the year round and swimming is taught in the schools, starting with the breast stroke instead of the crawl, as is the custom in the United States.

Jacobs Can Punt In Any Clime

It didn't take Jack Jacobs, Sooner Indian whose touchdown pass tied up the East-West football game long to establish the fact he was King of the West punters, Tackle Roger Eason reported upon his return from New Orleans.

Both Eason and Jacobs represented Oklahoma in the game.

"About the first day of practice, Bud Reinhard, California's tackle who was touted as the longest kicker on the coast, walked up to Jake and offered to kick for the cokes," Eason narrates.

"Jake took him up. They stepped out on the 30-yard line. Reinhard punted one up field to the ten, a boot of sixty yards, but Jake knocked one into the end zone, about a 75-yarder. They tried it again, but always the same thing happened. Jake could out-kick anybody, Frankie Albert of Stanford included, by from 12 to 15 yards."

It's funny how an East-West game can unite players who were old rivals during the regular playing season.

Eason did most of his buddying around in the West camp with Malcolm Kutner, Texas right end whom he bucked so viciously in the Texas-Oklahoma battle, and Vike Francis, big easy-going Nebraska fullback whom Eason threw for a four-yard loss on the vital fourth down at Lincoln when Major Lawrence "Biff" Jones was about to score on Oklahoma.

And you'd never guess who Jacobs' pal was at Baton Rouge. Nobody else but Kennie the Kutie Casanoga of Santa Clara, the Bronc safety the Indian waved at in the Bronc-Sooner game at Norman just before Jacobs shot a long punt down the opposite sideline.

"We had an awful fine bunch of boys on the West team," Eason declared, "They were all good boys. This little Frankie Albert was a peach of a guy. His newspaper clippings hadn't spoiled him a bit. Kutner and Daniels of Texas were tops. Everybody kidded them about the Texas pictorial spread in Life magazine. They just grinned."

The Texas boys told Eason and Jacobs that Bible's team pointed more sternly for Oklahoma than any other team on the Texas schedule, even Oregon.