

# Sooner Sports

By HAROLD KEITH

A FORMIDABLE SCHEDULE, a promising wartime squad. That's the story of Oklahoma's 1944 football prospects.

Coach Dewey "Snorter" Luster's defending Big Six champions play the best clubs in two major conferences this autumn. Texas, Texas Aggies and Texas Christian, coached by Dana Bible, Homer Norton and Leo "Dutch" Meyer, will be encountered from the Southwest Conference. Oklahoma also meets all the Big Six teams, each with a rejuvenated outfit, and plays a late November clash with Coach Jim Lookabaugh's Oklahoma Aggies, who always shoot their best loads at the Sooners.

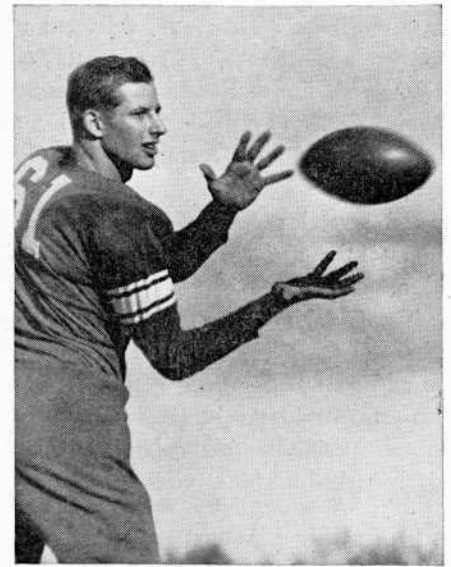
The opener here September 30 with the Norman Naval Air Station Zoomers could be the hardest game of all. The Zoomers have a stout tailback-fullback threat in Len Eshmont and Emil Sitko. Both made the All-America service team last year, Eshmont at Del Monte, Sitko at Great Lakes. Previously Eshmont played at Fordham, Sitko at Notre Dame.

Lighter and speedier than last year, the Sooners this fall will blend their single wingback formation with a single wingback T formation. The idea is to flank stronger, heavier foes, instead of trying to overpower them frontally.

And with Derald Lebow, last year's all-Big Six tailback, and Tommy Meason, Ardmore freshman, throwing, the Sooners may try to cut enemy communications by dropping an airborne army behind the enemy lines. Last year Oklahoma had throwers and receivers but passed only 620 net yards, as against 1,617 net yards gained by running. The boys liked to run so well that the quarterbacks rarely called up a pass.

The Sooner staff of Luster, Dale Arbuckle and Bruce Drake is readying two backfields for the 1944 wars. The No. 1 combination at present includes three starters from last year, Lebow, the 170-pound tailback, Charlie Heard, the 165-pound wingback and Homer Sparkman, the 148-pound blocking back. Billy Wright, a 170-pound fullback from Lubbock, Texas, High School, is playing departed Bob Brumley's spot. It's an all-Navy quartet.

The No. 2 outfit is nearly all civilian. Meason, the 17-year-old Ardmore boy, is at tailback and Basil Sharp, 190-pound Pawnee boy, at fullback. Both were high school players last year, and eventually will be fine collegiate players. Archie Bradley, sub end of the 1942 team, is at wingback. The blocking back is 18-year-



FAST AND LIGHT

Key man in Oklahoma's football offense this fall is Homer Sparkman of Anadarko, 155-pound quarterback and ace blocker.

old Don Weir, a sandy-haired Naval V-12 lad whose last football was played at Kerrville, Texas, High School. He is the son of Hienie Weir, center and captain of Dana Bible's great Texas Aggie outfit of 1922 that licked "Bo" McMillin and the Centre College Praying Colonels at Dallas in a post-season upset.

Oklahoma's problem is development of reserve linesmen. The Sooner backs clearly overshadow the forwards. Gone from last year's short-handed team are two all-Big Six linesmen, Tackle Lee Kenyon and Guard Gale Fulghum, not to mention Guard Don Link, also a starter, and such letter men as Omer Burgert, Lewis Dunn, Jim Desmond and Joe Breeden.

Don Tillman, fighting 165-pound guard who played 60 minutes in Oklahoma's surprising 20-13 trimming of Missouri for the conference title, hasn't reported yet because of an operation on his eye. Replacements for all these departed gladiators are weak.

Luster's 1944 outfit must also contend against precedent. No Oklahoma team winning a championship ever repeated the following year. Tom Stidham's Sooners of 1938 had even better prospects in 1939 but finished third. Bennie Owen's undefeated Oklahoma teams of 1911, 1915, 1918 and 1920 lost a total of 15 games in 1912, 1916, 1919 and 1921. Everybody points for a defending champion.

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