
Sooner Sports

By HAROLD KEITH

THE UNIVERSITY basketball team is making an old man of its coach, Bruce Drake.

Popularly called the Roundball Runts, because its starting team averages only approximately 5 feet 9½ inches tall, believed the shortest team ever developed at Norman, the team has won only seven of its tough 12-game schedule to date, yet has given spectators more thrills per each dime of admission than any other three clubs in the midlands.

Drake's youthful Purveyers of Pandemonium have already played six games this season that weren't decided until the final moment of play. And more are in the offing.

When the Runts play, the fans come away lathered with perspiration and with hearts pumping fiercely, same as the players. A survey of play-by-play accounts of Oklahoma's games to date discloses that the score has been tied 56 times and the lead has changed hands 69 times, making a total of 124 bedlam situations already this season, and the season isn't yet one-half gone.

No wonder Ted Owen, veteran Sooner trainer, couldn't find his bottle of little white "nerve" pills with which to dose Coach Drake following Oklahoma's 48-45 double overtime nose-out of Nebraska at Oklahoma City January 13.

"I found the bottle but it was empty. I had eaten all the pills myself," Owen says.

That Nebraska game was the wildest of all. Twice it looked like the Runts were licked, and defeat meant virtual elimination from the Big Six race since Oklahoma had already lost a one-point thriller to Kansas State at Manhattan.

With time about gone, Nebraska led 36-34. Oklahoma refused a free throw in the final seconds because she had to try for two points, instead of one. Bill Johnson, freshman center, got them with a long set shot which he flipped off his glossy, black hair, forcing the game into the first five-minute overtime.

Again it looked like the Runts were doomed. With only seconds left in the first over-time period, Nebraska led 41-39. Then Bob Koenig, Nebraska guard, knocked Harold "Scooter" Hines, 5-foot 5½ inch Runt forward, ten feet off the court with a flying block.

Nobody expected Hines to get up after that wallop, much less get his mind back on his work. But Hines crawled drunkenly to his feet, staggered to the foul line, shrugged off the tremendous pressure, took a long breath and pitched in both free tosses to plunge the wild game into a second overtime! The ball didn't even touch the hoop on either throw.

Then it was the turn of Drake, the Runt coach, to further fever the fans. As the second over-time period began, Drake withdrew his entire first team and substituted his green second five. It looked like the act of a madman. But Drake's strategy was to rest the Runt regulars until Nebraska scored on the second team, then rush the Runts back in. In other words, he was willing to trade a field goal for a minute or two of badly needed rest.

But the Sooner seconds did better than that. They exchanged field baskets with the Huskers and the score was still tied when the Runts raced back on the floor. Refreshed by their short siesta, they hit the goals that won, Don Buelow, frail little Enid boy, coolly laying up two, one on a feed from Hines.

It was then that Trainer Owen discovered he had eaten all the pills he was supposed to have saved for Coach Drake.

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