

Sooner Sports

By HAROLD KEITH

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A tailback who can kick, pass and run his routes smartly appeared the greatest Sooner need as Coaches Dewey "Snorter" Luster, Dale Arbuckle and Harry Phillips started practice September 1 at Owen Field.

The sudden ending of the war probably won't see any of the University's 132 lettermen or star freshmen with eligibility left arriving home in time to make the football team. Not before the second semester, and maybe not that soon, were the Sooner stars who marched away to war expected to return in sizable quantities.

Good tailbacking is a necessity for a successful college football team. Oklahoma A. and M. rode to a Cotton Bowl title last fall behind the running and passing of Bob Fenimore, an All-America triple-threat back. Tulsa's greatest teams were fielded the years she had Keithly and Dobbs alternating. The Sooners themselves became a national power during the era of such great tailbacks as Hugh McCullough, Beryl Clark and Jack Jacobs.

With Derald Lebow, the converted fullback who so competently passed and powered Oklahoma to Big Six championships in 1943 and 1944, headed for duty on a destroyer and Tommy Meason and Johnny West, his 1944 alternates, neither available this fall, Sooner coaches have been under tremendous pressure of finding and schooling a tailback in three weeks.

Two high school lads, 17-year-old Alfred Needs of El Reno and 17-year-old J. O. Thompson of Oklahoma City Capitol Hill, and Johnny Steward, a Navy lad from Los Angeles who played last season at Louisiana Tech, were the cream of the summer crop. All will be challenged in the autumnal workouts by Howard Hawkins, 180-pound Purcell High School boy who lays out a long punt and was recently discharged from the Navy.

The coaches didn't get much of a look at Bob Foote, a 145-pound Navy trainee from Petersburg, Texas, who played some last fall at Millsaps College but missed much of the Sooner summer drills because of a "charley horse." Jack Fentem, a clever-running little Ada cottontail who was a formation quarterback in high school, was even switched to left half as the hunt was hotly continued this summer.

If the fullbacking looks like it can take care of itself without Basil Sharp, 190-pound standout at that position last fall, Sharp has the talent to make a tailback of the Phil White and Frank Potts type. He kicks and passes better than is generally realized and runs with power and speed. He is the only returning back who lettered here last year.

Sooner coaches like the potentiality of Thompson, Needs and Steward. Thompson's booming off-tackle running when the hole closed has been reminiscent of Hugh McCullough. Needs' height gives him a fine view of his pass receivers in the secondary and he runs slashingly. He may be used at fullback. Steward is the smallest of the three but is game and tough and wants to play. The Sooners usually letter three or four tailbacks so there's plenty of opportunity for all.

Although military calls may alter it somewhat, here's the way the Sooners line up position by position in August, with the Nebraska game only eight weeks away:

ENDS—Lettermen Omer Burgert and John Harley. Navy trainees—Aubrey McCall, Cambridge, Maryland, Gene Preston, Dakota City, Nebraska, Ralph Streicher, St. Louis, Missouri,

Bill Cummins, Arkansas City, Kansas, Lamont Eltinge, Chicago, Illinois, Bob Martin, Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Civilians—Don VanPool, Oklahoma City, Joe Harrell, Dalhart, Texas, Bill Huffman, Oklahoma City, J. M. DeMoss, Ada.

TACKLES—Lettermen Bill Hallett, Albert Stover and Millard Cummings. Navy trainees—Elmer Friday, Punta Gorda, Florida, Jim Basham, Fort Worth, Texas, Bob Avent, Canyon, Texas, Albert Seyrenian, San Francisco, Bob Nes, New Orleans, Dick Lee, Modesto, California, Clifford Dunn, Cisco, Texas. Civilians—Jim Colb, Pawnee, Julian Medaris, Marlow, Clyde Woods, Purcell.

GUARDS—Lettermen Thurman Tigert and Don Tillman. Navy trainees—Ernest Davis, Berkeley, Michigan, Lyle Bartlett, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Don Keys, Wichita, Kansas. Civilians—Henry Schreiner, Seminole, Lester Jensen, Norman, Carl Smith, Holdenville, Lindsey Davidson, Ada.

CENTERS—Navy trainee—Jerry Rhee, Los Angeles, California. Civilians—Bob Brindley, Oklahoma City. Bob Bodenhamer, Waurika, Woody Barkett, Oklahoma City, Homer Fincannon, Pawhuska.

WINGBACKS—Navy trainees—Bill Irvin, Bartlesville, Dick Jackson, Phillips, Texas, Joe Richardson, Sherman, Texas, Kent R. Martin, Asher, Willibald Hanus, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Civilians—Laddie Harp, Fairview, Alan Greenburg, Oklahoma City.

BLOCKINGBACKS—Navy trainees—Everett Harvell, Memphis, Tennessee, Roy Rhodes, Tallahassee, Florida, Kent T. Martin, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, Tommie Riles, Crossett, Arkansas. Civilians—Bill Price, Norman, Clifford Stone, Antlers, Jim Hill, Oklahoma City.

FULLBACKS—Letterman Basil Sharp. Navy trainees—Jack Venable, Little Rock, Arkansas, Bill Seal, Wellington, Kansas, Jerry Dunlap, Tulsa. Civilians—Jim Parmer, Mangum, Paul Teas, Dallas.

TAILBACKS—Letterman Johnny West. Navy trainees—Johnny Steward, Los Angeles, Bob Foote, Petersburg, Texas. Civilians—J. O. Thompson, Oklahoma City, Alfred Needs, El Reno, Howard Hawkins, Purcell, Jack Fentem, Ada.

Glass Backboards And New Maple Floor

With a brand new Sooner basketball layout consisting of glass backboards, improved lighting and a shiny new maple floor nearing completion, Bruce Drake, Oklahoma coach, has a good talking point with high school players this summer.

The new Sooner basketball layout is part of a reconstruction plan designed to ready the Fieldhouse for the University's vastly-increased physical education program. By September 1 the Fieldhouse floor will be able to accommodate three classes simultaneously and will have twice as much floor space, says Hugh McDermott, chairman of the men's physical education department.

The roof will be patched to keep the rain out and the lights lowered to improve illumination. Downstairs bleachers have all been removed and the old floor ripped out. Two concrete slab foundations from wall to wall with a moisture and termite-proof covering are being laid, over which will go the maple strip flooring.

Built in 1928 by Athletic Director Bennie Owen, the Fieldhouse was only one-half finished. It was hurried to completion in time to be filled by a crowd of 5,280 fans who saw McDermott's all-victorious Sooner basketball team that year defeat Dr. F. C. "Phog" Allen's Kansas Jayhawkers 45 to 19, ending a Jayhawker domination of six consecutive Missouri Valley Conference basketball titles.