

The Sooners and Choo Choo

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: Thousands plus thousands of words were released nationwide over news wires grinding out copy about "the SUGAR in the real SUGAR BOWL" (Oklahoma vs. North Carolina)—the Number One Football classic, New Year's afternoon 1949. Additional thousands plus thousands of words of description via the radio networks flashed to millions of listeners throughout the world. What we consider the outstanding "word picture" of this great classic came over the wires to the news desk of THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL (Memphis, Tennessee) from the typewriter of its Sports Editor, WALTER STEWART. Stewart's detailed and vivid report of this classic (some 65 minutes after the final gun sounded) is being quoted in full by SOONER MAGAZINE as the final "historical document" on this Sooner accomplishment. We like it—hope our readers throughout the world enjoy it also. Ted Beard)

SUGAR BOWL, New Orleans, Jan. 1—"Striking with numbing power and spraying chips with every angry stroke, a raiding band from Oklahoma on the Western Plains applied tommyhawks to the skulls of immigrants from North Carolina, beat them almost unrecognizable this blue-bordered New Year's Day, and when the remains were finally identified the scoreboard was scarred with the legend: Oklahoma 14, North Carolina 6.

"It was a blood-thirsty Oklahoma line which upended the scales—a sledge-fisted unit which beat the mortar from between the stones of a well-famed Carolina wall and scattered stones themselves all over New Orleans. Running the ball down the sky-blue Tarheel throat throughout the afternoon, the Sooners clung to the earth as though they had found oil there, but it was the airlances which placed both Okie touchdowns on the front burner—an intercepted pitch in the first period and a cloud-scaring Oklahoma pass in the third.

"Charles 'Choo Choo' Justice followed script by playing the best ball on the field, but his supporting cast simply was not quite worthy of him. *And Charles himself folded badly in the withering finish, when his control escaped him and he threw more wild pitches than a political pollster.* His revolting stomach may have caught at the throats of 85,000 who watched—filled these throats with a massive cry of adulation.

"Three times, 'Choo Choo' was in a position to go all the way—needed only a meaty block in a

key sector, but the Tarheels were never able to supply it and perished as a consequence.

"North Carolina was never in front and never really deserved to be there. And yet the Tarheels were emotional cheats who raised the hearts of their supporting legion again and again—dropped them into a vacuum of gloom as the solid Sooners exerted pressure which was murderous in its intensity.

"Oklahoma struck a gusher on the game's 17th play as the opening North Carolina assault rebounded on a pass interception which was carried 66 yards to the Tarheel 14 and an eventual touchdown. Taking a fumble on the Okie 30 a few bruises later, North Carolina took the egg into scoring terrain, but lagged by a point when Bob Cox's placement was a few widths of the third period. North Carolina never rallied. Oklahoma apparently didn't intend that it should.

"As could be reliably expected, the Oklahoma attack was geared to old fashioned football. The Sooners ran the ball 65 times and threw only four passes, but one of them snapped the Tarheel spine with an explosive note plenty heard in China.

"Brooding in the locker room while his squad licked gaudy wounds, North Carolina's Coach Carl Snavely said:

"Oklahoma had a big, fine, rugged team and played smartly. Mitchell certainly is a smart quarterback. Greathouse was as good as we expected him to be. They were able to make those first

downs and hang on to the ball. Their kicking game surprised us. That fellow Royal was a big help with his good kicking.

"As for our team, we had a little tough luck, were a little erratic and a little off. Our offense fell down on us but you have to give credit to Oklahoma's fine line for that. I suppose they were better than we were and we gave them some assistance too. Our passing game was greatly off. Charlie Justice is a much better passer than he showed today and so is Rodgers. Weiner dropping the ball in the end zone hurt, but that's football."

"It is certain that this oil-fingered effort on the part of all-America End Art Weiner was a shattering blow. It fell into the last minute of the first half when Justice gunned the ball from the nine to Weiner who took it in the end zone at the terminal of a stag-like leap—then allowed it to trickle down his arms to the dull turf. Had he held it the Heels would have gone to the tunnel leading 12 or 13 to 7 instead of being on the wrong end of 7-to-6, but that as Socrates used to say, is football.

"The opening kickoff rose up against a day fresh, clean-hewn and sparkling as a coin hot from the mint. The sun poured chill and honey-colored light into the vast concrete canyon which is the Sugar Bowl and 300 trumpets sliced the crowd's roar with shrill triumph. Poinsettias flamed at each yard marker so that Oklahoma and North Carolina rushed against each other through a gauntlet of crimson.

"Justice received this scenic kickoff on his 17 and guided fading hips to the Heel 36. Hosea Rodgers lost six trying to pass, but Choo Choo faked a pitch and worked nine through center. He flipped to Bob Kennedy for 12. Then Carolina began to smoke at the ears, Rodgers assaulted center on a spinner and gushed through for 11. Kennedy dropped five on a fumble, but Rodgers made it back and Justice flipped a pass to Weiner who clawed it down in a 22-yard advance. The ball was on the Oklahoma 14 with first down on the board when Choo Choo passed into the right flat. Myrle Greathouse, Okie fullback, snared it at full stride and set out for Carolina with a two-man convoy.

"It appeared that Sooner Greathouse had nothing to do but run when Dan Steilgman, Tarheel center, cut in front to shatter the pattern . . . to allow Eddie



In the picture at the left more Oklahoma visitors to New Orleans include Don Welch, '48Law, Mrs. Welch, and an unidentified Sooner fan, all of Madill. On the right side of the frame are Mr. and Mrs. Martin L. Dowell and Mr. and Mrs. William H. Meissinger of Tulsa.



These pictures taken in New Orleans on December 31 show that Sooner fans were happy and confident even before the big game in the Sugar Bowl was decided in Oklahoma's favor. In the picture on the left, reading from left to right are: Mrs. George McDowell, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Geist, and George McDowell, '32ba, '36m.ed, all of Oklahoma City. On the right are A. D. Black and Jack Black of Norman.

Knox to steam up from behind to hobble Great-house on the Carolina 14. And Oklahoma needed nine plays to reach the checkerboard end zone. Jack Mitchell added four thrusts to 12 yards. But North Carolina, aided by a five-yard penalty, braced superbly. It was fourth down on the Tarheel half-yard line when Mitchell fell over right tackle. Bill Macey had ample opportunity to make the save, but Mitch slipped past for six points and Les Ming made it seven with a kick.

"An exchange later, North Carolina was placed in the pilot's cab when Lindell Pearson fumbled a handoff on the Okie 27 and diving Joe Romano recovered for the Tarheels and the Southern delegation went over in five plays.

"Rodgers threw a 15-yard pass to Kentucky in the right flat and a double-reverse to the same wingback netted nine to the three. Justice was knocked at the one, then Rodgers steamed over and Cox missed—Cox, who had concerted 33 times in 37 kicks during regular season. Oklahoma had another chance early in the second period when Darrell Royal was roughed as he punted and the ball carried down to the Tarheel 32. But Carolina dug in and took over on its 25. Another punt-roughing penalty gave the Sooners a neat chance on the Heel 34 a few plays later, but they could make nothing of it.

"Taking over on his 15, Justice ran for 23 yards in two whacks at the right side of the line. And then, with about two minutes left, Carolina weirdly decided to kick on third down. This time Justice was worked over and the ball taken to midfield. Choo Choo cut back over right end—was tackled on the 28 and lateraled to Big Tarheel Tackle Chan Highsmith, who went on to the 16. Charley threw to Cox for seven and then Weiner made his epic muff. Justice was only a yard from first down on the seven and Oklahoma was presented with the leather.

"In the third, Justice kicked out on the Sooner 47 and Royal immediately fell back and pitched a monumental spiral down the center. There was glorious opportunity for knocking the ball but Sooner Frankie Anderson plucked it from the mittens of defender Bill Flemish and was flattened on the 10. A smack at center was firm for three and in the next venture, Lindell Pearson broke over left guard to score and Ming probed the space between

the post. That was about all there was to it. Several formalized gestures of defeat followed, however.

"Late in the game Justice knitted two blows for 11 yards and a first on the Sooner 40 but he lost his passing eye and could never find the pesky thing again. One of his throws went 15 yards out of bounds—the next landing in Sooner Bobby Goad's receptive arms on the Oklahoma 40. The Sooners put together their first downs and were knocking on the Carolina 30 as the thing finally frazzled to a finish.

"There wasn't much Tar left in the Eastern contingent. Oklahoma had knocked out most of it for good.

STATISTICS

	N. Carol.	Okla.
First downs	12	15
Net yards gained rushing	128	186
Forward passes attempted	21	4
Forward passes completed	8	1
Yards forward passing	82	43
Forwards intercepted by	0	3
Yards gained run back interc.	0	84
Punting average	38	36.8
Total yards all kicks returned	49	47
Opponent fumbles recovered	2	1
Yards lost by penalties	30	40



Oklahoma's "official" rooters sat in a special box at the Sugar Bowl game. From left to right they are: Mrs. Bud Wilkinson, Mrs. Roy Turner, Governor Turner, Mrs. George L. Cross, and President Cross.