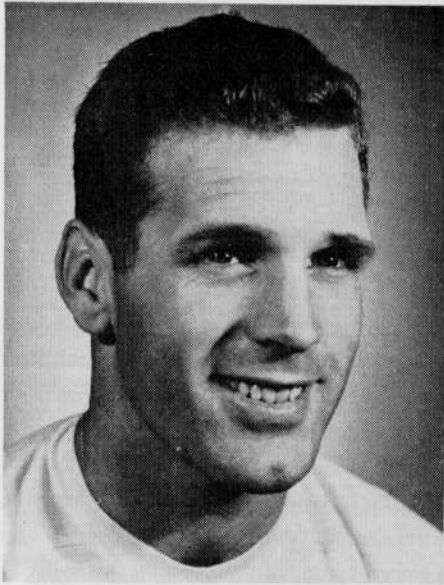


Look for the Swami

When December comes, that's what the football faithful will be doing. But every man is an expert until the whistle blows and the editor fearlessly enters the Tea-Leaf reading conference.

By David Burr, '50



LEON HEATH
Greatest in the Nation?

With varying degrees of optimism, the football forecasters have put Bud Wilkinson and the Sooners squarely behind the 8-ball. This is to be another great year for the Sooners and their followers, trumpet the pigskin sages. And to quote Bob Busby, sports staffer of the *Kansas City Star*, "Son, always string along with the champion."

Busby follows his advice but crosses his fingers in the doing. For Busby likes Oklahoma to repeat as champion of the Big Seven with the other schools strung out in the following order: Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa State, Colorado and Kansas State.

The once-a-champion-always-a-champion school of thought has reached a fever pitch among the prognosticators. Even the Big Seven coaches give Wilkinson's charges the favorites' role with Missouri rated nearly even. All of which leaves Kansas Coach Jules Sikes unmoved. He sees Missouri as the top campaigner in the Big Seven. Wilkinson is likewise unimpressed by the flurry of rosy literature flooding the market concerning the Oklahoma team.

Last month in *Sooner Magazine* Bud

wrote, "We could lose all of our early games—one or two of them by big scores—but we are hoping that our improvement each week will enable us to play a close game with all our late season opponents."

Fans may consider Wilkinson's gloomy outlook just so much crying which is expected from every coach and especially from the more successful ones. I don't know whether such was Bud's intentions or not. I'm inclined to doubt it. I think he was most serious and that he had good reason for his pessimism. For Wilkinson has seen Wade Walker, George Thomas, Jim Owens, Stanley West, Dee Andros, Charley Dowell, Darrell Royal, Bobby Goad, and Leon Manley depart through graduation and Lindell Pearson because of an eligibility ruling of the Big Seven.

Nor had the ax completed its head rolling at graduation time. Bob Ewbank, senior quarterback who would have done much of the team's punting, Tom Carroll, outstanding sophomore back who was expected to see much action this fall, Gene Cook, Carroll's alternate half-back, also a sophomore, Bob Pyle, sophomore back, and Bill Coffman, sophomore end, were members of the national guard and are now on active duty with the 45th division.

True, only Carroll could have been considered a starting player, but the loss of three fine sophomores and an experienced quarterback will weaken the reserve strength of the team.

What would a national emergency do to the 1950 squad? Just to give a brief idea of the devastation that could result consider these figures: four of five coaches, including Wilkinson, are reservists and 42 of the Sooners' 58 varsity players for 1950 could be called.

Such is the gloomy 1950 picture. It's quite unlike the 1949 prospects when the major worry was whether or not Darrell Royal could fill General Jack Mitchell's shoes.

But all is not lost, however. There are some players who will undoubtedly make

the season more pleasant for Wilkinson and staff.

Leon Heath, The Mule Train from Hollis, is being rated as the No. 1 fullback in the nation. That's fair enough considering his 9.12 yards per rush last season that lead the nation in that category. His Sugar Bowl derring-do helped capture the fancy of the crystal gazers but for Sooner fans, his blocking and running all season long had brought the same conclusion. Before alumni settle back in their easy chairs and relegate Heath to an All-American berth, it should be remembered that most All-Americans come from the top ten teams which should indicate a good season is in order for both Heath and the team before he can reach the football heights.

Jim Weatherall, Hooker tackle, was named on ouija board expert Stanley Woodward's All-American team. Weatherall saw comparatively little action on last year's squad where he alternated with Leon Manley. Yet he was one of the two sophomores to be considered on the first string—Dick Heatly, Mangum back, was the other sophomore.

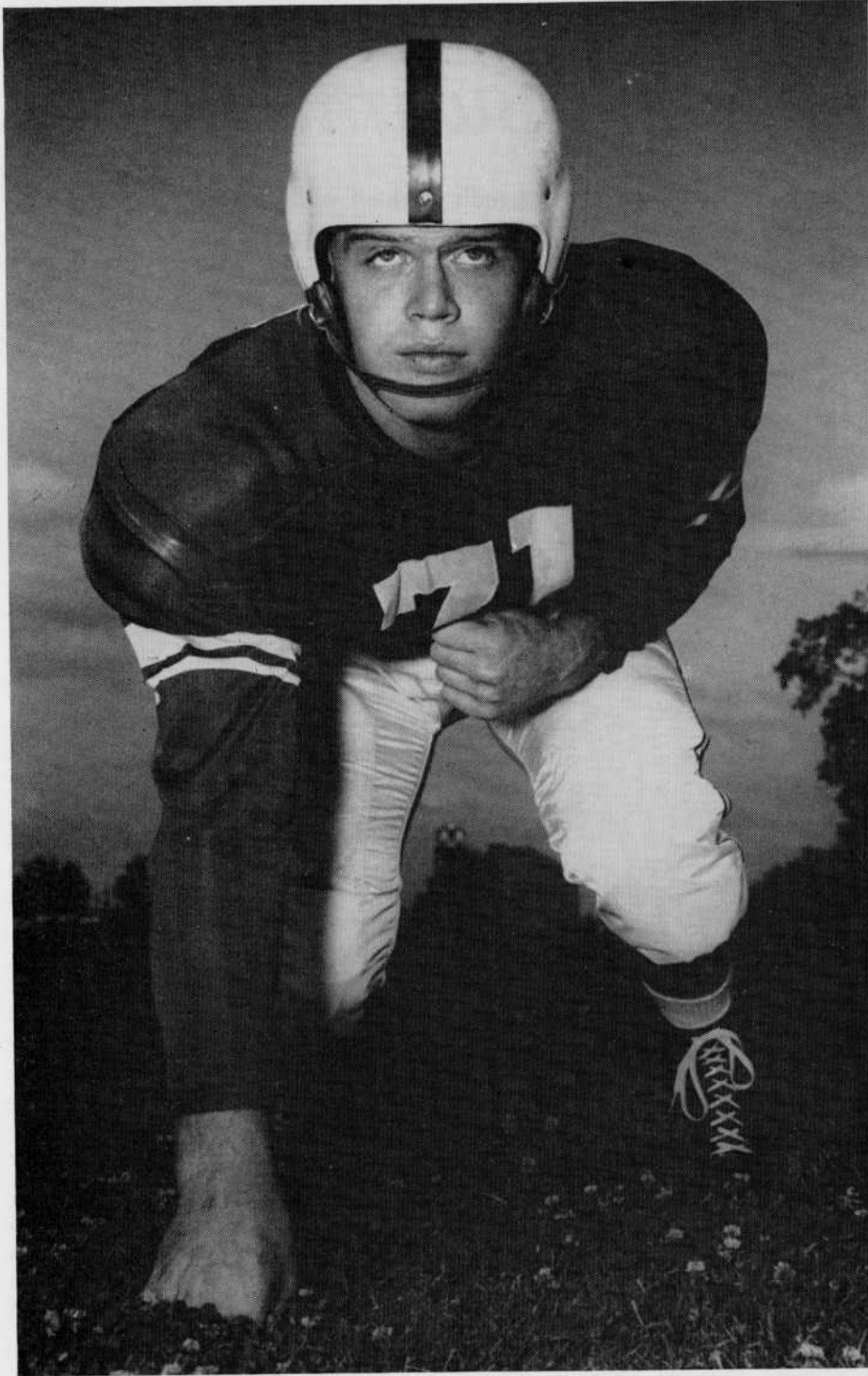
There are other capable performers who should comfort Bud in a time of need. Frankie Anderson, end from Oklahoma City; Ed Lisak, Kalamazoo, Michigan, ace

Press Box Tops

The Sooners' press box received national recognition in mid-August. By unanimous vote the members of the American Football Writers Association chose it as the nation's outstanding press box.

Charles Johnson, *Minneapolis Tribune* sports editor and chairman of the writers' press box committee, declared that the Sooners have exceeded the efforts of all other colleges and universities in providing accommodations for the working press.

Harold Keith, '29ba, '39ma, director of sports publicity, attended the annual meeting and cheerfully accepted the honor in behalf of the University.



Jim Weatherall, Hooker tackle, has been named on several pre-season All-American football squads. A junior, Weatherall saw only a moderate amount of action last year but has been chosen as an outstanding tackle mostly on his playing potential.

defensive halfback; Buddy Jones, Holdenville, brilliant safety; Claude Arnold, quarterback from Okmulgee; Norman McNabb, Norman co-captain and guard, and Harry Moore co-captain and center, from Blackwell, have proved their ability.

As the season progresses many sophomore names will make the sports columns. One that's sure to be mentioned is Billy Vessels, halfback from Cleveland, Oklahoma.

The schedule is not exactly loaded in favor of Oklahoma retaining its national

rating as the No. 2 team. The major hurdle that Wilkinson faces is the October 14 tilt with Texas. From all indications Texas will be laying for the boys from north of the Red River. And Texas seems to have the material to take home the ten-gallon hat. According to Wilkinson, most of the teams in the Big Seven will be sporting nearly equal strength so that an upset is possible on any given Saturday. Two of the roughest entries in the Big Seven, Kansas and Missouri, are scheduled for successive Saturdays. Kansas is set for No-

vember 11 and Missouri for November 18.

All of which brings us to the *Sooner Magazine's* own set of predictions.

1. The Sooners will lose two games. Texas will tumble their tormentors and either Missouri or Kansas will provide the other defeat. The odds are with Kansas although Missouri will field the best squad. Kansas tackles O.U. at Lawrence where they're mighty tough and Missouri visits Norman where the Sooners can be mighty rough.

2. The Big Seven conference should see co-champions with Missouri and Oklahoma holding forth.

An excellent season for the Big Red would be nine wins and one defeat—that administered by Texas. A good season would be eight wins and two defeats.

Give a little or take a little from the foregoing estimate and you probably have as good a prediction as any. Anyone can look into the future if there's a deck of cards or a pot of tea leaves handy. But the horrible truth remains that Bud Wilkinson and his assistants, Gomer Jones, Frank Ivy, '40 phys.ed, Bill Jennings, '46ed, '49m.ed, and George Lynn, can only come up with so many miracles. I wish I would have a divine visitation that informed me of a win over Texas. Then I'd believe in miracles.

Bud's a Bit Gloomy

Following one of Bud Wilkinson's latest press interviews, Phil Dessauer, UP sports writer, wrote:

"If Leon Heath plays like an all-American full back; if Clair Mayes holds up the line; if the army looks the other way and all the sophomores play like seniors—The University of Oklahoma may be able to win one or two football games this autumn.

"That's about the way Coach Bud Wilkinson sizes up his chances—for public consumption, at least—despite the 'team to beat' tag hung on the Sooners by the other Big Seven Clubs.

"Wilkinson told members of the press . . . the 1949-50 Sugar Bowl champs will be lucky to win one of their first three games, and "the rest of the season depends on how we got over the shock of our Texas defeat."

Of course, Wilkinson can be excused for his outbursts of pessimism. However football championship prospects look dim indeed compared to a year ago.