

FOOTBALL LETTER

1951 Season Forecast

Norman, Okla.

Dear Sooner:

It's a pleasure to write to you again and to discuss our 1951 football prospects with you.

We're going to field another new team again this fall. It will be the most inexperienced squad we've had since I've been here. We are plugging our losses with squad men and sophomores who will be strangers to most of you until you've seen them play several times. But I think you're going to like them. Win or lose, I think they're going to hustle and improve with every game.

I thought we were unusually fortunate with our last year's team, far more fortunate than we can hope to be again this season, and we face about the same obstacles this year as last. Our physical strength was only modest. We lost 7-13 to Kentucky in the Sugar Bowl. We were behind in the fourth quarter against Texas Aggies, Texas, Kansas and Kentucky, yet saved the first three with fighting rallies. We were tied 21-21 with Nebraska at the half on our field and although we won, Nebraska scored five touchdowns on us. Colorado gave us a bruising battle before bowing to us at Boulder, four touchdowns to three. Never in the last four years have we had so many close games. Only superb hustle and fight prevented our 1950 team from having a mediocre year. And we were



GOMER JONES
... Top Line Coach

extremely lucky to go through the season and not have any key players injured when we needed them for critical games.

Although I doubt very much if it's in the cards for us to have another miraculous season like 1950, we can still have a good year if our new team will show the same hustle and morale as the fighting squad of '50. I thought last year's team proved that football is still primarily a game of spirit.

Last year we lost ten starters. This year we've lost seven starters from our offensive team, RE Frankie Anderson (All-American), RT Dean Smith, RG Clair Mayes (all Big Seven), C Harry Moore (all Big Seven), LG Norman McNabb (all Big Seven), QB Claude Arnold (all Big Seven) and Fullback Leon Heath (All American). Also, we lose such fine reserves as RT J. W. Cole, Dean Smith's alternate, and LG Joe Horkey, McNabb's alternate.

We lose far more than that, too. Our entire tertiary defense, HBs Tommy Gray and Ed Lisak and Safety Buddy Jones, graduated. This leaves our defense wide open behind the line-backers. We are so inexperienced there that we may try a trio of sophomores.

Jones, our little All-American safety, is a particularly costly loss. For the past three years he's been our safety. He was in on nearly all of our 31 consecutive victories 1948-1950. He played safety for us during both our Sugar Bowl victories over North Carolina and Louisiana State. He was durable, too. He missed our bowl defeat last January 1 to Kentucky but it took a twisted knee to put him on the shelf. We'll miss Gray's speed and Lisak's bee-line tackling, too.

We keep four offensive starters, LE Kay Keller, Co-captain and LT Jim Weatherall (All-American), LH Billy Vessels (all Big Seven) and RH Merrill Green. Also rugged line-backers from last year return, Co-captain Bert Clark and Tom Catlin.

Four of our front-line men this fall are recovering from operations or have broken bones mending. If any one of them should be lost, that loss would be keenly felt. They are RH Merrill Green who had an ankle operation in the spring, RG Melvin Brown, who broke his leg in spring practice, and Defensive Guard Ed Rowland who had an



BUD WILKINSON
"... A Game of Spirit"

ankle operation in the spring. RE John Reddell also had a knee operation right after catching for the Sooner team that won the NCAA baseball title in June.

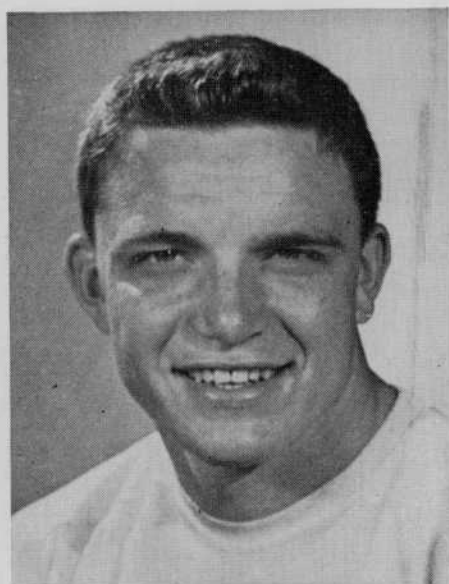
Although no coach can tell for sure how serious will be his losses to the armed services, because of the uncertainty of the serious international situation, all our varsity players are in either Army, Navy or Air ROTC save RG Jim Davis, who has a medical discharge, and LT Art Janes, who is a veteran of World War II. We lost Juel Sweatte, freshman halfback from Georgetown, S. C., and fastest man on our squad, to the Naval Reserve when he was called to active duty.

The Big Seven Conference has legalized the participation of freshmen on varsity teams, starting this autumn. All freshmen who enrol here this fall will immediately become eligible for football and I hope many of them will play in varsity games.

While our 1951 team will be the greenest we've had since I came to Oklahoma, we feel that our halfbacks, guards, tackles and possibly our quarterbackbacks will be adequate. We definitely lack depth at offensive center, and we lack strength at end, fullback and in Buddy Jones' old spot at safety.

I believe that Nebraska and Kansas will be the teams to beat in the Big Seven with Colorado a distinct dark horse possibility. I think the rest of us will be bunched. Nebraska returns Bobby Reynolds and plays Oklahoma, Colorado, and Kansas on her home field at Lincoln. I think the Cornhuskers will have the best club in the Big Seven. Kansas will be dangerous.

We will get lots of help from our last year's freshmen, sophomores this fall. As freshmen last year they divided the two



JACK LOCKETT
... Veteran End

games permitted them by the Big Seven Conference, losing 9-10 to Tulsa University at Tulsa, defeating Oklahoma A&M here 53-13.

Our varsity squad this fall again is primarily a home state outfit. We will have 37 players from Oklahoma, 10 from Texas, 2 from Arkansas, 3 from Tennessee. Eight of our eleven starters in last spring's alumni game were native Oklahomans while a ninth, Tackle Jim Weatherall, lived at Shidler, Oklahoma City and Hooker, Oklahoma, although he played his highschool football games at White Deer, Texas.

Although our advance season ticket sales has been the best in the history of the school, there are still thousands of seats unsold. However our crowds should be good this fall and if you haven't purchased seats for Norman games, you had better order right away. Write Kenneth Farris, our business manager of athletics here.

For a much more complete description of our new squad, including pictures and biographies of each player, I should like to recommend that you purchase a copy of our new 96-page football press book, written by Harold Keith, our sports publicity man. This book also contains an exhaustive

1950 Results

O.U. 28, Boston College 0
O.U. 34, Texas Aggies 28
O.U. 14, Texas 13
O.U. 58, Kansas State 0
O.U. 20, Iowa State 7
O.U. 27, Colorado 18
O.U. 33, Kansas 13
O.U. 49, Nebraska 35
O.U. 41, Oklahoma Aggies 14
O.U. 7, Kentucky 13, Sugar Bowl

preview of each of our ten opponents and all the up-to-date football statistics—National, Big Seven, and O.U.—that anybody could possibly want to know about. It sells for \$1 per copy. If you would like a copy send your check, or dollar bills to Athletic Business Office, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, and you will receive as many copies as you desire by return mail.

Our 1951 squad by positions:

LE—**Jack Lockett, Hugh Ballard (soph), *Bill Beckman, Eugene Ball (squad), Buster Eoff (soph), Auston Ingram (squad).

LT—**Jim Weatherall, **Art Janes, *George Cornelius, Doc Hearon (soph), Jerry Wilkes (freshman), John Stice (soph).

LG—Joe Brock (soph), **Bert Clark,



KAY KELLER
... An End Starter¹

J. D. Roberts (soph), Bob Gaut (squad), Art Gilliam (soph), Von Worten (squad).

C—*Tom Catlin, Ed Sampson (squad), Bill Covin (squad), Sam Allen (squad).

RG—*Melvin Brown, Dick Bowman (soph), Ross Ausburn (soph), **Fred Smith, Allie Robards (freshman).

RT—Roger Nelson (soph), Jim Davis (squad), *Ed Rowland, Harold Coffman (soph).

RE—*Kay Keller, *John Reddell, Jennings Nelson (soph), *Jerry Ingram, Dick Ellis (squad).

QB—*Eddie Crowder, Jack Van Pool (soph), Jack Ging (soph), Billy Ballard (soph), Blythe Carney (squad).

LH—*Billy Vessels, **Dick Heatly, Larry Grigg (soph), Jack Santee (squad).

RH—*Merrill Green, **Frank Silva,

¹Keller was injured in early drills in September and may be lost for most of the year.

Schedule for '51

Sept. 29 William and Mary at Norman
*Oct. 6 Texas Aggies at College Station, Texas
Oct. 13 Texas at Dallas, Texas
Oct. 20 Kansas at Norman (Dad's Day)
Oct. 27 Colorado at Norman (Homecoming)
Nov. 3 Kansas State at Manhattan, Kansas
Nov. 10 Missouri at Columbia, Missouri
Nov. 17 Iowa State at Norman (Band Day)
Nov. 24 Nebraska at Lincoln, Nebraska
Dec. 1 Oklahoma Aggies at Norman
*Night game
All Norman kickoffs at 2:00 p.m.

Dale Crawford (squad), Harry Lee (soph), Billy Bookout (soph).

FB—*Buck McPhail, Joe Gaynor (soph), Raymond Powell (squad).

* one letter. ** two letters.

Sincerely yours,
signed
Bud Wilkinson

This is the first of Bud Wilkinson's letters for 1951. Individual copies were sent to those alumni not receiving Sooner Magazine. The remainder of his letters will be sent in the usual 4-page format to Alumni Association members immediately following each football game and will not appear in the magazine. No portion of this letter may be used by newspapers or radio.—Ed.



MELVIN BROWN
... Strength in the Line