

BERT CLARK  
Co-Captain

JIM WEATHERALL  
Co-Captain



*With no bounty as yet on football forecasters, the editor gets into the act by offering a report on coaching, material and competition and tries to answer,*

# Will the Sooners Repeat?

By David A. Burr

Collegiate football, for some the greatest show on earth, moves out of the practice arena into the big top at September's end. The acts have been rehearsed and polished, the tents are up and soon the crowds will come to make all the work worth while.

As usual, a major sideshow attraction started the football rolling in August with the Cleveland Browns-All Star game in Chicago. An even gaudier display of pigskin pyrotechnics took place at a place called West Point earlier in the month. But if the tight-wire walkers lost their nerve from one bad spill, there was no sign of it. Every discourse on the relative merits and evils of the game seemed to provoke so much more interest.

Along with the premature interest in football arrived the first of the pre-season forecasts. The selections agreed and disagreed. The handwriting on the wall apparently read differently from each vantage point.

Two teams in the Big Seven were treated with a good deal of respect. Oklahoma and Nebraska, the scribes believed, would rule the conference roost but which would be cock of the walk was a difficult question.

While it is easy to write off pre-season predictions as so much mental wandering, the best informed authors do not claim to be clairvoyant and make their selections on the basis of material, competition, schedule and less tangible considerations, i.e., Nebraska is thirsting for a championship while O.U. has had a good drink.

Material for the Sooners in 1951 is generally considered excellent in ability if inexperienced. A large share of the offensive punch should come from Billy Vessels, the curly-haired one from Cleveland, Oklahoma. As a sophomore he only scored 15 touchdowns—two against Texas and the only ones scored against them in a 14-13 win. Vessels is commonly termed a money player and may very well be the best halfback ever produced at O. U.

Jim Weatherall needs no superlatives that are not inherent in his accomplishing the difficult feat of being named All-American while a junior. As tackle and co-captain, he'll lead the up front brigade as well as do the place kicking.

Co-captain Bert Clark, guard, and Tom Catlin, center, give the Sooners the best line-backing duo in the Big Seven, many believe in the nation. In addition both will probably see a great deal of offensive action. Catlin appears a sure bet at offensive center. (Catlin is a junior and Clark a senior).

Kay Keller, end, and Merrill Green, halfback, both juniors, are the only other offensive starters returning from last years squad.

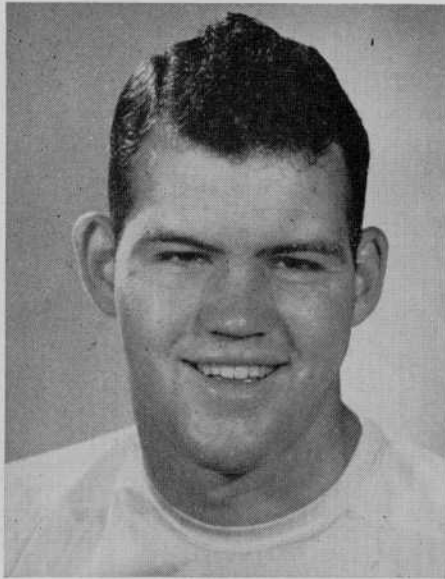
There are several other players of known ability who have that most valuable asset, experience. Art Janes, left tackle, Jack Lockett, left end, John Reddell, end, Fred Smith, defensive guard or tackle, Dick Heatly, punting specialist, Buck McPhail, fullback, and Melvin Brown, tackle, to mention a few.

Those Sooner partisans who cry "Wolf" explain that O. U.'s 1951 team will be an inexperienced group. Relatively speaking, such is the case. You do not lose seven offensive starters and the veteran pass defense of Tommy Gray, Ed Lisak, and Buddy Jones without having quite a rebuilding job. Of course, ten offensive starters were lost in 1950 and the team managed to win the national championship.

Pessimists claim the '50 team was a miracle squad yet all the ingredients that produced a miracle in '50 seem available in '51.

The coaching staff still is headed by Bud Wilkinson and capable line coach, Gomer Jones. Frank "Pop" Ivy, '40phys.ed, again will handle the end coaching chores and Bill Jennings, 46ed, '49m.ed, will continue as backfield coach. Two newcomers are Pete Elliott, assistant coach and scout, and Dee Andros, '50ed, assistant line coach.

Some of the sophomore material available for the molding process is the envy of most of the coaches in the business. Very likely three sophomores will man the pass defense setup. Replacing the incomparable Buddy Jones will be a man-sized job and at present it appears likely that the assignment will go to Jack Ging, diminutive quarterback from Alva. Ging weighs 152 but has the highly desirable asset known as "heart." Billy Bookout, 160-pound halfback from Wichita Falls, Texas, and Larry Grigg, 175-pound



**TOM CATLIN**  
... A Lot of Center

halfback from Sherman, Texas, will probably round out an all-sophomore defensive backfield. The three are fast and may get a shot at offensive work also.

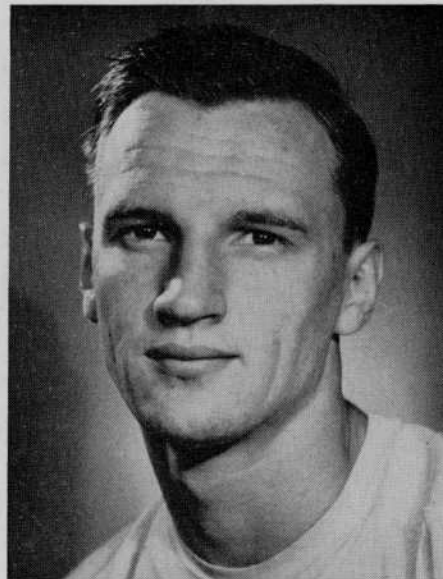
Roger Nelson, tackle from Wynnewood, has been shifted to guard from a tackle position to give strength down the middle. He's big, 220-pounder, and powerful. Great things are expected from this 18-year-old. Joe Gaynor, fullback from Memphis, Tennessee, looked exceptionally good in the O.U.-Aggie freshman game. He's fast enough for a halfback and will undoubtedly give McPhail, heir-apparent to Leon Heath, a run for his money. Harry Lee, an extremely fast halfback from Durant, may have trouble breaking into the talented backfield. He'll bear watching. Jack Van Pool, quarterback from Oklahoma City, looks like the number one understudy for Eddie Crowder, Muskogee. (Crowder, a junior, looks to be about one season away from greatness but has enough promise to lead the Big Red on the field.) There are other sophomore luminaries but those above should serve as a starter.

The schedule lessens the Sooners' chances of completing an undefeated season. The opening game is a home affair with William and Mary September 29. It is too soon to get a clear view of what W.&M. will have to offer. In pre-season doping, William and Mary seemed to have a good squad ready for all comers. Yet in mid-August, Coach Rube McCray resigned midst a probing of "athletic irregularities." By McCray's own estimate his team should have been improved by 50 to 75 percent. What effect the probe will have remains to be seen.

A clearer picture is available of the second game opponents, Texas A.&M. Briefly,

they're loaded. Sports publicist Kenneth Band skipped the usual gloomy role to announce that "The Texas Aggies' 1951 prospects look bright. Coach Ray George could hardly want for a better running crew. The Aggies' running attack is the most deadly in the conference . . . line backers may prove to be nothing short of terrific . . . line should be as good or possibly better . . . passing game should be better and secondary far better than in 1950. The Aggies are two-deep in lettermen at all positions save the two guard positions and have three lettermen returning there."

That should give some indication what the Sooners are up against. Three of the best backs in the Southwest or any conference will oppose the Sooners. Billy Tidwell, Glenn Lippman and All-American candidate Bob Smith will be available. This would be a rugged contest under favorable



**EDDIE CROWDER**  
... New Field General

conditions but O.U. has the prospect of playing Texas the following Saturday and the natural desire of Texas A.&M. to avenge their 34-28 last-minute trimming at Norman last year.

Texas will always be a "Big" game. Playing again in the Cotton Bowl at Dallas October 13, The T.U. boys will have a new coach (Ed Price) and a new formation (split-T). Byron Townsend, great fullback, will again lead the attack. Texas, like Oklahoma, will have no bed-of-roses leading up to the encounter. They play on successive Saturdays before meeting the Sooners, Kentucky, Purdue, and North Carolina.

The next hurdle for the Big Red comes the following weekend when Kansas moves into Owen Stadium. There's no breather here. The Jayhawks have one of the Big Seven's better halfbacks in Charley Hoag

and should have improved quarterbacking from Chet Strehlow or Jerry Bogue. Currently the Kansans are being rated the third best team in the Big Seven.

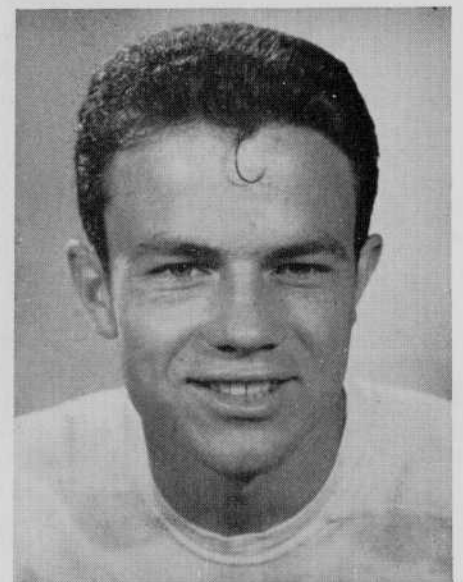
Colorado will be the visitor for homecoming the next weekend, October 27. This should be the best home game of the season. Last year Colorado extended the national champs 27-18 and eight starters from the offensive team will again be on hand. Merwin Hodel and Zack Jordan will cause any team they play considerable trouble. Colorado is the real darkhorse of the conference.

The game with Kansas State November 3 at Manhattan, Kansas, very likely will be the first reasonably soft touch the team faces this year. However, seven offensive starters return and the team should be much improved over the editions of the past several years.

Missouri does not apparently pose such a problem as it has for many years. Robbed of offensive starters by graduation, this looks like a year of rebuilding. Under the same coach Mizzou has had for many years, Don Farout, the team may be ready for the Normans by November 10. The game will be played on Missouri's home field.

Iowa State comes to Norman November 17 for band day. Gone are Bill Weeks and Jim Doran, the famous passer and pass catcher, and with them probably much of the team's potency.

What promises to be the game with the conference crown awaiting the winner comes off at Lincoln, Nebraska, November 24 when Bobby Reynolds and outfit try to make up for a 35-49 defeat of last year. The aforementioned Reynolds is quite a boy and Nick Adduci, fullback, will help considerably. Nebraska like O.U. has a



**JACK GING**  
... Another Jones?

fine crop of sophomores to pick from. This should be an offensive battle all the way.

Oklahoma A.&M. comes to Norman December 1 with an improved team. There is no reason to presume that A.&M. will play anything but their best ball as they always do against O.U.

The schedule appears rougher than last year's with several teams showing definite improvement.

What will the season's outcome be? Will O.U. lost any games? Who are the chief candidates for All-America? Of course, every football fan who has followed O.U. and her opponents will be in a position to give the only answer that will satisfy themselves. But for the record and because the *Sooner* hates to miss out on the pre-season guessing, some of the answers are given below. Following each choice by the author appears the selections made by others who are remotely connected with the Alumni office, Boyd Gunning, '37ba, '37 law, executive secretary; George Cummings, '49bus, assistant executive secretary, and Guy Brown, '42ba, '48ma, field representative.

1. Big Red will probably lose to Texas A.&M. They have too much experienced power too early in the season. Besides it is the only night game on the Sooners' schedule and played at College Station. (Gunning and Cummings agree. Brown thinks the Sooners will go undefeated).

2. The Sooners will go undefeated in Big Seven play. The hardest game will be with Nebraska but by that time the chips should be down and O.U. will win. All three agree).

3. O.U. will probably wind up in the top ten teams in national rankings, say in about fifth place. (Cummings and Gunning think team will be in top ten, Brown thinks they will be in first place).

4. All-American choices look bright for Weatherall, Vessels, Tom Catlin and Bert Clark. (All three gave as their first three choices Weatherall, Vessels, Clark and all qualified their choices by stating the number of selections depend on where team is ranked nationally.)

5. The game-of-the-year. Texas A.&M. (Brown holds out for Texas, other two agree with author.)

6. Best competition in Big Seven should come from a) Nebraska, b) Colorado c) Kansas. (Gunning thinks Nebraska and Kansas are chief threats in that order. Cummings likes Nebraska and Colorado. Brown believes that Nebraska is only big threat.)

**Billy (the Kid) Vessels shows the form that may make him an All-America back.**

