

Good Start for Big Red

Sporting a double-edged attack with the addition of a new formation, the Sooners began the new football season with a sound trouncing of William and Mary. For what they are worth, the magazine presents some observations on O.U.'s opponents.

By Bill Goodner, '52

"Big Red" fans have discovered there is something new under the sun in Owen stadium. Something new besides the large number of sophomores filling first string Sooner positions, that is.

Wilkinson's boys are equipped with the double threat of two offensive formations, consequently the foes have two defensive woes.

Bud who is eager to cash in on the potential of the "Versatile Vessels" has come up with the old double wingback spread formation. The Sooner mentor readily admits that the formation is new only as far as O.U. is concerned, for it has enjoyed wide popularity at Texas Christian University, Southern Methodist University and other Southwest Conference schools.

The spread formation places Billy Vessels eight-ten yards behind center, the fullback behind the guard close up on the line and the other two backs in wingback slots. Taking a pass from center, Vessels can either fake, pass or run, but usually he retreats 10-15 yards, giving his five potential receivers an opportunity to make a break. If no receiver is open and if Billy decides to

run, he will find the defense well-spread from covering his five pass receivers.

With five members of the opposing team covering the receivers that leaves only six linemen to rush the shifty Sooner. The O.U. line falls back and blocks some of these, and if Vessels can shake the rest he is off to the wide open spaces.

Since the first three games will be sports history by the time this edition comes off the presses, by now, both the reader and Bud Wilkinson will have decided the value of the spread formation.

Some sad Sooner news is that "Big Red's" stalwart right end, Kay Keller, will not see any action this year. Keller was operated on in September for a severe shoulder separation. Wilkinson didn't want to risk permanently injuring the big end by playing him in a cast. Billy Ballard, sophomore quarterback was another costly loss as he also sustained a shoulder separation.

Also, the possibility of the Soonermen making another bid for the nation's gridiron crown will have been settled by the time the Alumni have thumbed these pages. By this time Big Red will have side-stepped or fallen over two rugged stumbling blocks, both from the Republic south of the United States, the Texas Aggies and Texas University. An all victorious season rests heavily on whether the new and inexperienced sophomores can be whipped into shape and seasoned without benefit of a lesson in defeat.

On the bright side was the 49-7 thumping the Sooners gave William and Mary in the opener at Norman. One fan commented after watching the slaughter, "I wonder if they know how good they really are?"

It was a game that was a little disinteresting to watch for the casual fan. Except for a beautifully completed pass play that scored for William and Mary, they were never really in the game. But for the fan who knows his or her football, the game produced some interesting observations.

Probably the most important was the quality of play by the reserves. There is

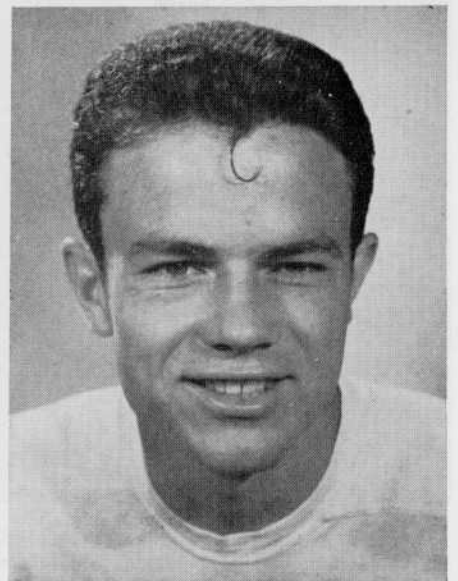
depth on that the team. The backfield substitutes moved the ball, if not as well as the first string, at least well enough to be dangerous. And they were generally playing behind second and third string lines. In the last portion of the game, a freshman quarterback proved that he too could move the ball down the field. Generally speaking, the reserves looked sharp.

The defense looked nothing short of sensational. True, William and Mary failed to live up to their pre-game reputation, but that was partially due to the pressure the defense built up and never allowed to ease off. The defensive backs with several people alternating in the backfield (Crowder, Ging, Bookout, Grieg, etc.) looked capable. None may get his name billed above the late departed Buddy Jones' but as a team they seem to satisfy.

Perhaps it shouldn't have come as a surprise, but the ball-handling and field-generaling of one Eddie Crowder, was polished and poised. He managed to hide the ball from the opposition and the fans so well one remarked he wished they'd send somebody



EDDIE CROWDER
... Impressive



JACK GING
... Capable Understudy

else in at quarterback so he could follow the plays. Jack Ging, diminutive quarter, also handled the ball with a great deal of skill and showed considerable poise for a sophomore. Frank Silva, Crooked Oak senior, running at right halfback, may have finally arrived. For two years, great things have been predicted of him and each time someone else got the starting call. Now it looks like he's ready to make the right side as dangerous as the left where Vessels holds forth.

The game was just the kind the doctor ordered for the team if not for the fans. The first team moved the score up to the out-of-reach-except-for-miracles category early in the second quarter and then the reserves came in to mop up. Every player on the bench with the exception of injured players moved into the game. Several freshmen got their first taste of college competition and the promising sophomores got a chance to pick up a little seasoning.

The season was off to a good start.

Not only can a little true evaluation of the 1951 edition of the Sooners be made following the opening of the football season, but the same holds true for Sooner opponents. If the early season form of opponents shows no more improvement than can be expected from any team as it gains experience as a unit, the following might afford a good guess as to what Oklahoma is up against for the rest of the season. Al-

though the two Texas games will have been played when this *Sooner is* in Alumni hands, just for the records:

Texas A.&M. Game just over Aggies 14, O.U. 7.

Texas. Better than pre-season doping. Stopped Kentucky and Purdue 7-6 and 14-0 respectively. Looks great on defense. Newly adopted split-T should be in high gear for game. Could be a low-scoring affair with the better defense determining the winner. Winner: Who's fool enough to guess?

Kansas at Norman, October 20. Looks like Kansas has the conference sleeper. Although rated good in pre-season guess, no one could foresee the fine offense fielded by the Jayhawks. Upset Texas Christian by two touchdowns in season opened and mashed a surprisingly good Iowa State club. Should be a big Norman attraction. If they build a defense to go with their offense, they are going to be hard to hold in the Midlands.

Colorado at Norman, October 27. Own an early season record of a win and a defeat. Beat Colorado A.&M. and lost to Northwestern. Look strong but not strong enough to take Big Seven. Early season guess of 4th spot in Big Seven looks good.

Kansas State at Manhattan, November 3. Here's a big surprise. The K-Staters have a comer. In two games, dropped two but to good teams and by fairly respectable scores. Apparently offer a good defense but not too

much offense. May leave the conference cellar.

Missouri at Columbia, November 10. Apparently the Tigers have lost their teeth. They can score, but lack a capable defense. Lost to Fordham and beat Oklahoma Aggies in first two games. Will have to fight to stay out of conference cellar.

Iowa State at Norman, November 17. A better than expected edition from Abe Stuber. Probably give Colorado a run for fourth spot in the Big Seven.

Nebraska at Lincoln, November 24. TCU upset Cornhuskers without services of All-American Bobby Reynolds. Reynolds will be back and so will Nebraska. Without Reynolds, no clear line as yet on team potential.

Oklahoma Aggies at Norman, December 1. Aggies beaten badly by Arkansas and nudged by Missouri thus far. Will probably improve rapidly. Are not top-flight this year but will probably extend Oklahoma.

Another National Honor

For Baseball's Baer. The sports writers are running low on flamboyant adjectives to describe the Sooner sports scene. All-American, Tops, and Champions is just common-place jargon as far as depicting O.U.'s athletic highlights are concerned.

Never-the-less sports pages over the country, that had already bulged with tales of Sooner triumphs, made way for another national tribute paid in full to Soonerland. The roses this time were sent to robust Jack Baer, '42ed, who was named collegiate baseball's coach of the year for 1951.

Not only did the University chalk up three national championships last year in football, wrestling and baseball—an unprecedented event in college athletic history—but the selection of Baer as "Coach-of-the-Year" awards the O.U. athletic staff two such honors, Bud Wilkinson being named for the gridiron counterpart by the Associated Press.

Baer, a native Sooner and former "Big Red" great, coached the O.U. club to the NCAA title last spring. He was awarded the honor in a ballot of more than 200 members of the American Association of College Baseball Coaches. Baer will be honored at the NCAA national convention in Cincinnati next January.

It was Baer's sixth turn at the wheel since taking over the helm of the O.U. diamond sport in 1946. And all six times Baer has displayed some mighty fancy steering. His squads won Big Seven championships in 1946, 1947 and 1951; were second in 1942 and 1949, and third in 1950. He finished sixth in 1948. He has the core of a fine Sooner club with which to start the next season even though he lost five of his mainstays from the 1951 team.



Jack Baer, '42ed, O.U. baseball coach, gives his new Ford a dust removing treatment with his handkerchief. The automobile was a gift from Sooner fans and alumni in recognition of Baer's work in coaching the nation's top baseball team. Ozzie Marrs, (center) and Norman McNabb, '51bus, both Norman businessmen, seem to be enjoying the situation. They led the drive for funds to purchase the new automobile.