

The defense was sharp and the ground game was picking up momentum. Two early season losses failed to dim the team's brilliance for long. Heading for the conference crown and a place in the nation's top ten teams in mid-season, they were

Going Up!

By David Burr, '50

For those whose optimism knows no end, a sad deflation. For Bud Wilkinson, a better prestige rating as a prognosticator of pigskin pummelings. That's the reverse in roles made necessary in mid-season by the results of the first five football games. Record: 3 wins and 2 defeats.

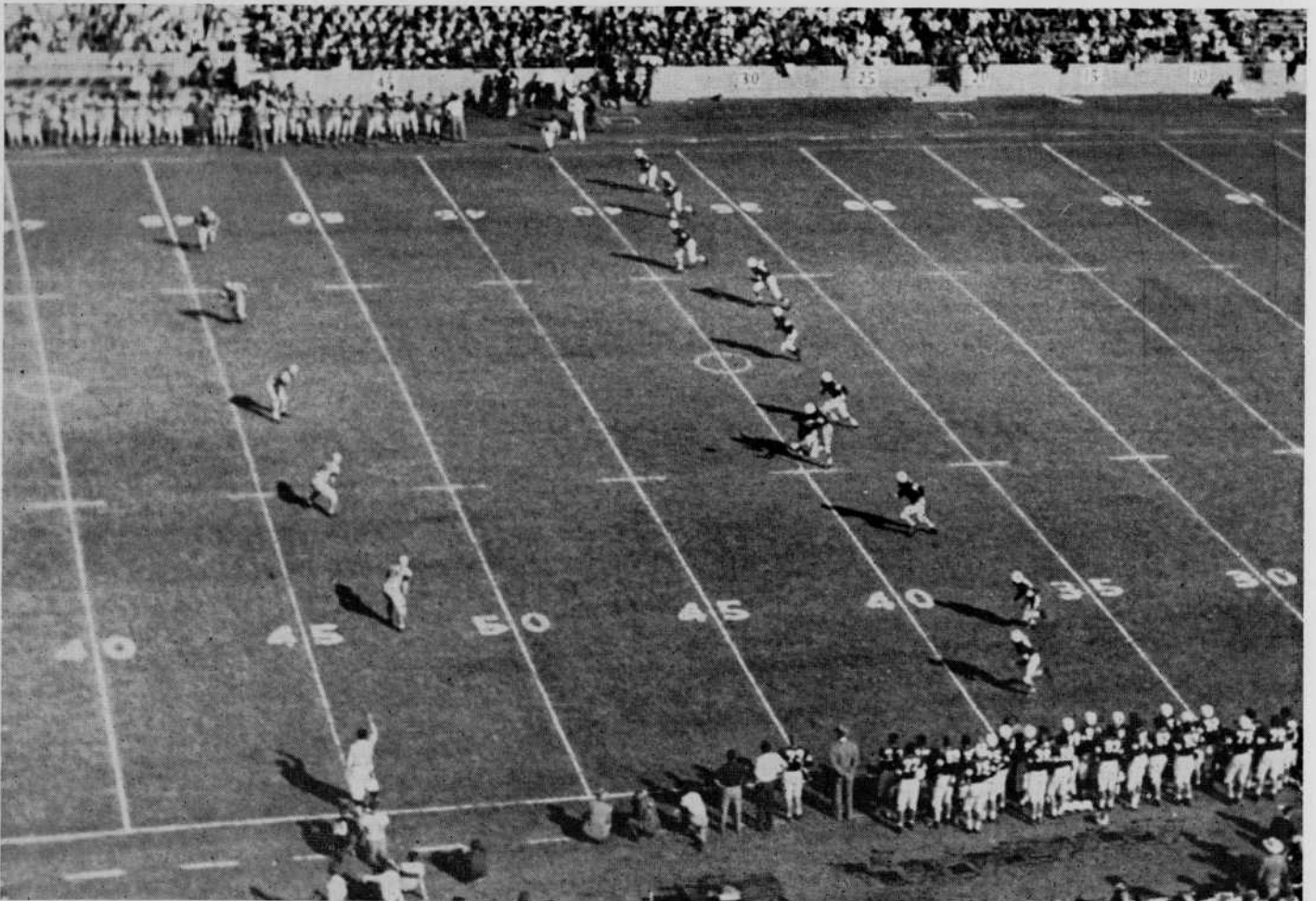
Back at the start of the season Wilkinson had opined that his team was not up to snuff for such teams as Texas A.&M. and Texas U. The squad was inexperienced, he said, and not capable of holding on to the

national football championship. The trouble was Coach Bud had said the same thing the previous year and all his poor li'l ol' charges did was take it all.

It takes no expert to see that Wilkinson was right on both prophecies. His explanation of how he fielded a winning team last year holds up. . . "Only superb hustle and fight prevented our 1950 team from having a mediocre year." He might have appeared wrong in '51 except that some of the bounces of the ball went in the wrong direc-

tion. While last season was practically injuryless, the present edition sustained important injuries to Kay Keller and Merrill Green before the season started. Keller, an experienced end, and Green, a promising halfback, were two of the men Bud needed for their ability and for experience sake.

But even with the squad trimmed of a few of its experienced starters, the Big Red started off like a house afire. They measured William and Mary by a 49-7 count



"O.U. kickoff; the game's begun." The tension of waiting comes to an end and the color of the game unfolds. Note the traditional pose of the two teams at kickoff time. In foreground at end of 45-yard line Coach Bud Wilkinson awaits the return. This game caused little concern for the host eleven. They turned back a William & Mary team with little trouble by a 49-7 score.



"The tide has turned." O.U. on the march with one of the potent weapons in their offensive bag of tricks. John Reddell catches a pass and is off for a good gain against the Kansas' Jayhawkers. Sooners initiated their conference race with a 33-21 victory.

and looked much like their predecessors in the doing.

Then came Texas A.&M.—a team that everyone concerned with football felt could handle the Sooners. And sure enough, in a cold, windy game played at College Station, Texas, the Aggies applied the pressure and never let up to score a 14-7 victory. This was the way the *Sooner* had doped the season and could hardly be considered much of an upset.

But Texas. Here was a team with a new coach, a new Split-T formation and the same old appetite that had been a-nursing for the past four years. In a great game by any standards, the Longhorns counted a safety on a bad pitchout in the opening minutes of play and scored another touchdown to win 9-7.

At this point in the proceedings it was all too apparent what was wrong with the Oklahoma team. And it was what Bud had indicated before the season started. Lack of experience. With potentially fine ball carriers, the team only fielded a sluggish ground game. The poise that had damaging effects on opponents of a previous year was gone. What was right with the team was also apparent. The defense. Magnificent. But here was a bit more experience. The line led by All-American Jim Weatherall and linebackers Tom Catlin and Bert Clark consistently foiled Texas' theft of the goal line. By any standards, there was little to choose from between the Texas U. squad and the Oklahoma team—except 2 points.

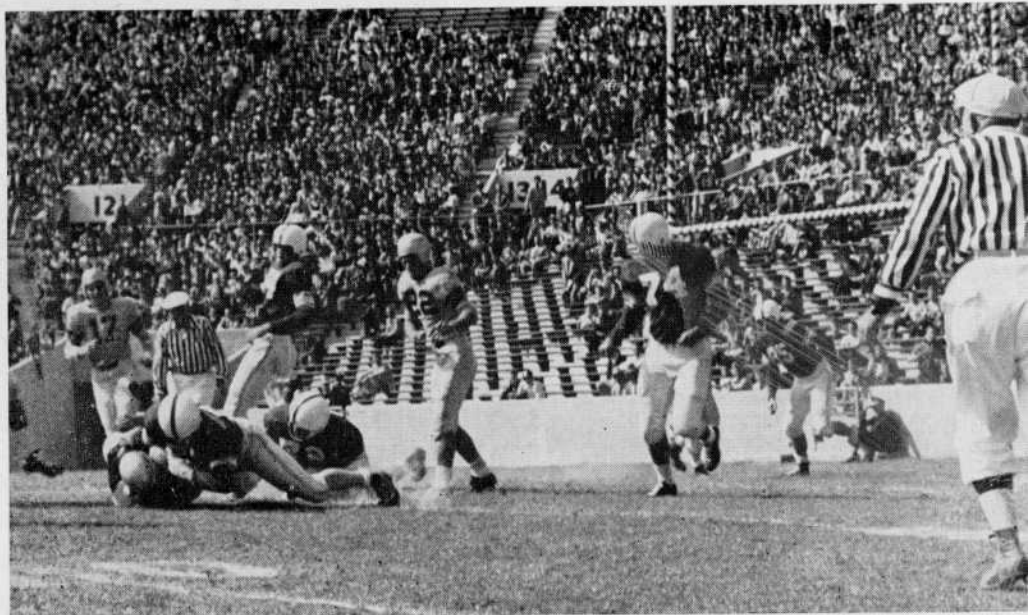
At this particular point mixed emotions took over. Two losses and still the Sooners hadn't mixed with Big Seven foes. No undergraduate could remember two defeats in one season and many a football follower preferred not to. After a quick look around

the "friendly" conference, it appeared the hardest tasks facing the Sooners would be Colorado and Kansas. Nebraska had lost Reynolds for a while and seemed to be having other troubles. It wasn't a pleasant task facing the Sooners when they returned from Dallas. All they had to do was run smack dab into Kansas the next weekend and Colorado the following. Even after the Kansas game was over and the local lads had won 33-21 no one sighed a breath of relief. For Kansas had put up quite a struggle with their spread formation and a sling-shot artist named Jerry Robertson. True, the Sooner offense showed signs of improvement. Buck McPhail galloped nicely for 215 yards, a Sooner rushing record. But Billy Vessels, who had been sidelined in the last quarter of the Texas game with a twisted knee, wasn't there to take up the outside chores while McPhail was doing his inside. Instead there was a freshman performer by the name of Buddy Leak of Memphis, Tennessee. He ran well and managed to score three touchdowns before



"Things aren't going right. They've got the pressure on us." Bud Wilkinson bites his fingernail and Buck McPhail (41) worries with him in Texas' 9-7 victory.

"What's this. The opponent is about to score." The defensive action of the team staved off a potential score in the William and Mary game. One of the high points of the Sooner team has been their sustained high quality of defensive alertness.





"Now they are driving on the ground." Long a favorite Wilkinson formula, the rushing picked up in mid-season. Buddy Leake, freshman half from Memphis, winds up on William and Mary 15. Leake replaced the injured Vessels in an outstanding way.



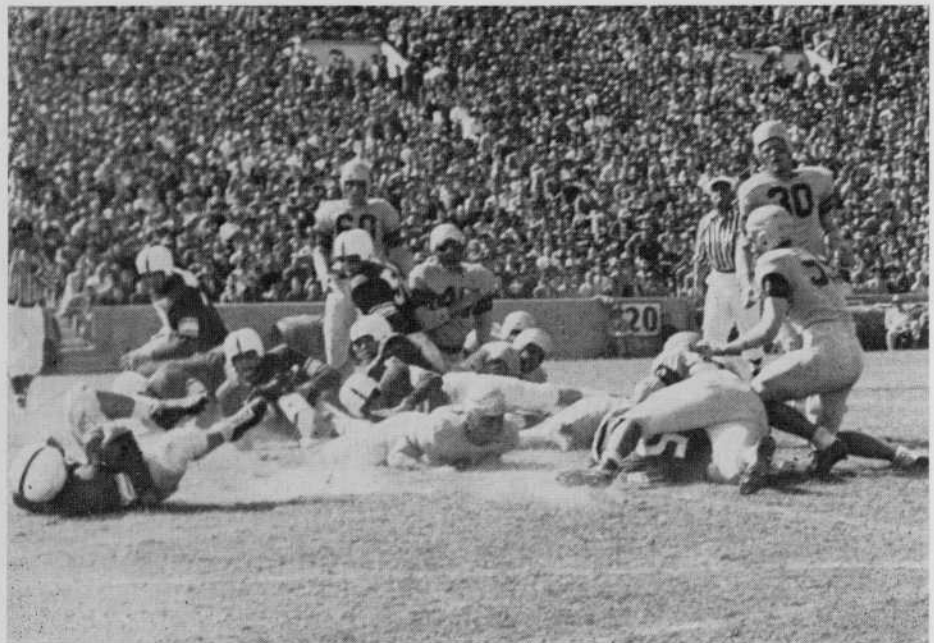
"Despair." Billy Vessels, All-American candidate and backfield wheelhorse, is helped off the field in the Texas game by Joe Glander, trainer, and Kent Braden, student manager. Vessels suffered a twisted knee and may play no more football this season.

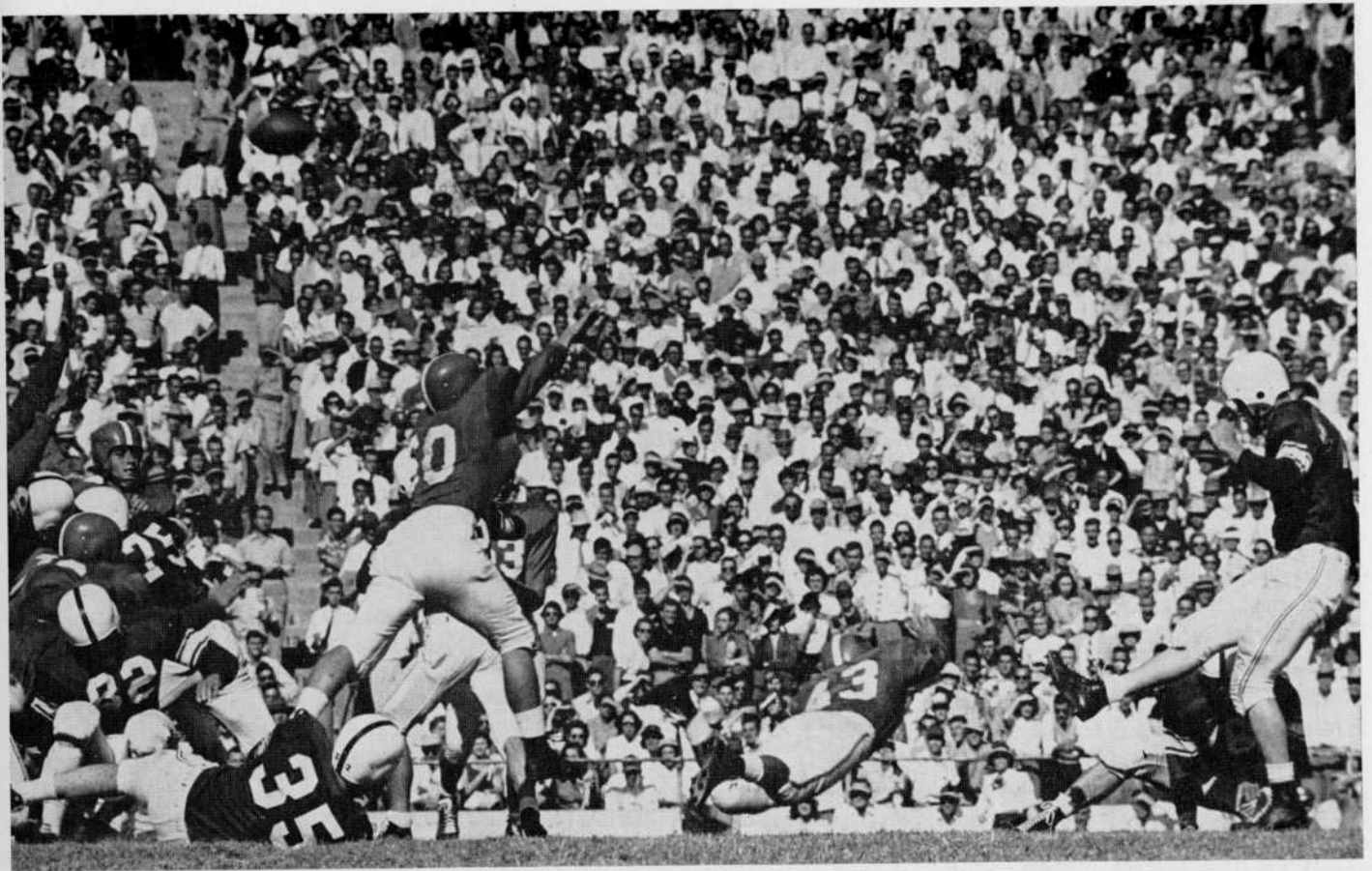
toss and received. The Oklahomans defended the north goal and kicked with the wind to their backs. And Colorado moved. They were down inside Oklahoma home territory when an intercepted pass allowed the ball to change hands. The amazing afternoon was underway. With a new star in one Eddie Crowder faking, handling and passing the ball, Oklahoma had racked up a 27-0 lead in the first quarter. The final score, Oklahoma 55, Colorado 14. Crowder performed in an admirable fashion. He tossed four touchdown passes and only attempted seven and completed six for 185 yards. His mates in the backfield—Heatly, McPhail and Leake moved on the ground. The line play was excellent. The first four games had been valuable. The experience the team lacked was being gained and the team showed the results. When Oklahoma wanted to move they went. Even the reserves looked sharp. Crowder, incidentally,

the afternoon was over. The Sooners could move against a not-to-strong Kansas defensive line but what about Colorado. They were making signs out in Boulder of wanting to take the whole cake. They had sampled a slice by being undefeated in conference play, and looked like definite challengers. Just a year ago they had stunned the national champs by scoring 18 points and scaring the pants off their visitors who rallied to win by a pointage of 27.

An overcast sky, a light wind and a cool day collaborated to making the Homecoming game, October 27, an ideal one for spectators and players alike. Colorado lost the

"Touchdown." Frank Silva comes crashing through a good-sized hole for a tally against William & Mary. O.U. holds wins over William & Mary, Kansas, Colorado, Kansas State, and has dropped decisions to Texas' Longhorns and Texas A.&M.





"This one didn't get away." Plenty of action here and plenty of importance on the conversion attempted by All-American Jim Weatherall. It was the Texas game and Jim's boot was good. Texan fans in the background were as worried as O.U. rooters.

ried a Sooner record for the number of touchdown passes tossed in one game, four. Claude Arnold, '51ba, last year's passer set the mark.

When the game was over and the results were in, the sportswriters began to see Big Red in a different light. The Big Seven championship should be a certainty and thoughts of national prominence went with such a trophy. Among Big Seven opponents, Iowa State's refreshing resurgence offered a good contest and the likes of Missouri and Nebraska were all that remained. (Kansas State is being played as this report is written.)

There is strong sentiment for a rematch for the Oklahomans with either Texas or Texas A.&M. in the Cotton Bowl come January 1. The only way such a rematch could occur would be for one of the two Texas schools to take the Southwest Conference championship. There are so many "if's" that speculation on such sentiment seems silly. We lost the games and are improving. The fact that Texas would have liked a rematch last year was based on the

same type of reasoning. There is no reason for assuming that either of the Texas schools want a rematch under any condition. They've been trying to win from Oklahoma for several years and, when they do, it is reasonable to assume that they would like to keep their accomplishments to themselves at least for one year.

Which brings us to the point that much of this year's squad will be back with their precious experience next year. In a not-to-far distant issue, we will consider the talents of those who will return, including an analysis of the freshmen performers.

A parting shot—don't expect a bowl game for the Sooners. They will probably be offered the opportunity but will likely turn it down.

A Tribute to Waddy

Oklahoma's great All-American player, the late Roland (Waddy) Young, '35-'40, will be honored with a memorial trophy to be awarded annually to Oklahoma's No. 1 highschool football team as

selected by the Associated Press poll.

The state's Touchdown Club, whose purpose is to create an interest among high-school students to further their education, will give the trophy.

Young who played in 1936-37-38, died a hero's death in World War II. Piloting a heavy bomber, he dropped out of formation to aid another plane under heavy attack which resulted in the loss of his own ship. He was named an All-American end in his senior year.

The trophy's inscription will read:

"Waddy Young Memorial trophy, presented by the Touchdown Club to (winning) highschool football team of 1951 as determined by the Associated Press poll of coach, writers and broadcaster."

The final poll this year will be taken after the Thanksgiving-week game. The trophy will be to Oklahoma highschool football what the O'Donnell trophy is to national college football. The O'Donnell award is given to the team in the national AP poll at the end of each season. Last year Oklahoma received it.