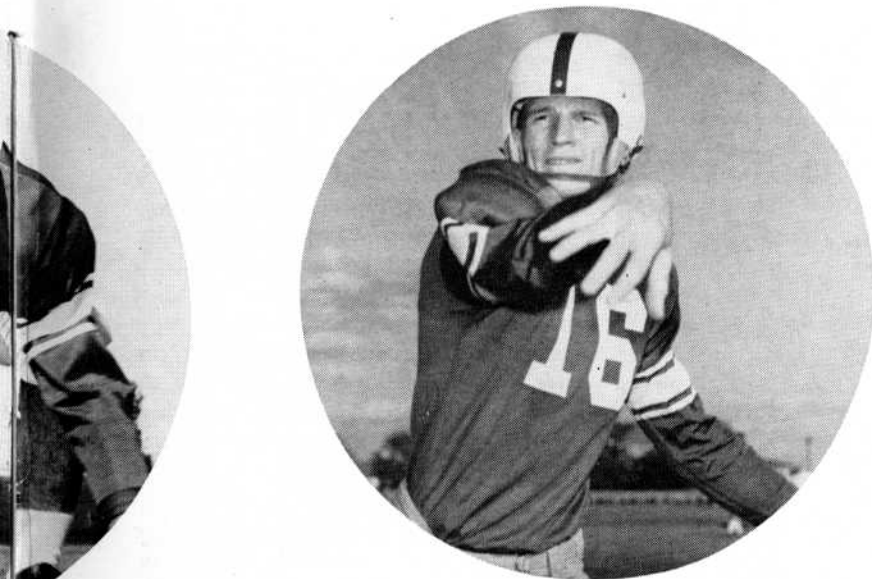


# The Sooners Come Well Equipped



*Analysis of O. U.'s football fortunes indicates a powerful team, playing a powerful schedule. The editor ventures out on a prediction limb and foresees a great season.*

**BY DAVID BURR**



ALL-AMERICAN CANDIDATES dot Sooner lineup. Here are four who will be watched closely. Tom Catlin (bottom), Billy Vessels, Ed Rowland, Eddie Crowder.

Football's radar screen was showing plenty of activity in early September. Unlike flying saucers, the flying cleats and pigskins were not calculated to startle the multitudes. They were simply test flights to prepare football powers for annual fall battles.

Oklahoma, confronted with the best slate of challengers in post-war years, also was preparing for the Saturday's ahead. There was no place for mediocrity on a team that must face, among others, Colorado, Texas, Kansas and Notre Dame.

All over the Big Seven behemoths were trotting out for scrimmage work or staying in for an extra "skull" session. At Oklahoma the block and tackle boys were popping leather with the usual Wilkinson gusto.

The feeling that this would be the Big Seven conference's best-balanced showing in its history found justification in the fact that veteran coaches were teaching veteran players football's refinements. Many of the teams have had key losses but none have experienced the wholesale house cleaning that automatically means "a building year." The same is true of O.U.'s four non-conference games. Pittsburgh, Texas, Notre Dame and Oklahoma A.&M. are all better teams than last year's squads.

To meet the challengers, the Sooners come well equipped. How well equipped only the season's record will tell. On paper the team prospects look bright.

Coach Bud Wilkinson can field a veteran backfield of Billy Vessels, halfback, Merrill Green, half, Buck McPhail, full, and Eddie Crowder, quarter. At this stage it is

considered likely that Tom Carroll, a freshman performer in 1949 who is back in school after a tour of duty with the 45th Division, will get the starting assignment over Green. Carroll is big (190) and fast and had great things predicted for him before his entry into service.

Vessels may be extended to keep the fine freshman of 1951, Buddy Leake, from seeing first string action. Crowder has a job threat, also, with Gene Calame making an impressive showing in Spring practice. With the exception of fullback, the backfield comes 2-deep in experienced, polished, offensive performers.

For defensive backfield duty, the Sooners have the great Larry Grigg, Lester Lane, Jack Ging and Billy Ballard plus any of the offensive backs who may be needed.

The line looks good but not as solid as many Oklahoma has fielded. Certain weaknesses must be omitted if it is to stack up favorably with some of the great Big Red forward walls. The weakest spots are at end and center. Center is weak because of a lack of reserves. If Tom Catlin can play 59 minutes of every game, center will be the strongest position in the line. Unless a capable reserve is found, the loss of Catlin at any time during the season would be a serious loss.

The ends are considered the greatest weakness of the line. There just are no ends of the Frankie Anderson-Jimmy Owens stripe available. To help solve the problem, Max Boydston has been shifted from the backfield and shows considerable promise. Back of Boydston is Kay Keller, who was injured in pre-season practice last year and

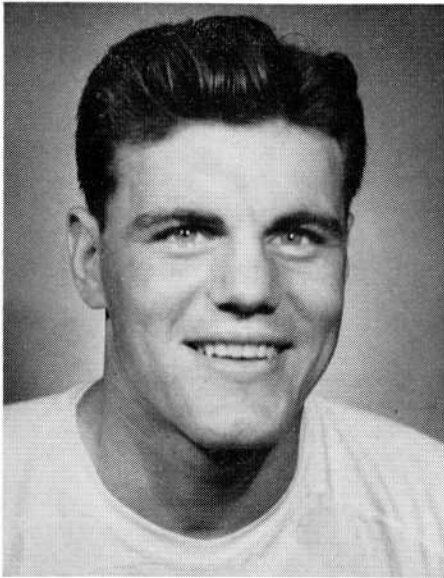
saw no action, and lettermen Dick Ellis and Reece McGee. On the other extremity, Carl Allison seems headed for a big year as a sophomore. His defensive work against Colorado and in succeeding games last year made him a stick-out performer. Behind Allison is two-time letterman John Reddell. The end material is good but it must develop into a bit more than good before the season opens if Oklahoma is to meet successfully the hurdles ahead.

The tackles and guards are in capable hands. On the left side, tackles Roger Nelson and Jim Davis have the power to open the offensive and close the defensive gaps. Guards Dick Bowman, Doc Hearon and George Cornelius leave little reason for concern for O.U. fans. All have earned at least one letter.

Experience is just as prevalent on the right side. Ed Rowland and Melvin Brown, tackles, and J. D. Roberts, Bob Gaut and Jerry Ingram, guards, are no newcomers to rugged line play.

Backing up the line, Oklahoma will have Sam Allen and Tom Catlin. As long as both boys are able to play, they will offer the best protection in the conference. Catlin again must have a capable defensive relief man. Kurt Burris and Boydston are two possibilities.

The Sooners will be strong in 1952. Oklahoma can field an experienced, smooth operating backfield. If Carroll lives up to expectations, Kansas notwithstanding, it will field the most explosive backfield in the league and probably in the midlands. The line doesn't have the depth of former years and would be weakened by any first string



BUCK McPHAIL  
... fullback in Heath tradition

loss. However, as of September 1, quality performers are at every position.

With this offensive and defensive material, Wilkinson leads his charges against a schedule that will provide a thorough test of Sooner strength. There are few, if any, breathers.

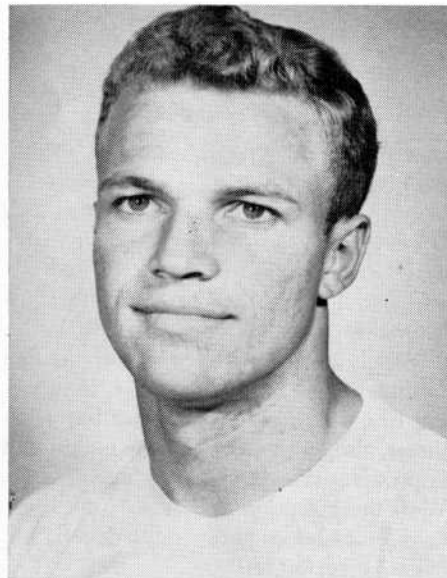
**Colorado** at Boulder, September 27. Colorado Coach Dal Ward believes, "It will be the toughest Big Seven race in years. Oklahoma looks like the champ again. Kansas should be terrific offensively with some of the best backs in the league. We should rate next alongside Nebraska. . . ." Normally many people might accept Ward's opinion as a sound one. The only trouble is that Ward retained 32 of 39 lettermen and that Colorado catches Oklahoma at Boulder. No Sooner fan needs to be reminded of the 27-18 scare the Buffs gave Oklahoma's national champs in 1950 at Boulder. Last year's Colorado team had a 7-3 record. This year's should be as good.

**Pittsburgh** at Norman, October 4. Pitt Coach Red Dawson phrases what many sports writers will agree is a sound description of Pitt's prospects. "We were pleased with our spring drills, although they showed up some weaknesses in depth on the line. Our first team should be good, with an improved running game. . . ." In his first season as head coach, Dawson's team showed vast improvement. They dropped their first seven games and then beat West Virginia, Penn State and Miami of Florida. This game is no breather. Pitt is on the way up and a win against the Sooners would announce their debut to high society.

**Texas** at Dallas, October 11. If it makes any difference in this traditional contest, Texas will not offer a squad with as much experience as is customary. Experience

seems to be no reason for O.U. optimism, and it is no reason for pessimism from the folks down under. Coach Ed Price says, "Our inexperience in 1952 will be evidenced by the many young, new faces that will be seen assuming the responsibility of important offensive and defensive assignments, but they are certainly as strong in spirit as the older boys—and that is good. . . ." The last phrase didn't need to be added for the Sooners' benefit. Besides some of the experience needed for the Cotton Bowl encounter will have been picked up from the three opponents Texas plays before they get to Oklahoma—Louisiana State, North Carolina and Notre Dame.

**Kansas** at Lawrence, October 18. Two statements by Coach Jules Sikes is the tip-off here. "We think we will have a good team for 1952. . . . We have a chance to win any game on our schedule." Such is the



MERRILL GREEN  
... Galloping Halfback

feeling of the coach and much of the writing fraternity. With an experienced team returning and with the addition of quarterback Gil Reich, 185-pound West Point transfer, Kansas will be no patsy for any team. The backfield is especially good and the line should be good defensively. If the offensive line shows improvement, Kansas will be hard to hold.

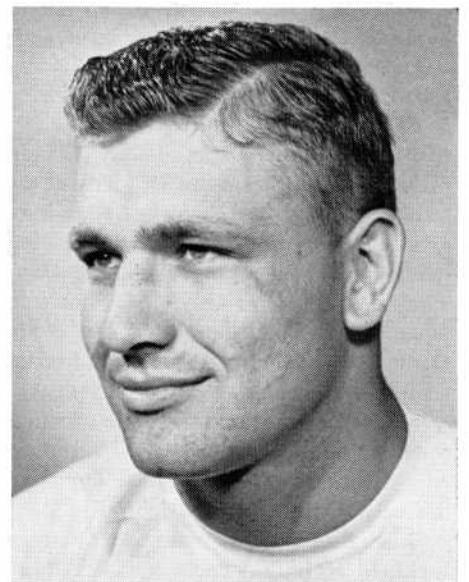
**Kansas State** at Norman, October 25. Usually figured as a game for the second stringers to handle, Kansas State is ready to fool the football fans that relegate them to last place. With the addition of West Point transfers Ed Stahura, guard, and Jack McShulskis, end, and Notre Dame transfer, Tom Smith, tackle, State's line figures to be vastly improved. The Wildcats are adding claws by switching from the Single Wing to the Split-T. They boast the great Veryl Switzer at safety. He will be used

on offense also. This is probably not the season that K-State will reach the rarified air of the league's upper reaches, but every team will have to be ready for them if they expect to win.

**Iowa State** at Ames, November 1. Coach Abe Stuber sizes up his team's prospects as follows: "We need more depth than we may be able to get, but we should be a bit stronger than last year. We'll have a bit more experience to call upon and the team blocked better in the spring than at any time since I came to Iowa State. . . ." A West Point transfer, Jack Erickson, tackle, will help the squad. Defensively Iowa State should be good. Their offense remains a question mark.

**Notre Dame** at South Bend, November 8. Sportsdom's Grantland Rice says, "Notre Dame will move back towards football's leadership. Coach Frank Leahy has figured 1952 for the return year. He will have the hardest team for opponents to manhandle." Defensively sound with seven starters returning, Notre Dame's offense may not be as spectacular as in the Lujack era. However, quarterback Ralph Guglielmi is being considered a worthy successor to the line of great football generals Notre Dame has produced. For many Sooners this is a game long cherished. If both teams should reach this point undefeated, a strong possibility, this may well be the game of the year in the manner of former Army-Notre Dame games.

**Missouri** at Norman, November 15. Not figured as a conference title threat, Coach Don Faurot's team is expected to make a greater use of the Split-T than they did last year when the spread got a workout. Bill Rowekamp, fullback transfer from West Point, should help make the "T" go. Faurot is worried about his defense, but feels his



ROGER NELSON  
... All American Tackle?

team will be stronger this year than last.

**Nebraska** at Norman, November 22. On the basis of the great Bobby Reynolds, Nebraska was rated a championship threat last year and wound up winning one, tying one and losing eight. Reynolds missed most of the season due to injuries, but regained his form in the last game of the season. According to reports, he's ready for action again which may be the reason for Coach Bill Glassford's appraisal, "We should be better in 1952. We are deeper and I believe faster with more competition at each position. We have the best set of fullbacks on call now that I have ever had as a coach." The team lost but four regulars by graduation so Reynolds & Co. should be in the market for wins in 1952. Could be a serious title threat.

**Oklahoma Aggies** at Stillwater, November 29. Coach J. B. Whitworth thinks, "We



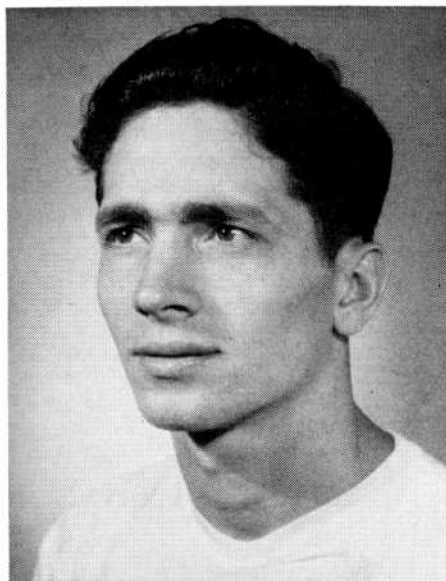
J. D. ROBERTS

... Headed for Guard Honors

should be about two touchdowns better than last year, due to improved defensive ability and somewhat improved personnel generally." The Aggies will enter the season as an inexperienced team but will be ready for the Sooners. In sight, a better game than last year.

The general consensus of the coaches themselves is that the Big Seven can field seven of the strongest teams in the conference's history. There are no real pushovers. Of the non-conference challengers, Notre Dame, Texas and Pittsburgh all seem to have what it takes to make the head of a football king roll.

There are several interesting things about this year's schedule. 1) One of the toughest conference teams is met head on in the first game of the season. 2) The two chief threats to Oklahoma's Big Seven football



JOHN REDDELL

... Veteran End

supremacy, Kansas and Colorado, are met on enemy soil. 3) The first four games are all crucial tests and come on successive Saturdays—Colorado, Pittsburgh, Texas and Kansas.

Weighing the information available before the season begins on a balance held by a dark-robed figure representing insanity, the following predictions are available. (Each year the *Sooner* editor unhesitatingly announces the results before a single whistle blows. Before the season's end, the predictions are calmly referred to as typographical errors.) Nonetheless, for what they are worth, the following predictions are dictated:

1. Standing of Big Seven in December—Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas State, Missouri, Iowa State.

2. O.U.'s national ranking—After an undefeated season and the type of schedule they play, the Sooners will be ranked among the top three. (Look for the squad to shape up rapidly and show some of the killer punch on the ground the 1949 squad did.)

3. All-American selections—There are a number of possibilities. Best bets Tom Catlin and Buck McPhail. Other top prospects, Ed Rowland, Billy Vessels and Roger Nelson.

4. Game of the year—Without question, Notre Dame. Texas and Kansas may field teams as good as the Irish but those games will not demand same national prominence.

The reader may have noticed how casually the phrase, "after an undefeated season," was injected. Most loyal partisans will consider it a prediction worth challenging. Opposing teams will find it amusing at this stage of the game. The local

coaches will consider it a sign of lunacy. Yet there is reason to believe that this year's squad is loaded. Last year many of the returning players demonstrated talent. This year they have added that important ingredient—experience.

On that happy note, another sports fable comes to an end. Hark! can that be Wilkinson rapping on my door.

## Golf and the Olympics

**Vickers Takes Title.** Two summer sports events brought attention to University athletes. O.U. had its 2nd collegiate golf champion and had several students and alumni selected for Olympic participation.

Jim Vickers, '52, captured the collegiate golf championship by defeating Eddie Merrins of Louisiana State. He was the second Sooner ever to cop the title. Walter Emery, '37Law, Tulsa, won in 1933.

O.U. representatives were selected for the Olympic wrestling, basketball and track teams.

J. W. Mashburn, Oklahoma City freshman, was named to the Olympic track squad. He qualified for the 1600-meter relay team by placing 4th in the 400-meter dash tryouts. A substitution by American track and field officials in Helsinki removed him from the relay team that took second to Jamaica. In subsequent exhibition races in Europe, Mashburn met Olympic 400-meter champion George Rhoden, Jamaica, twice and defeated him on both occasions.

The wrestlers fared a bit better. Tommy Evans, 145½, placed second in the wrestling competition. Billy Borders at 125½ was eliminated in an early round.

In basketball, O.U. alumni helped win the championship for the U. S. Marcus Freiberger, '51, and Wayne Glasgow, '50 ed, represented O.U. Freiberger was a member of the A. A. U. champion Peoria Caterpillars and Glasgow was selected for the Olympic squad by his performance in the A. A. U. play with the Phillips 66 team.

## No Longer Bashful . . .

be presented with the doctor's hood and a doctor's degree. By far the greatest number tonight will receive master's degrees. Approximately 150 of you will be awarded bachelor's degrees. Tomorrow those of you with an A. B. can knock on the door of the world and say, "I am John Jones or Mary Smith, A. B., alumnus of the University of Oklahoma." Don't be surprised if the world responds, "John Jones and Mary Smith, A. B., come on in and I shall teach you the rest of the alphabet. . . ."