

Orange Blossoms Attract Sooners



J. D. ROBERTS, U.P.'s lineman-of-the-year and Outland trophy winner, pats Gorgeous George, the Sooner's new mascot. Roberts, Oklahoma guard, impressed most All-American selectors.

In the Winter a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of citrus blooms—that is if you happen to be a member of the Big Red team that tackles Maryland U. January 1.

Maryland vs. Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl!

After an absence of two years from the bowl scene, Oklahoma returns in a matching that is proving to be as popular as R&H's happy pairing for the musical of the same name.

The game shapes up as the New Year's game-of-the-day in a spectacle known throughout the land as a natural.

The elements that make it that way include: 1) the nation's top-ranked eleven, Maryland, vs. the nation's fourth ranked team, 2) two of the nation's top defensive lines will meet for a showdown, 3) Jim Tatum, Oklahoma's coach in 1946, will meet his former assistant Bud Wilkinson in a coaching battle. And there are many, many more.

Oklahoma with its record of 8-1-1 will be the underdog in the contest, a role that the Sooners find to their liking. Maryland ran through a 10-game schedule undefeated.

As a method of comparing the two

teams, the *Daily Oklahoman* asked for a poll of the Missouri football team, the only common opponent for the Orange Bowl opponents, to see how the team that was defeated 20-6 by Maryland and 14-7 by Oklahoma figured the game would end. The results showed that the Missouri favored Maryland 7-3 with one player undecided. The reasoning:

LOYD BROWN, center: "I pick Maryland because of its line play. Oklahoma has the best back in Larry Grigg, but he isn't much better than Faloney."

TERRY ROBERTS, guard and line-backer: "I think Oklahoma is a better clutch team and can get more fired up for the big one. Maryland has the better backfield, Oklahoma the better line."

JACK SHIVELY, guard: "If Faloney plays, Maryland will win. He is one of the best quarterbacks I have seen. The Maryland line is just as good as Oklahoma's, but Maryland has better all-round balance in the backfield."

CHARLES BULL, tackle: "Maryland

will win by two touchdowns because of a better line. Faloney makes the difference between the two clubs."

AL PORTNEY, tackle: "Maryland has better personnel in line and backfield. I was impressed with the Terps' tackles and guards. I believe the game will be pretty close."

PETE CORPENY, end: "Oklahoma hits harder, but Maryland has the Sooners outclassed in the backfield. Notre Dame is the only team Oklahoma has played with a backfield of Maryland's class."

JOHN WILLSON, end "Maryland has a better line and a better passing attack. The outcome, of course, depends on whether Faloney can play."

VIC EATON, quarterback: "The game will be so close I'd be afraid to bet. I rate it a tossup. Faloney might be the difference, or Maryland's added bowl experience might be in its favor."

BOB SCHOONMAKER, halfback: "Oklahoma will win. It should stop Maryland's offense, particularly their long gain-

ers. Maryland is strong at quarterback and maybe that will help it. Oklahoma's offensive line blocks better and Maryland's defense is not as tough."

SKIMP MERRIFIELD, halfback: "Oklahoma should win. Oklahoma has an edge in the line and the backfields are a tossup. I believe Faloney is better at quarterback than Oklahoma's Gene Calame. But Oklahoma has rugged ability and will make it too tough for Maryland."

BOB BAUMAN, fullback: "I pick Maryland because I believe it is a better team. Faloney makes the difference. I believe Oklahoma has a better line, Oklahoma a better backfield—except Faloney is the outstanding back."

Tony Scardino, Missouri's other No. 1 quarterback, didn't play against Oklahoma because of an injury, but he rated Maryland as the better team. His deduction was based on his specialty—passing—and he believes that the two teams are so closely matched that the outcome will be decided on a passing attack.

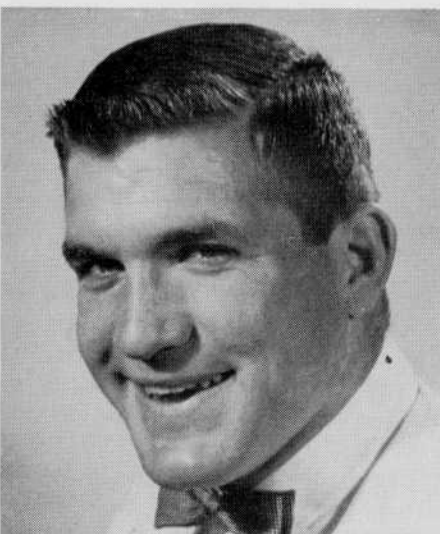
The comments reflect direct differences of opinions—a difference that will be settled in Miami, Florida, January 1, 1954.

Some opinions mean more than others, particularly if it's All-America and All-Conference time.

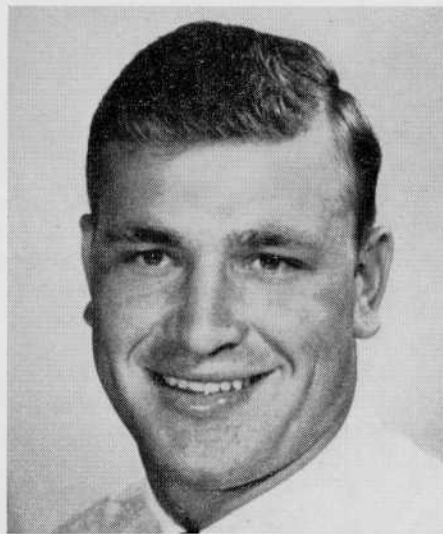
As usual the Sooners scored heavily in All-Conference berths but only one Oklahoma player appeared on any first team All-America team. J. D. Roberts, fine guard for the Big Red, scored heavily on the many "All" teams selected to date.

And the difference between his being an All-American and another fine lineman may be 28 pounds.

Commenting about the Sooner's finest asset—speed—Harold Keith, '29ba, '39ma, Sooner sports publicist wrote:



KURT BURRIS



ROGER NELSON



MAX BOYDSTON

... All-Conference Tackle and End

"Roberts wasn't born with all that speed. As a sophomore at Oklahoma, he was the squad's pudgiest player, scaling 230 pounds stripped as he made the offensive team.

"The food at Jefferson House, where most of our football players eat, was wonderful but in our games I noticed that I was always about two steps slow on downfield blocking," Roberts recalls.

"So Roberts took off ten pounds and scaled 220 stripped his junior year.

"But he was still one step slow on the downfield block. 'I could re-act pretty well but I still needed to be faster so I could help our guys cover to the outside when the opponents ran our ends. So I decided to come down to 200 pounds,' Roberts says.

"It takes a lot of character for a hungry football player to reduce his weight from 230 to 200 pounds and keep it there. Roberts managed it by doing lots of summer running at marine camp and by eating lots

of fruits and lean meats. He doesn't starve. He's just careful what goes into his tummy.

"His sacrifice and hard work has paid off this fall. In Oklahoma's opener against Notre Dame, Johnny Lattner, the Irish ace, ran Oklahoma's left end. Roberts broke through from the right side, gave chase and made the tackle from behind on the opposite sideline.

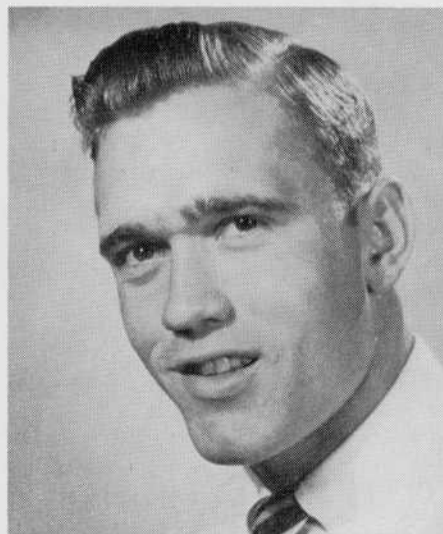
"That encouraged him. Although he looks gaunt as a halfback, Roberts now plays at 202 in every Oklahoma game. He has finally got the speed he's always wanted—speed for downfield blocking, for covering wide, for quick reactions, for firing straight ahead on the split-T block."

His outstanding play brought him the Outland award, the highest honor any guard or tackle can receive. He was the second Oklahoman to receive the trophy. Jim Weatherall won in 1951. Only one other team, Notre Dame, has had two men selected since the award was first presented.

All-Conference berths were won by Roberts, halfback Larry Grigg, end Max Boydston, tackle Roger Nelson and center Kurt Burris.

Grigg, Oklahoma's finest ground gainer (792 yards gained with an average gain per play of 6.09) and a national leader in scoring (78 points), was the workhorse of the Oklahoma backfield. With left halfbacks shuttling in and out of the starting lineups and the classy Merrill Green pressing him at right half, Grigg coupled his improved offensive play with his proven abilities as a defensive player to be one of the finest halfbacks in the midlands.

Boyston put up one of the gamest comebacks of any Sooner this year to make the All-Conference team. Chosen last year as an All-Conference end, Boydston was switched to fullback for the Notre Dame opened this



LARRY GRIGG

... All-Conference Center and Halfback



MERRILL GREEN (No. 20) on his way to a game winning touchdown. With the score tied 20-20 in the Colorado game, and with only seconds remaining to move 51 yards. Green carried the ball on a trap play and went the distance for Oklahoma's 27-20 victory. Green previously had scored on long touchdown runs against Notre Dame in the season opener and also against Texas in the Cotton Bowl. Photo by John Crane.

year. Apparently capable at that position, he demonstrated no particular lustre and was switched back to an end position already manned by veteran Kay Keller. Keller's specialty was blocking and defense—Boydston's pass catching. With Gene Calame at quarter the Sooners pass infrequently. It appeared that Boydston would have difficulty replacing Keller. Then Keller was taken out for the season with an injury and the load was placed squarely on Boydston for the Big Seven title run. His improvement defensively from week to week was rapid. In the final game of the season against Oklahoma A.&M., Boydston's defensive play glittered. He blocks well and is still a pass catching threat.

Nelson, the much-injured tackle, only missed All-American status because of his injuries. Unable to play in the Notre Dame game this year when all the sports world was watching, he missed his chance. But teaming on the right side of the line with Roberts and Boydston, his fierce offensive blocking provided the backs with room to spare. Probably his most spectacular showing was in the Kansas game when he and Roberts opened the Kansas line at will.

Burris, Sooner center and line-backer, started the season running neck and neck with returning center Gene Mears for starting honors. Before the season had reached the half-way point, he was receiving praise

throughout the prairie area. Defensive signal caller when he's in the game, Burris made many fans believe he had invented the line-backing post with his play against Texas. Ranging far and wide, he must be haunting the Texas team yet.

Two of the five will return next year. Boydston and Burris still have a year to go. Both will be serious contenders for All-American honors a year from now.

With bowl fever running high, O.U.'s

basketball team tipped off relatively unnoticed December 5 for a round of pre-bowl games that would cause any coach to worry. Coach Bruce Drake, '29bs, and his team had to meet Illinois (Dec. 5), Ohio State (Dec. 12), Wisconsin (Dec. 14), Oklahoma A.&M. (Dec. 16), and the Big Seven tourney draws during the holidays in a gruelling start.

(At press time, the Sooner basketball team had a 1-3 record. They defeated Wisconsin but lost the other three.)

To meet the challenge, Drake had veterans at every post ready to go. Last year's top scorer Bob Waller, Lester Lane, Dink McEachern, Ron Blue and Sterling Jones are all lettermen and the first four were starters last year. However, the team still lacked the height it needed to meet most challengers. Waller at 6-6 is the tallest starter. Hustle, experience and the Drake Shuffle will be counted on to produce a good season.

Billy Vessels, last year's pick as the No. 1 football player in the nation, proved to the satisfaction of Canadian football followers that he was as good as his clippings. Playing for the Edmonton Eskimos, Vessels was selected as the outstanding Canadian pro football player even though he received a sidelining injury late in the season.



BOB WALLER

... Tall Man on Short Team