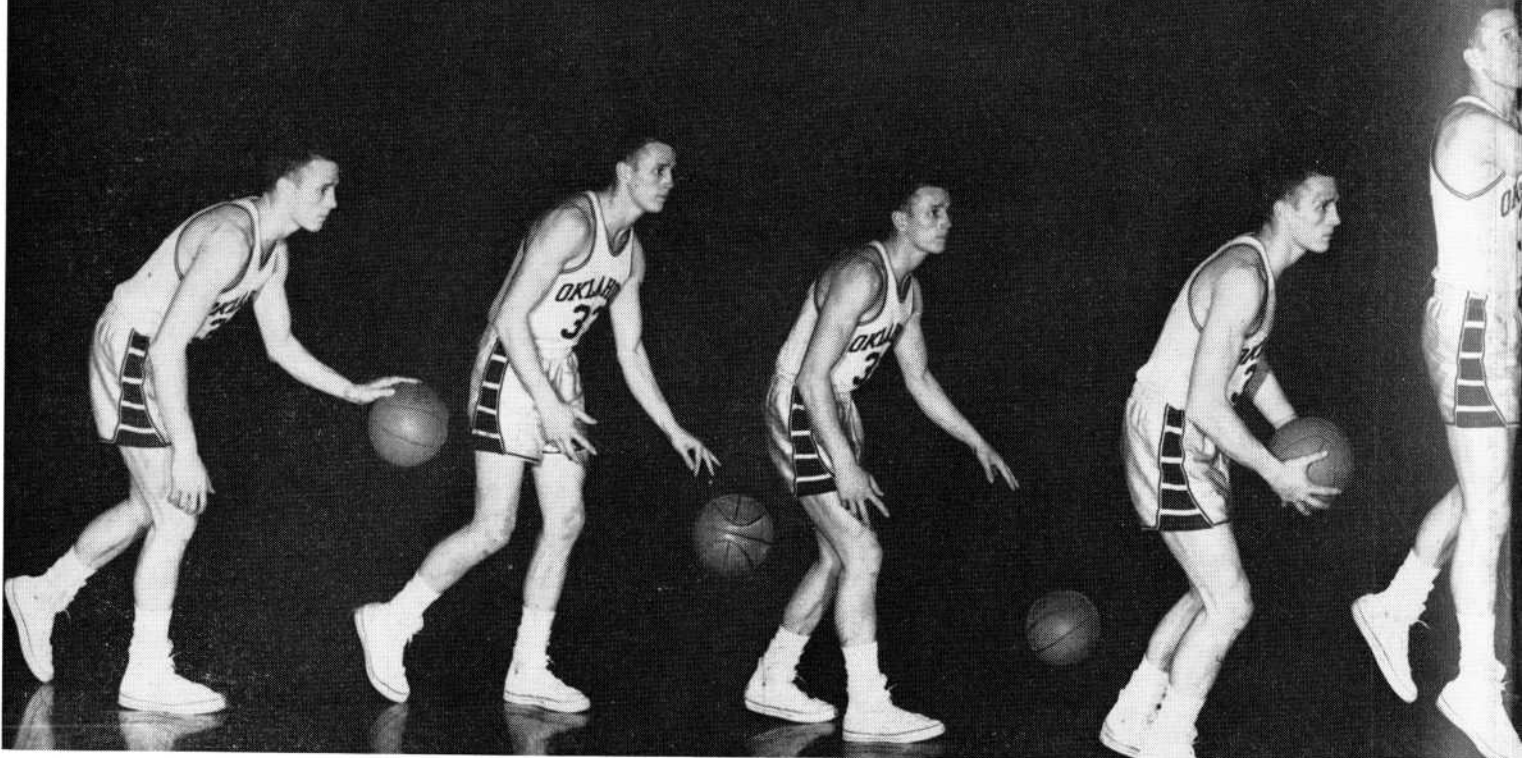


# Small Man With Big Ideas



IN A SEQUENCE OF SHOTS, Lester Lane, Oklahoma's leading candidate for title of best little man in college basketball, shows jump shot that is rocketing him along.

**Lester Lane, Oklahoma's fancy floorman and scorer, is having his best basketball season. He's making his jump**

**T**he score stood 78-78. Fifteen seconds were left to play. Oklahoma brought the ball down court. Guard Larry Hamilton passed off to a slim player with a fine jump shot. With less than 5 seconds showing on the scoreboard clock, Lester Lane jumped, pushed and hit. Oklahoma had a 80-78 victory over a visiting Missouri team, and Lane had a ride off the court on the shoulders of his teammates.

It was no accident that led to the strategy of letting Lane take the do-or-tie shot. Up to his final decisive basket, Young Mister Lane had scored 28 points against Missouri and was riding high in Big Seven scoring statistics with a 19.4 point-per-game average, and just over a 20 point average

for all games, tops for the O.U. team (through February 10).

For Purcell high school fans, the fact that Lester was giving a fine account of himself at O.U. was not the least surprising. They knew him on the way up and would have bet their sports knowledge on Lane making the grade to star billing.

Strangely enough, the young man who won 15 high school sports letters in basketball, football and track and was the first athlete in 12 years to letter in both basketball and football at O.U., came close to having his sports career nipped before it got started. When he was in the 6th grade at Purcell, where he was born and reared, he picked up osteomyelitis—the dread bone

infection that has threatened Mickey Mantle's baseball days.

After several weeks in the hospital and a year's recuperation, Lane showed enough improvement to play basketball in the 7th and 8th grades on a team that won 38 and lost 1 during that stretch. He made Purcell's high school basketball team as a freshman. His team took a state Class B championship when he was a junior, and was a semifinalist when he was a sophomore. He also tried track and football and was good enough in the latter sport to be named to two All-State football teams. He was an unanimous choice as an All-State basketball player.

After graduation, several factors helped



point-per-game scoring clip. Photo by John Crane.

t pay off 20 points per game.

him decide to attend the University. Included in the list of reasons were 1) the distance (Purcell is less than 20 miles from Norman); 2) an O.U. alumnus who was a Purcell high school sports enthusiast and a personal friend (John Kennedy, '30 pharm), but foremost among his reasons was a conversation that he had with Bud Wilkinson.

Lester had a problem and Bud Wilkinson was the man with the answer. Lane did not want to give up either basketball or football. Both games had great appeal for him. Yet most colleges would want him to concentrate on one or the other. Could Wilkinson tell him whether he would be allowed to play both at O.U.? Wilkinson

could and did assure him a chance in both sports, and that was that.

When Lane enrolled, freshmen were allowed to play varsity sports due to the Korean War and a Big Seven Conference rule. An injured knee that required surgery kept him from playing football that year, but he was able to play basketball and broke into the starting lineup before the season was over. In spring football drills, he impressed the coaching staff, and in the dying days of the 2-platoon system, Lester played defensive halfback for Wilkinson's 1952 team. On the '52-'53 basketball team, he was a starter and earned letters in the two major sports—the first Sooner to turn the trick since Tom Rousey, '43phys.ed, '48 m.phys.ed, did it in 1940.

Last year he reported for spring football drills to try for the quarterback spot as a two-way man. He looked good in making the attempt but decided to forego football in favor of getting an even start with his basketball brethren.

His decision to stick to one sport was brought about partially by a changed family status. During his first two years he not only picked up three varsity letters but also a wife, the former Jan English of Altus, and a son, Kevin. He felt that two sports required too much time away from home.

Anyone spotting Lane on the campus would find it difficult to believe that he is one of O.U.'s finest athletes. He stands just a shade over 5-10 and weighs in at 165 pounds. But what he lacks in stature he makes up in ability. The term 'natural athlete' fits him snugly.

An example of his versatility took place when Lester was a freshman. A friend inveigled him into entering the pole vaulting competition in the state AAU track and field meet at Norman. To his friend's surprise, Lane took second place with only 2 weeks' practice.

**L**ester has had many doors opened for him by his athletic abilities and many people undoubtedly have played a part in turning out the poised, polished player and young man that he is today. Yet the author had the feeling, talking with him, that Lester held a special seat reserved for his high school coach Boney Matthews. His idea of the caliber of coach Matthews is summed up like this: "He could take a one-legged boy with a stick cane and make a basketball player out of him."

Lane believes that athletics are responsible for most of the good things that have come to him and he defends athletes and athletics with more emphasis than is normally found in his conversation.

Teeing off on those who think being an outstanding athlete comes easy, he mentioned an 8 to 11 a.m.-2 to 5 p.m. training schedule during the Christmas holidays and an everyday work session as proof.

"Those people who see us get on a train with our suitcases for an out of town trip probably resent us skipping classes and going off to have a good time. What most of them don't know is that the suitcases are filled with books that we've got to crack if we intend to play sports," Lane said.

Lane's hopes for the future include sports, of course. He would like to play AAU basketball after a hitch in the Air Force, and later work in a coaching career. But before he has to come to any hard conclusions about the future he has one more year of basketball left at O.U.

Somehow I got the impression from talking with Lane that he was still a bit uneasy at the prominence sports have brought him. But when he gets on the basketball court there is nothing unsure about his play. The opposition may be playing a small man, but with a ball in his hands Lester Lane has big ideas.

**February Scoreboard.** As of February 10, O.U.'s winter sports teams had the following records: 1) basketball, 5 won and 10 lost; 2) wrestling, 2 won 1 lost; 3) swimming, 2 won and 1 lost, and 4) indoor track, third place in a triangular meet involving Kansas and Kansas State.

**March Headliner.** The University of Oklahoma will be host to the National Collegiate Wrestling tournament March 26-27. The tourney will be held in the O.U. fieldhouse. Preliminaries and quarterfinals take place the first day and semifinals and finals March 27. Tickets for the tournament can be purchased from the Athletic Business Office, University of Oklahoma, Norman. First day's tickets are scaled at \$1.00 each for afternoon and night matches (each session requires separate ticket) and at \$1.50 for semifinals and finals. Reserved seats are available at \$2.00 for finals only.

**February Upset.** The headline in the *Daily Oklahoman* read, "Sooners Stagger Aggies, 63-60," and therein lies one of the most welcome Sooner stories of the year.

The Oklahoma basketball team, going into the February 13 encounter with the Aggies, had been taking their lumps. Their season record was a dismal 5-10 and a spot was being reserved for them near the Big Seven conference's basketball cellar. Their first 1953-54 encounter with the Aggies December 16 had ended in a near rout by the Aggies.

The Aggie team, on the other hand, was riding high in national rating with a 4th

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THE QUARTET pictured here attended the Jackson County Alumni Club meeting February 4. They are Hugh Garnett, '32bus, Mrs. Glee Miller Garnett, '37ba, Baxter Henry, '35bus, Mrs. Henry.

### The Mobile University . . .

is going on in the state and of the problems to be encountered with increased industrialization.

Here is what he has to say:

"Census reports reveal that 1,000 Oklahomans a month are moving off the farms and into the cities and towns of the state. This illustrates the fact that Oklahoma is an industrializing state. It means that adult education in urban areas is becoming a greater and greater responsibility of the State University. The urban population of the state now is larger than the farm population . . . .

"Since Oklahoma is moving into a new period of industrialization the Extension Division is gearing its operations to facilitate such industrialization.

"It has already begun and will continue to emphasize an intensive program of service to business and industry. Business is the business of the State University. Oklahoma is becoming an industrial state, and needs people who are educated for industry. In line with the same philosophy, services to the professions are being increased markedly.

"In short," Dean White concluded, "Oklahoma is moving into a new period of its history and the Extension Division is organized to help speed the transition through adult education which will increase the reservoir of trained persons and enlightened citizens."

It's going to be a big job. But then it's a big operation, this Extension Division.

### February Upset . . .

place grip and was intent on improvement of that standing at the expense of O.U. They had won 20 games and lost 1 for the season.

To make the picture even darker for O.U., A&M had lost only one game to the Sooners at Stillwater under Hank Iba's coaching—and that in 1947.

There was no indication in the opening minutes of the game that an upset might be brewing. A&M moved in front and, with 12 minutes of the first half gone, the score stood Aggies 25, O.U. 18. But the Sooners picked themselves up and outshot the Aggies in the next three minutes by a margin of 9 to 1 to post a lead of a single point. From that point on, A&M knew they were in a ball game. As the half ended, A&M held the lead, 33-32.

The third quarter saw O.U. move in front and end the session with a 50-40 lead. At one point the Aggies trailed by 12. Although the Aggies gave a fine closing kick, the Sooners protected their advantage and posted their 63-60 win.

Leading the Sooner parade were Lester Lane (see above) who counted 18 points, Bob Waller with 16 and Ron Blue with 12.

This was the big one and the Sooners produced their best game of the year. Coach Bruce Drake, '29phys.ed, had his boys ready and they took it in stride.

As they headed into the backstretch of the Big Seven conference race, the Sooners had no hopes for the championship but could climb to a third place finish.

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