



Stadium sketch sizes up athletic ticket situation. Area within broken black line indicates size of stadium before expansion. Sections shaded dark gray: season ticket sections. Light gray sections: student tickets. Medium gray: visiting team tickets White: tickets available on individual game basis.

Everyone Loves a Winner

And everyone loves 50-yard line seats. Tempers rise in direct proportion to distance tickets are away from coveted spot. Here is a clear explanation of ticket procedures.

By GUY H. BROWN, '42ba, '48ma

*The best of the linemen get clobbered
And the life of the back ain't so hot,
But what of the guy to whom they apply
For seats that he simply ain't got?*

—BERT McGRANE

RECENTLY I heard a football fan complaining that he couldn't get 50-yard line seats at the football game. A third per-

son in the conversation answered with a philosophic smile, "Well, I can tell you one thing—you could darn sure get plenty of tickets prior to the Bud Wilkinson era—anywhere in the stadium! In fact, you could even get a 50-yard line seat and still have room on each side of you to lie down and watch the game."

That remark contained the crux of the ticket situation in Soonerland. Everybody likes to watch a winner. The highly successful Bud Wilkinson football teams have caused many people to want to do the same thing on Saturday afternoons during the fall football season—namely, to go to Owen Stadium and watch the Big Red roll past all

comers. And, actually, it is a great thing for the team and the University that so many loyal fans are present for every game. The problem is that all fans cannot occupy the same seats. Although the stadium is built around one common playing field, complications arise from the fact that some seats are in a better location than others.

Winning football teams cannot claim credit for discovering or initiating the basic principle underlying the ticket scramble. It is simply an application of the law of supply and demand. The same principle caused the rationing system during World War II, makes the diamond a high-priced stone, and permits only one out of seven persons who apply for World Series seats to actually see the games.

Regardless of the principle, the Athletic Business Manager, the Alumni Executive Secretary, the University President or anyone else within shouting or writing range of the ticket applicant might just as well chuck the economics text for *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Come football season, the twin personalities of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde emerge in many individuals. The business executive who handles thousands of intricate business details with ease simply cannot understand a ticket system which does not allow him to buy a choice ticket according to his desires or whims. A "pillar of the church" often resorts to some questionable adjectives in voicing his opinion of everyone that he imagines responsible for his ticket plight. There are accusations such as "political influence," "pay-offs," "influential friends," and hundreds of others just as unreasonable and imaginary, hurled at ticket officials.

Some comfort and satisfaction is forthcoming with the realization that only a comparative few fit the descriptions in the preceding paragraph. Fortunately, thousands of fans understand the problem and accept the consequences without complaint or objectionable behavior. Many of the latter group do not know the exact "why"—they're just nice people who have faith in other people. Therefore, this explanation of the O.U. ticket situation is given with the hope that more people will understand a difficult problem.

Tickets are handled by the Athletic Business Office. Kenneth Farris and his staff have developed a ticket system that is sensible and equitable. It is a system that does not appeal to the person seeking "special consideration"; neither does it cater to the person who wishes to "go around" or avoid regulations.

The system honors the following priority groups in this order: (1) season ticket holders and re-order patrons; (2) athletic letter-

men; (3) alumni with paid membership in the Alumni Association.

Each year a special order period is conducted for priority members. Application blanks are mailed April 1st to all priority members with a return deadline of May 4th. Following the priority period, ticket sales are open to the public.

Now for the problems! There are two categories: (1) home games, including both season and single game tickets; (2) away from home games with special emphasis on the Texas-O.U. game.

First, season tickets. It is often perplexing to the new applicant that he cannot buy a season ticket in a good sideline location, preferably the west side. Let's look at the stadium capacity and other seating details.

The seating capacity without bleachers or other special additions is 55,647. Now, here's the eye opener—only 25,860 seats are between the goal lines. This figure includes both sides—12,860 on the west; 13,000 on the east.

Let's look at the figure of 25,860 seats located between the goal lines and see the present status.

The student body occupies seats on the east side of the stadium—total 6,356. The O. U. band requires 260 seats, 2,288 seats are allocated to the fans of the visiting team and 780 seats are tabbed for the visiting press and official guests. This represents a total of 9,684 seats that are not available for season ticket sale.

Subtract 9,684 from the total between-goal lines figure of 25,860. A total of 16,176 seats (between the goal lines) remain for season ticket sale.

The season ticket sale at O. U. has long since passed the figure of 16,176. In 1952 it was 16,042; in 1953, 19,944; this year's total is over 19,000.

It is obvious that not only are all the side line seats taken on a season ticket basis, but that many season tickets are sold in the end zone sections. In fact, Sections 13 and 18 are almost completely sold on a season ticket basis.

So—what remains for the new season ticket applicant or the person buying single game tickets? End zone seats, my friend, or seats in the corner of the stadium.

And here's another thought. Remember the capacity before the stadium was enlarged? Around 28,000—an overflow crowd of 33,000 that watched the Sooners annihilate Missouri in '48 required bleachers, chairs, and standing room.

Other than ten rows added by deepening the field, the stadium expansion consisted of closing in the north end. Take the difference between 28,000 and 55,000. Result? About 27,000 end zone seats.

Even with a perfectly logical mathematical explanation, many questions come to mind. Here are some of the most frequent:

How does one improve his seats? At a recent alumni meeting, one alumnus put it this way, "Don't any old alums ever die?"

The Athletic Business Office staff will improve your location, if possible. However, there are few vacancies in the sections that are ordinarily considered "choice." Remember that the ticket order system permits the ticket holder to reorder his seats on a priority basis! Can you feature a ticket holder in Section 5 or 6—even in 3, 4, 7, or 8—failing to reorder his tickets? Not on your life! Even if he cannot attend the games for the particular season, he holds to his priority tenaciously—usually giving his tickets to a friend. Nevertheless, improvement is possible but it is a long, steady grind. Just remember, you are one of 20,000 season ticket holders.

Who gets the good seats? The answer is simple—the person who has been a season ticket holder the longest. Please consider that there are some fans who have supported the Sooners during both good and lean years—buying season tickets year-in-and-year-out regardless of the team success.

Since a football program depends upon the support of its customers, the customer takes No. 1 ranking in importance to the Athletic Business Office. The person who buys consistently, year-in-and-year-out, takes precedence over the person who buys single admissions to only a few of the special attractions. Gate receipts must pay the bills and the responsibility for this falls to the Athletic Department. If this is viewed as an easy task, witness the number of colleges that have dropped football in recent years because of athletic deficits.

Business Manager Ken Farris cited the following example during one of our talks: "There's an old fellow who has a janitor's job here at the University. He has tickets on the 45-yard line—been buying the same seats for 25 years. He will continue to get those seats as long as he orders and wants them. I do not intend to oust him and give the seats to some person trying to use pressure. He is a good football customer."

Here's another perennial question: "How come I can't buy good seats when I know for a fact that Joe Blow decided to go to the game during the week that it was to be played and got good seats from somewhere?" Answer: Joe knew someone who long ago had plunked down the shekels for season tickets. It may have been an individual or it could be that he received tickets from a company or some organization holding a block of tickets. There are a few com-

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panies that hold priority on blocks of O. U. tickets—but please understand that if the seats are in choice locations that the company had established that priority through an order of long standing. At the time that the block was purchased, there wasn't such a clamor for tickets and the ducats were available in any amount. Should a company order a block of tickets today, it would have to be in an end zone section.

And now—single game tickets. The availability is governed almost entirely by the season ticket sale. The theme emerges from the preceding paragraphs—plenty of seats in the end zone sections. The number of single game seats is bound to decrease in the future providing, of course, that the Sooners continue their successful ways. More and more fans are turning to season ticket purchases.

And O.U.-Texas tickets. Practically everything explained to this point applies also to the problem of Texas tickets. More people wish to see this game than can possibly be seated in the Cotton Bowl. The demand for tickets greatly exceeds the supply. First priority is extended to season ticket holders and re-order patrons! second priority to lettermen, and third priority to alumni. Should the members of either the second or

third priority group “feel hurt,” just remember that you, too, can qualify for the No. 1 priority.

The ticket allotment reserved for the University of Oklahoma is 26,000. An approximate allotment of 6,000 for O.U. students and 20,000 for priority groups is made each year. The student allotment varies with enrolment. Texas University receives a similar number of tickets and the remainder is used by the Cotton Bowl Association and its bondholders.

A limit of two tickets to new applicants has been in effect during recent years. The policy was enacted in an attempt to spread the allotment over a greater number of applications. Re-order patrons of long standing retain their priorities for the number of tickets in the original application. Here again is the reason that you hear of some individual obtaining his ticket from some company that holds a block of Texas tickets. The priority of these companies dates back to the lean years—and any individual had the same privilege of ordering Texas tickets at that time. Even in such cases, the number of tickets held by one company is limited.

The problem of “location” is even more prominent in the Texas ticket problem than it is in our own stadium. Of the 20,000 seats available to the O. U. priority groups, only 3,300 are located on the sidelines. Who gets them? Once again, it is the person who has been ordering the longest.

How can alumni get Texas tickets? Frankly, the chances aren't too good if you are ordering for the first time. Once you receive tickets, you can graduate to the No. 1 rating of “re-order patron.” Consequently, the ticket supply has diminished with previous alumni orders and the increase in season ticket sales. Practically everyone with a No. 1 priority rating exercises his privilege to order Texas tickets whether he intends to go or not. He has heard that they are scarce. This is the reason that tickets can often be found for sale in Dallas on the morning of the game. Everyone associated with the ticket problem in Soonerland would like to correct the situation to place tickets in the hands of those who intend to use them—but the Athletic Business Office cannot determine “intent” simply by examining the order. They all look alike.

Even though the chance of getting Texas tickets for the first time is not bright, it

COLORADO PARTY

The Alumni Club of Denver, Colorado, is planning a dinner party October 29 to serve as a pre-game warmup for the O.U.-Colorado game the following day in Boulder. The party will be held at the Cosmopolitan Hotel beginning at 6:30 p.m. with dinner service at 7:30 p.m.

Since the club officials anticipate a large turnout (a group of Casper, Wyoming, has indicated they would be present in good number), reservations should be made in advance. Tickets can be reserved for you and your party by writing Earl Stone, secretary-treasurer of the club, 2501 S. Garfield, Denver, or by writing Robert E. McCurdy, club president, at 1839 High Street, Denver. Ticket price: \$5.00 per person.

isn't hopeless. New orders within the alumni priority rating are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Orders are filled according to the postmark on the envelope just as long as the supply lasts. This year the supply was depleted with orders bearing a postmark through April 7th. Your chance is improved by mailing your order immediately upon receipt.

There is yet another possibility—one that I hope never happens. Even one losing season would witness a horde of Sooner fans leaving the bandwagon. Remember our opening 21-21 tie with Colorado in 1952? I talked to a fan during the week following and I recall his comment, "Yeah, I have Texas tickets, but I'm not going down this year. They tied Colorado and it doesn't look like we have much chance against Texas." I thought about that fairweather friend when the Sooners led Texas 28-0 at the end of the first quarter. Final score: 49-20. Even with the headaches of the ticket problem, all will agree headaches are preferable to a losing season.

In short, the ticket problem at the University is understandable. For the individual it is one that digs at human emotions such as selfishness, envy, greed, pride, ridicule, jealousy, and bitterness. Baylor University officials labeled their similar problem as the "unscratchable itch."

I am convinced that the Athletic Business Office at our University is doing an excellent job. I am convinced that its staff handles ticket orders with absolute honesty and fairness to everyone. Having talked with alumni directors throughout the nation, I'm convinced that our alumni receive far more consideration through the priority system than alumni of the average university.

The following is an excerpt from a letter received in 1952:

"I ordered tickets to a home football game which will be the first I have seen played in Norman for several years. Also, for the first time, I received what amounts to a bone being tossed as a leftover—by having two tickets in Section 1, Row 49, pushed off onto me. Even considering that I ordered the tickets less than two weeks before the game is to be played, I cannot feature the entire stadium being so completely sold out!"

Yes, things have changed! There's even a further change since this letter was received in '52. Section 1 isn't available for single game tickets anymore—It's sold solid on a season ticket basis. Yes, things have changed one heck of a lot. But we are proud of the changes that have taken place at the University and are more anxious than ever to be good hosts to football crowds.

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