

The basketball team could field only one starter from the '53-54 team, but there was an even greater obstacle to a successful 1954-55 campaign. For they had

No Big Man to Lead Them

FOOTBALL for the University of Oklahoma came to a slow halt in December. The last game of the season was November 27 at Stillwater, but O.U.'s all-victorious contingent was still the talk weeks later as All-American teams kept the football fire going. As was correctly forecast, Max Boydston and Kurt Burris were mentioned on nearly everyone's team.

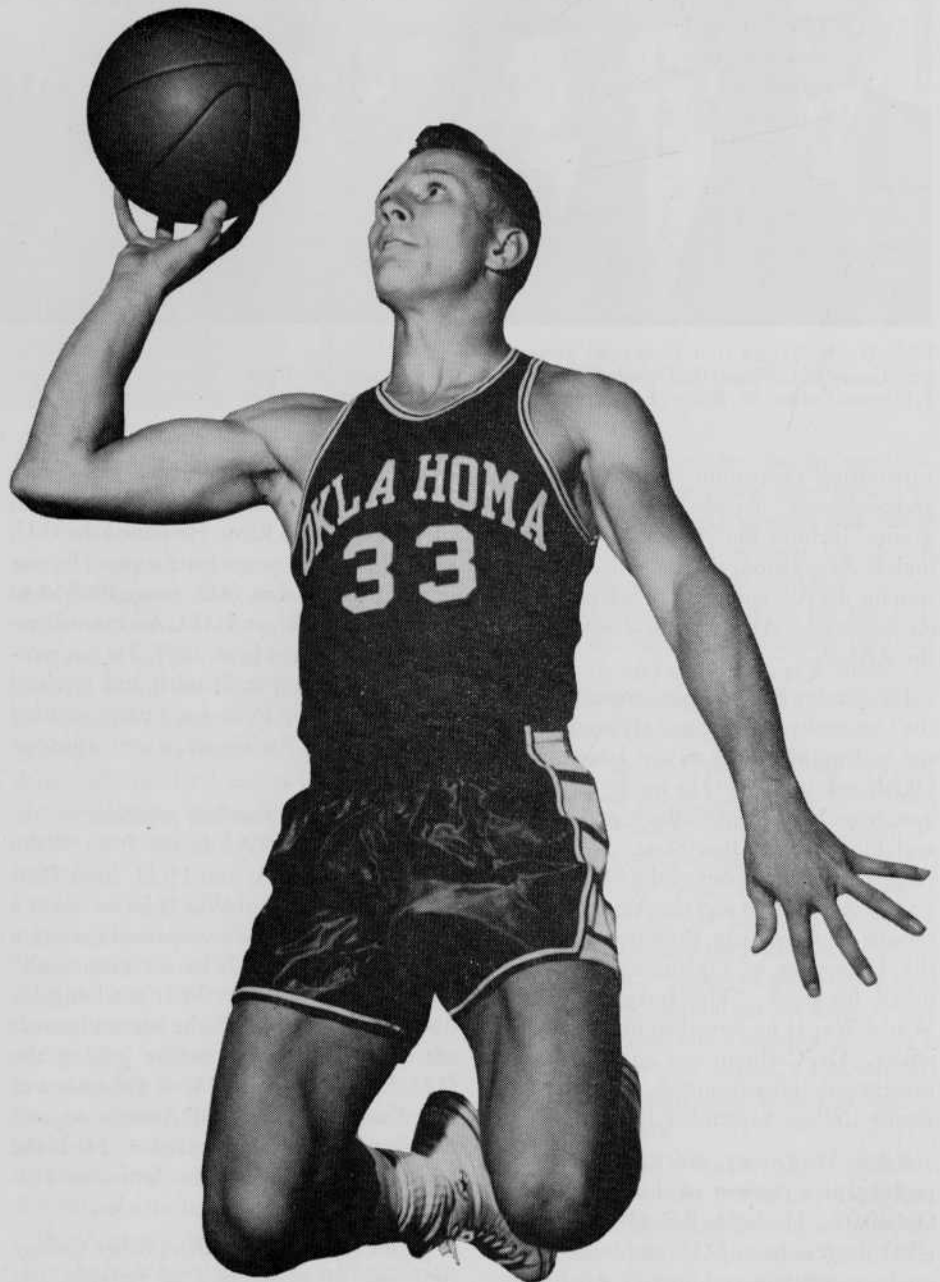
Meanwhile, basketball was making its move into the sports spotlight. The *Sooner* assigned the task of summing up the Sooners' personnel and possibilities to Hal Heller, student sportswriter. Here is his report:

By HAL HELLER, '55

"Oh, where, oh, where have the big boys gone?" might be Coach Bruce Drake's lament.

Bruce, starting his 17th season at the Sooner helm, appears to have his work cut out for him as this will probably be the shortest team he has had since 1944. It could, however, very easily be the most colorful in quite some time.

Just how the Sooners will fare as the season progresses, only time will tell. Their first four games will be some of the toughest, and may furnish enough experience to make O.U. pretty rugged by the time they embark on their conference schedule. Those first four include games with Wisconsin,



LESTER LANE
... Only Starter Back for Basketball

Ohio State, and two with Baylor. Then comes the Big Seven Tournament at Kansas City, which promises to be a dilly, and after that the conference race begins.

The Sooners will be missing four starters this season. Forwards Ron Blue and Sterling Jones, guard Dink McEachern, and center Bob Waller have all graduated. However, they will have eight returning lettermen from last year's squad, but only one, Les Lane, was a starter. Of these returning, the tallest man is 6-3 Fred Muller. Drake received a big blow when he learned that the only really big man on the team, 6-10 Walt Morrison, was giving up basket-

ball to concentrate on his studies. That leaves two sophomores as the tallest men on the squad, Ed Abbey and Gene Wheeler, both 6-4.

The O.U. height problem will be bolstered with the coming of the second semester when 6-6 LeRoy Bacher becomes eligible. Bacher is a returning navy veteran with four years of service basketball on the San Diego navy team under his belt. He will be eligible to play eight of the twelve conference games and both Oklahoma A&M games, so he is being counted on to carry much of the load during the last half of the season.

They Had to Swim For the Touchdown

In the 1904 O.U.-A&M game, every Sooner made a touchdown. But that isn't the reason football fans still chuckle and remember the game.

By FRANK LONG, '08ba, '09ma

The center position looms as the big problem for the first part of the season, and it will probably go to Ed Abbey, 6-4, or Fred Muller or Sam Thompson, both 6-3. These two look pretty good in practice, and both possess fine shooting ability as well as rebounding ability.

The forward slots will probably be filled by Lynn Hart, 6-2, Larry Hamilton, 5-11, or Ted Blue, 6-0. All three of these know how to rebound, and possess a great deal of speed and shooting ability.

The guard positions shape up as the strongest on the team with All-Conference Les Lane, 5-10, and sophomore Jimmy Peck, 5-9, taking command. Both are extremely fast, clever dribblers and ball handlers, and have what is probably the finest array of shots in this section of the country. They could very easily become the best pair of guards in the conference.

Drake is hoping that some of his sophomores will develop enough to bolster his bench strength and give him a little more depth.

Sooner fans may not recognize the O.U. offense too well this year either. The shuffle isn't what it used to be, according to Drake, who says, "We'll have a new wrinkle on the Sooner shuffle this year."

The offense will be built around the two guards, Lane and Peck, and will feature a lot of fast break, good passing, clever dribbling and careful ball handling. The Drake-men will try to outshoot their opponents percentage-wise from the field and the foul line. With the new rule on foul shots calling for a player to get a second shot if he makes the first one, the Sooners will be concentrating on this phase of the game. This season, a team's effectiveness at the free-throw line may be the deciding factor in many ball games.

The Big Seven Conference again shapes up as one of the strongest loops in the country. According to the executive office of the NCAA, records for the past five years reveal that the Big Ten and the Big Seven are the two toughest basketball leagues in the nation.

Colorado, with practically their whole squad that tied Kansas for the title last year coming back, appears to be the team to beat. Missouri, Kansas State, and Kansas will be close behind.

The pre-season dopesters seem to have forgotten the Sooners as a title contender this time. One thing is certain, this year's team will provide plenty of crowd-pleasing nights of entertainment, for, as Drake says, "The fans may see the most entertaining basketball they have in several seasons."

(Frank Long, '08ba, '09ma, was one of the University's early sports stars. In addition to participating in football, he also made the track team. After graduation, he made a fine career for himself in YMCA work. He is now retired and lives in Norman.)

"If my friend Hall hadn't invited me to Oklahoma University, I'd take the next train back."

That was how Fred Ewing, O.U.'s first paid coach, felt when he arrived in Norman in the fall of 1904 and looked over the material he was supposed to mold into a football team.

Up to that time, the team, such as it was, had been coached by faculty members, some of whom even played when there weren't enough husky students available to make up an eleven.

Ewing's first afternoon out, only four regulars showed up. The key men had been lost to the farms or just hadn't come back. It took several days before he rounded up enough men to make a team.

I was a freshman from Pond Creek High School, a green farm boy who had never seen a game of football played. My father had seen two town teams play, however, and several men had been carried off the field. That settled it for him.

"Son," he warned me, "they play football down at the University, but don't you play! I'd rather see you train for a prize fighter. There you only tangle with one man, but in football you have eleven to whip."

Though I couldn't play, I still could watch, and I was anxious to see a free for all fight, eleven against eleven. So when O.U. met Kingfisher College in the first game of the season, there I was on the sidelines. What's more, I was never so excited in my life. When the big Kingfisher center jumped over our line and broke up our plays, I got madder than the boys on the field. I couldn't see why our boys didn't knock him out, sure enough.

"Darn you, you couldn't do that if I were in that line," I thought, clinching my fists in my pockets. Then I remembered what

Dad had said. There could be no football for me.

That night a student committee headed by Herb Everest came to see me. "Long," they said, "you've got the weight, you're husky, you've got to get out and help hold that line. You can do it if anyone can."

I knew they were right, but I remembered what Dad had said. I couldn't go back on him. Finally I agreed to try out, however, on condition that I could turn in my suit if Dad still said no.

When they left, I sat down and wrote Dad all about it. For a wonder, he answered me at once. He wrote, "You have gone further in life than I have, I don't have a right to tell you what to do; use your own judgment, son."

I played in the next game and in every game thereafter for the five years I was in the University. (I finished in the prescribed four years, but took a graduate degree.)

We'd won two games and lost one when we went up against the Oklahoma Aggies that year in the first game between the two schools. It brought a lot of speculation and worrying on everybody's part. How good a team were they? We didn't have scouting in those days. Could we beat them? All we knew about them was that they were coached by their music teacher!

The game was to be played at Guthrie, November 5, 1904. The Aggies came by wagon; we went by train.

Cottonwood Creek made a loop around the playing field, and recent rains had swollen it with muddy, rushing water almost thick enough to walk on.

We won the toss, kicked with the wind. Tom Matthews' boot sent the ball high in the air and the wind did the rest. The ball went to the Aggie goal line. Their music teacher-coach hadn't told them what to do in such a situation. Instead of downing the ball for a touchback, they tried to carry it out. We stopped them ten yards from their goal line.

The crowd was yelling itself hoarse. Hold 'em! Hold 'em!, our rooters whooped. We

Continued page 28