

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

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O.U.'s Lawton Campus . . .

recognition through the annual Science Fair. Budding journalists meet each year for school newspaper and yearbook information from the Interscholastic Press Association.

"Education in credit courses is furthered by the Correspondence Study Department. Military personnel at Fort Sill finish high school work and progress toward college degrees through this mail-service education.

"The list of University services in the southwestern Oklahoma City could go on and on. There's the night classes for teachers, the entertainment service for civic clubs and the guidance of students through the Evaluation and Testing Department.

"A survey of businessmen on Main Street seems to indicate that the University has made a good start toward providing the educational services that Lawton wants."

They Had to Swim . . .

held and even pushed them back a few feet.

They had to kick on the third play, against a 40-mile-per-hour wind. What

was worse, the punter didn't have enough room. He had to aim high and get the kick off before we blocked him.

The Aggie fullback, Callahan, got the punt off all right, but it went almost straight up. Then the blast caught it and took it back over his head and the goal.

The crowd went wild. If O.U. got the ball, it was a touchdown. If the Aggies recovered, it would be a touchback.

The ball fell on the ground behind the goal on the edge of Cottonwood Creek and began to roll toward the water. It reached the water as Baird, an Aggie, got to it. He started in after it. But Tom Matthews was close to him, gave him a shove, and Baird, not being able to swim, scrambled out. Burleson, another Aggie, followed Matthews. Ed Cook, one of our halfbacks, and I followed them into the water. Three were too much for one, so Burleson turned back. We cornered the ball. Cook got it and yelled "Down" before he made it to the bank.

Wet, muddy and shivering, yet crazy-happy, we crawled up the bank and got our touchdown.

Final score, O.U. 75, Aggies 0. And O.U. had the distinction of making the first touchdown in history by swimming for it.

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