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The Sooner Scene

By R. BOYD GUNNING
Executive Secretary
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HOW HIGH is the cost of Victory in football?

This question has occurred to many Sooner fans this season. An answer to it requires a review of many problems that arise from winning consistently and against all comers. If the Sooners win the remaining games of the season they will establish a record of 50 consecutive wins. In 11 years Bud Wilkinson has won more consistently than any other coach in the history of the game.

Bud Wilkinson's success and his philosophy of athletics have contributed immeasurably to the welfare of the University and the state it represents. Winning has instilled a sense of pride in the University and in the people of the State. It has given the people of Oklahoma confidence and determination to be "champions" in all lines of activities. Few, if any, who know the coaches and the players, personally, would consider this picture overdrawn.

What then has been the price of Victory? The players and the coaches have paid the price of self-denial, hard work, and the determination to live up to their motto "to live and play like champions every day." To know what this experience is worth to the players you need only to follow their successful careers after graduation.

Nevertheless, winning seems to inspire many outsiders toward distractions. There is the myth of over-emphasis. It is a charge that seems to go with winning. So far as the University is concerned it is hard to find a point of over-emphasis in O. U. football. The players have less practice time and miss far fewer classes than do participants in any other major sport and you might add, or several other student activities. Their number and the value of their scholarships are comparable to those of athletes at every other conference school. These boys study in a great variety of fields and more than 90 percent of them receive degrees—a percentage considerably higher than the average for the student body as a whole.

With some justification, over-emphasis can be attributed to the fans who demand higher scores, presume to speak for the coaches or the University, or whose only interest in the school is to be personally identified with big-time football celebrities. However, every Sooner knows there has been very little of this sort of thing connected with the O. U. situation.

As to how these players are regarded on the campus: Several weeks ago a writer appeared on our campus collecting material for an article about football players which appeared in the November 11 issue of *Life* magazine. He interviewed members of the faculty and student leaders. The article was belittling and derogatory about college football players in general. Numerous examples were used in the article but none from the University of Oklahoma. I interpret this omission as a compliment to our players and to the University program.

Over the years Oklahoma's winning has been attributed to an amazing variety of circumstances outside of the skill and determination of the players. Here are a few examples, each claim unfounded. Claims have been made that O. U. wins because the crowd is too noisy—the officials are unfair—the players are heavily subsidized—O. U. never plays against a good team—they play too rough—etc. Most of this is taken by O. U. people as too ridiculous for comment or merely as intended as a bad joke.

Winning brings ticket problems. Such problems are very real indeed. In the alumni office it sometimes seems that if we continue to play games where the demands for tickets exceed the number of seats available, disappointing or alienating a few loyal people each time, eventually we will inevitably run out of friends.

I know of no school, playing big-time football, where the alumni have been treated with greater consideration than at O. U. Yet here is an example of what happens. O. U. will have 12,000 tickets to the Orange Bowl game this year. At two tickets each, the potential demand from priority holders is in excess of 50,000. As I see it, there is no solution entirely satisfactory to all concerned. Some deserving good friends of the University are going to be disappointed.

A problem that arose this fall for the first time, so far as O. U. is concerned, involved the football fans of four schools playing in Dallas on one October weekend. The big winner, O. U., received most of the publicity when local hoodlums, not connected with any college, triggered the worst brawl in the history of a fine football series. This resulted in considerable

embarrassment, particularly for O. U. and the University of Texas.

I was a senior in the University before I ever saw a winning season. During those four years we lost four to Nebraska and three to Texas. If the game is worth playing it is worth winning, and it is great to have a winner. But frankly, I believe there is a great deal more to the Wilkinson philosophy than just winning. It is a philosophy of hard work, self-denial, good sportsmanship, integrity, and the will to excel in everything you do. He has all the qualities of a master teacher and has always been a credit to the institution which he represents.

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