

Sooner Scene

Oklahoma football has brought a sense of pride and accomplishment to Sooners everywhere. Followers of the Big Red have experienced many thrilling afternoons in the past 13 years. The magic of an indomitable Sooner drive, as it gets rolling with electrifying effect on the crowd, is an unforgettable experience. It happens in Sooner football time and again.

Here are a few such memorable moments as I recall them:

1. The year 1950 was a season of great comebacks, such as the second game against Texas A. & M. It was a 34-28 thriller and ranks as one of the best offensive games of all time. In the first quarter Yale Lary scored on a 13-yard dash, putting the Aggies in front.

This was counteracted immediately with a 25-yard run by "Mule-Train" Leon Heath, followed by a pass from Arnold to Heath which resulted in a 50-yard touchdown play, making the score 14-7. Just before half-time Billy Tidwell tied the score with a 75-yard touchdown and point-after. In the third quarter Vessels swished 26 yards to place Oklahoma in front 21-14.

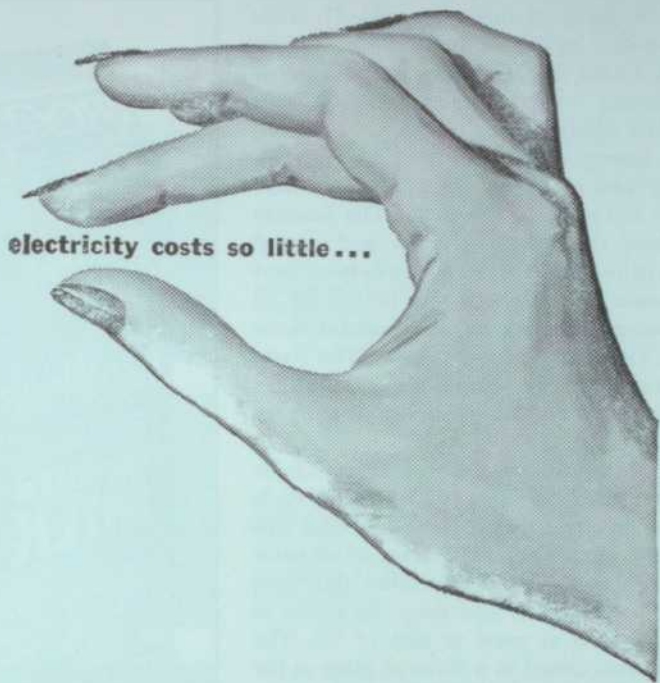
Glenn Lippman came right back with a 40-yard touchdown, tying the score for the third time. The Cadets' great fullback, Bob Smith, then went 50 yards to place the Texans in front, 28-21. The Sooners retaliated, however, Vessels scoring on a pass from Arnold to make the score 28-27 with 3½ minutes left. At this point Oklahoma fans were praying for a tie.

Weatherall missed the kick, and 55,000 people sat in stunned silence, feeling the game had slipped from them. Then the fans stood and began to applaud. The Sooners kicked off and held the Aggies. Lary punted to the O.U. 31 with 106 seconds to go. Arnold flipped a pass to Vessels for 30 yards; the second aerial was a bulls-eye to Heath but it was lost in the sun.

Arnold then threw to Tommy Gray for 11 yards to the Cadets' 25. The next pass was to Heath for a 14-yard pickup with 61 seconds remaining. Arnold then threw a 10-yard strike to Gray on the 4. The Sooners called on Heath who turned the corner on the left flank and went in for the winning touchdown. This was 106 seconds of perfect football which paved the way to a National Championship for the 1950 team.

2. In 1952 the Sooners were a team of explosive offensive power. The most memorable game of this season was in the Cotton Bowl when a highly regarded Texas team was literally blasted out of the stadium by 28 points in 10 minutes. Eddie Crowder put on an exhibition of football magic which confounded both the Texas team and the fans.

The backfield was Crowder, Vessels, Leake and McPhail, one of the best of all time. Texas fumbled the opening kickoff, recovered by the Sooners. The most hectic opening 10 minutes in football history saw the Sooners



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score 4 times, and the demoralized Texans never recovered. In the 10 games of this season the Sooner juggernaut rolled up 407 points for an all-time offensive high.

3. Another game of the 1952 season stands out in my mind as one of the great games. Oklahoma lost to Notre Dame in the 7th game of this season 21-27. This was quite a ball game. It led Notre Dame's coach Frank Leahy to say afterward that Oklahoma was the finest team he ever coached against.

In losing, Oklahoma held an edge on the ground of 313 to 219 yards, but Notre Dame led in aerial 135 to 44. The Sooners fumbled the ball five times and played most of the game without the help of four key men. J. D. Roberts was ousted for an elbowing fracas and injuries lost Ed Rowland, Leake and Merrill Green. The slashing runs of Billy Vessels assured him an inside track on the Heisman Trophy in 1952.

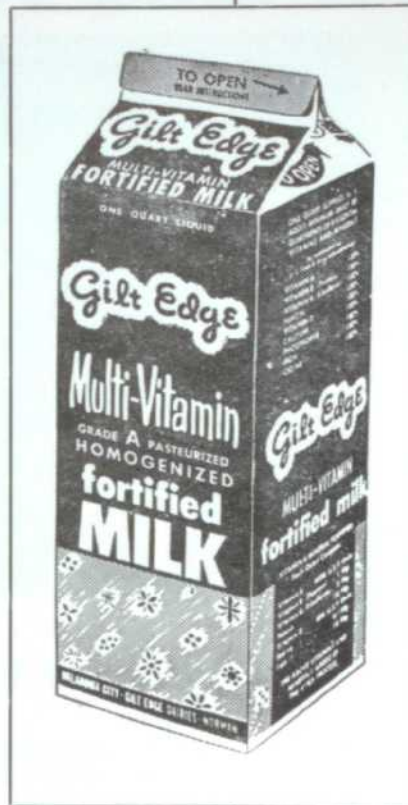
4. Oklahoma literally took Notre Dame apart in the 1956 game to the tune of 40-0. It can be argued with conviction that this was the finest Oklahoma team of all time.

5. Oklahoma fans remember the team of '49 as big, fast and deep. Its claim as "the best" is as good as that of '56. The season was closed in a blaze of glory at the Sugar Bowl against L.S.U. with Leon Heath winning the outstanding player award. The 35 points made by Oklahoma that day broke the Sugar Bowl record and carried the Oklahoma victory string to 21 games.

6. No such list would be complete without the spectacular Nebraska game of 1950. The contest in this game between the fabulous Bobby Reynolds and Billy Vessels will long be remembered. Both were great football players and both were at their best on this day. At one point in the first half the Huskers led 21-14. Three touchdowns in 10 minutes following the intermission downed the Nebraskans. Vessels outran Reynolds 209 yards to 89, and the final score was Oklahoma 49, Nebraska 35.

The Sooner football magic is still intact. Even with 5 to 7 of our best men injured, the team has had the spark of former Oklahoma teams and has improved with each game. Although the Northwestern game wrecked its national ranking, the outcome was understandable to those who knew the physical conditions of the players on that day. Bud Wilkinson and his staff deserve tremendous credit for the way they have brought the team along this year in the face of unbelievable obstacles.

—R. Boyd Gunning



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