

Sooner Scene

The University of Oklahoma was placed on probation by the NCAA, January 6, 1960, for an indefinite period of time. The penalty applies to football only and its effect will be that during the probationary period Oklahoma will not be able to participate in post-season football games or in televised games.

The NCAA reported that Oklahoma violated the principle of the institutional control and responsibility rule and the provision requiring members to co-operate in answering all relevant inquiries concerning the enforcement of the Association's rules and regulations. The NCAA held that during the previous inquiry in 1954-55 representatives of the University failed to provide information which, if it had been disclosed, perhaps would have altered the eventual disposition of this earlier inquiry.

President G. L. Cross has stated: "This recently disclosed information occurred seven years ago, two years before the NCAA placed Oklahoma on probation in 1955.

"When the 1953 violation was recently brought to our attention, Mr. Wilkinson took steps immediately to inform the NCAA of it. The NCAA first learned of it through our own initiative."

The NCAA statement indicated that "recently disclosed information concerning improper financial assistance being awarded to a then student-athlete of the University and the operation of a recruiting fund which was allegedly used to provide improper financial assistance to certain prospective and enrolled athletes, caused a reopening of this case to investigate the operations of such recruiting fund which was administered by a Mr. Arthur L. Wood of Oklahoma City."

The NCAA received information that the fund existed between 1952 and 1954 and that the University of Oklahoma and representatives of the NCAA made repeated requests of Mr. Wood to make the records of this fund available so as to determine whether or not it is still in existence. Up to the date on which the probation was voted, Mr. Wood had refused to make any information about the fund available on the grounds that he could not disclose such records without jeopardizing his own position. The NCAA did not believe Mr. Wood's reasons for refusing to co-operate to be sufficient and believed that it was entitled to be satisfied that the recruiting fund was no longer in existence and had not been used to provide improper recruiting activities.

The NCAA report commented on the "co-operation extended the NCAA and its committee on infractions at all times by the executive and athletic administrations of the University of Oklahoma."

Dr. Cross also said:

"Regarding the involvement of Mr. Wood, we have made repeated efforts to persuade him to make his records available to the NCAA and we hope he will do this in the near future.

"The University appreciates the NCAA's acknowledgment of our efforts to co-operate with them fully. The University not only co-operated, it was the first to bring the new evidence to the NCAA's attention."

The earlier NCAA investigation of Oklahoma was conducted during the year 1954-55 and resulted in a two-year probation for O.U. beginning April 26, 1955. Oklahoma was then found guilty of:

(1) offering high school athletes cost-free education beyond their normal period of

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eligibility. (When an Oklahoma athlete had served out his football eligibility and hadn't graduated, Oklahoma didn't drop him. Instead, Oklahoma extended his scholarship, giving him additional employment until he received his degree, provided he was making normal progress toward graduation.)

(2) paying emergency medical expenses for wives and children of athletes (Oklahoma's defense of that was that there was no other legal way for a married athlete to obtain this assistance since the Big Seven conference forbade an athlete on scholarship to secure outside employment to earn these emergency expenses. Thus athletes were unfairly handicapped by this rule whereas non-athletic students were not.)

(3) university patrons provided some Oklahoma athletes "fringe benefits . . . of relatively nominal value" (Oklahoma held that since the NCAA itself termed this aid "relatively nominal" it showed Oklahoma had done a good job of controlling it among its alumni and fans.)

As Wallace Kidd stated in the *Anadarko Daily News* in the first of many editorials appearing throughout the region, "If wrong has been done, the penalty can be paid. An indefinite suspension period, such as now exists, is a heavy cloud of suspicion that has a worse effect than guilt itself."

The NCAA should be given the information it requested on the Wood Fund, if such existed, so that it can be determined how the money was used and that no such fund has been in existence since 1954 or 1955. It is certainly to the best interest of the University that the whole matter be cleared up as promptly as possible.

—R. BOYD GUNNING

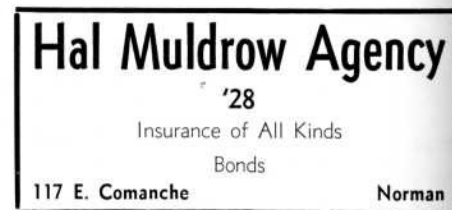


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