

# The Big Leap to Rome

By Jay Levine, '60

SOAKING up the summer sun in Rome is a pretty lofty ambition for a boy from Erick, Oklahoma, especially with possible Olympic glory thrown in. Yet for J. D. Martin, O.U.'s vaulting wonder and one of the mainstays of this year's promising track squad, this is no idle dream, but an opportunity that may be well within his grasp.

A Martin vault of 15-9 $\frac{3}{4}$  in Norman, April 12, bettered the world's record by an inch and a half and made the lanky junior the man to beat in the pole vaulting ranks. Though the vault may not be accepted as the new record (one of the vaulting standards was reversed to steady the bar in a 20-mile-an-hour wind), the effort gave rise to speculation that Martin could be the first to clear 16 feet.

Martin's spectacular showing during February's indoor track season had given added momentum to talk of his Olympic potential. The Sooner was over the 15-foot mark in each of the indoor competitions. His peak performance was a sky-scraping 15-7 $\frac{1}{4}$  vault at the Big Eight indoor meet in Kansas City.

If Martin is successful in making the U. S. team at the July 1-2 Olympic trials, he will join a select list of Sooner trackmen who have participated in these international contests. He would also be the first athlete developed by current Sooner track coach Bill Carroll to land an Olympic berth.

Five former Sooners have seen action in the Olympic games—Tom Churchill, '31ba; Glen Dawson, '37ed; J. W. Mashburn, '54; Hendrik Kruger, '56bus, and Neville Price, '54, the latter two representing South Africa.

Former O.U. track mentor (now associate coach) John Jacobs, '16ba, has watched 39-years-worth of Sooner track stars—and the lanky Martin doesn't suffer by comparison. "Martin is certainly one of the finest boys I have ever seen in the pole vault," Jacobs says emphatically. "He's doing very well; most of all, he's a great competitor."

Martin, of course, draws heavily on the advice of his own coach, Bill Carroll, '50ed,

who was a champion vaulter himself at Oklahoma in 1949.

The 6-foot-4, 193-pound Martin first made vaulting headlines last spring when he climbed over 15-3 $\frac{3}{4}$  against O.S.U. A great jump in anybody's meet, Martin's effort was good for only third place as the Cowboys' flying duo, Jim Graham and Aubrey Dooley, both cleared better than 15-5 to nose out 19-year-old Martin. His vault, however, was probably the highest on record for a teen-ager.

He will also be a definite threat in the June NCAA meet in Berkeley, California, by virtue of his second place finish in last year's nationals. The only man to best him there was O.S.U.'s Graham, who has since been graduated.

But when Martin is racing down the path toward bar and pit, he refuses to let himself think of records hanging in the balance. "It's better if a vaulter doesn't think about anything. He should have his form down so well that everything goes off automatically."

Until a kinked leg muscle sidelined Martin between the indoor and outdoor seasons, Coach Carroll had been using his ace vaulter in the hurdles as well. Although Martin won't be a threat at Rome in the timbersticks, he did manage to run home second in the high hurdles at the Kansas City indoor meet.

It was at this meet that Oklahoma won its first Big Eight track championship and upended Kansas' perennial first place finishers. Earlier in the season, the Sooners had tied the Jayhawks 61-61 at Lawrence in dual competition. The decider in each meet was the mile relay. In the dual meet, O.U. lost by a slim margin but reversed the verdict at Kansas City when the Kansas anchor man dropped the baton on the final exchange.

This year's team is plowing through possibly the toughest schedule of any previous



Vaulter J. D. Martin

WHEN J. D. MARTIN SAILED OVER THE BAR AT 15-9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>  
HE SMASHED THE WORLD'S RECORD  
AND BECAME THE GREATEST POLE VAULTER IN COMPETITION



Sooner track squad. On tap were appearances in the big relay meets at Texas, Kansas and Drake. A dual meet with upstate foe Oklahoma State is set for Stillwater, May 11.

One of the highlights of the spring schedule was a swing through Arizona to meet Arizona State and the great track power Southern California. Sandwiched in were meets with schools such as Arkansas, Nebraska, Texas, Southern Methodist and Texas A. & M.

After this murderous schedule, the team will fill May and June with the Meet of Champions, the Big Eight Conference meet (a field that includes NCAA champion Kansas, of course), the NCAA, National AAU meet and finally the Olympic trials July 1 and 2 at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California—the conclusion of the six-month grind.

Gail Hodgson and Mike Lindsay, the squad's stellar miler and weight man respectively, are also possibilities for Olympic berths—Hodgson for South Africa and Lindsay for Great Britain.

Hodgson has won both the Big Eight indoor and outdoor mile races as well as a first in the 1958 cross-country meet. His indoor win came in this year's Oklahoma conference meet win. He set a new Big Eight outdoor mark of 4:06.2 last year, breaking the record held by K.U.'s Wes Santee.

Shifting to weights, Oklahoma finds itself with the top Big Eight shotputter in Mike Lindsay. The brawny Londoner has been crowned conference indoor titlist twice. He also racked up a No. 1 spot in last year's outdoor league meeting. In addition to holding the Sooner record in the shot, he has the top O.U. discus effort, 175-8.

Versatile senior Larry Neeley has concentrated mostly on the pole vault for the past three years. The Dighton, Kansas, product cleared the bar at 14-6 last year and has already equaled that height this spring. He has also shown promise in the high jump, clearing 6-3 at Kansas City to win an unexpected victory and add valuable points to the Sooners' final score.

The remainder of the high jumping corps is inexperienced but talented. The twosome of Mark Brady and David Ewing is probably the best sophomore combination in the loop. Both have hit over 6-5.

The broad jump is another of O.U.'s

strong events where sophomores are playing a big role. Footballer Tommy Raley and Steve Swafford give the Sooners the best chance in this event since Neville Price competed for O.U. in 1954.

Dee (the flea) Givens, the diminutive senior from Lawton, holds the top spot among the Sooner dashmen, claiming school records in five events.

Givens and Mark Sullivan are the Sooners' top low hurdles men, with Givens holding the O.U. record. In the high hurdles, letterman Bob Knight has been sharing the load with Martin.

Two of the few events on the track program where O.U.'s strength lies with veterans are the 440-yard dash and the mile relay. Lettermen Hi Gernert, Vernie Sanders and Bill Noble have been the mainstays so far this year. Senior Gernert also has been running the half-mile.

The sophomore-stacked squad started off the season in high gear with the tying and subsequent dethroning of mighty Kansas in indoor competition. The job of winning the outdoor crown will be more difficult with the addition of the events where the Jayhawks are strongest—the javelin, the longer dash and hurdle events. Sooner injuries since Kansas City are also certain to take their toll.

The chances for more Oklahoma triumphs can best be summarized by Coach Carroll's pre-season statement, "The success of the team depends entirely on the individual desire by each member of the track team to accomplish a personal goal."

Any other year that personal goal might be limited to victory in a single event, school, meet or conference records. But in 1960. It could mean Rome, the Olympics and competition with the world's best.

### Martin-1960

#### INDOOR

15-0<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ----- Kansas, Feb. 8  
15-0 ----- Mich. State Relays, Feb. 13  
15-0<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ----- Nebraska, Feb. 20  
15-7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ----- Big 8 Indoor Meet, Feb. 27

#### OUTDOOR

14-10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ----- Texas Relays, Apr. 2  
15-1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ----- Arizona, Apr. 5  
15-3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ----- S.Cal-Ariz. State, Apr. 8  
15-9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ----- O.U. Invitational, Apr. 12