



**F**OOTBALL FORECAST: Fair and warmer with occasional showers and a few severe thunderstorms. Oklahoma's Sooners, once the scourge of the midlands, find themselves in an unusual position at the start of the 1961 football season. Not only are they not ranked nationally in top ten pre-season predictions, but they are not even expected to win the Big Eight Conference championship.

One season of below-par performances has produced a rush toward a new band-wagon—Kansas. But before the 1961 Sooners are counted out, an improved defense and crop of sophomores may have to be reckoned with.

Coach Bud Wilkinson pinpointed the reasons for the 1960 record of 3 wins, 6 losses and one tie, when he said:

"With the exception of one game, possibly two, I thought we scored enough points to win last season, if we'd been a little bit better on defense. We were effective on offense but so poor on defense we just couldn't win.

"This year I think we'll be a better defensive team. How much better remains to be seen. But I don't think we'll be as good on offense."

In an attempt to improve the defense, spring training was devoted to player shifts and liberal experimentation with freshmen. One major change returned 1960 quarter-

continued

# The 1961 Big Red Forecast

*the Sooners are hitting the comeback trail with the accent on defense*

By DAVID A. BURR  
Director of Public Information

back Jimmy Carpenter to halfback. Stepping into the spotlight at quarter is a talented Tulsa sophomore, Bill Van Burklee.

But an improved defense, talented sophomores and excellent desire and morale may not be enough to bring the team out of the football wilderness. Other Big Eight teams are making improvements also, and the Sooner's three outside games are Notre Dame, Texas and Army. A quick check of Sooner opponents provides little reason for optimism:

**Notre Dame**—The Irish will have 17 first and second team members returning from a squad that compiled a 2-8 record in 1960. In many ways, Notre Dame and Oklahoma appear to be evenly matched. The 1960 records are similar and both teams return experienced personnel. Coach Joe Kuharich has stated: "Certainly we are pointing towards Oklahoma and we are aware they are pointing for us." The season opener will be televised nationally.

**Iowa State**—Once the patsie in the conference, the '61 Cyclones will be stronger than the team which bested Oklahoma 10-6 last year. Twelve of the top 22 players return, including outstanding tailback Dave Hoppman.

**Texas**—The entire starting backfield of Mike Cotten, quarterback, Jack Collins, and James Saxton, halfbacks, and Ray Poage, fullback, return. This backfield may be the best in collegiate football. Coach Darrell Royal also has 11 other members of the top two teams returning and recruits from a freshman team that won 5 and lost none. Texas has won the last three O.U.-T.U. games and figures to continue.

**Kansas**—Another Wilkinson protégé, Jack Mitchell, has put together a Kansas team which is expected to make a run for the national championship. Players like Hadl and McClinton will be joined by Bert Coan in the last five games of the season. Seventeen members of the first two units are back. Sports publicist Don Pierce writes: "Offense will be swift, punishing and versa-

tile, passing improved, defense quick, mobile and hard-hitting. Experience widespread."

**Colorado**—Fred Casotti, sports publicist, states: "Better depth and speed, a tough pair of lines and a backfield with more balance and potential should make Colorado a solid title contender. Main strength is in the line where All-America and Capt. Joe Romig and All-Big Eight End Jerry Hillebrand head a big, powerful group that includes 17 lettermen. . . First team figures to be as good as any in the league."

**Kansas State**—Team shows some improvement with 16 returning members of first two teams. However, K-Staters are not expected to be a consistent threat to Big Eight title contenders.

**Missouri**—The Big Eight champion, which defeated Navy in the Orange Bowl, suffered severe losses from graduation. Seven starters and 4 alternates were lost. Team does not figure to be as strong as last year's which defeated Oklahoma 41-19. However, Missouri will be strong enough to be a conference title contender.

**Army**—The return of 13 players from the top two teams is enough for Coach Dale Hall to say, "The starting team is a strong, well-balanced unit lacking speed, especially at halfback. Inexperience labels the second team an unknown quantity." Game will be played in Yankee Stadium and telecast regionally.

**Nebraska**—With two consecutive wins over Oklahoma, the Cornhuskers return 23 of 31 lettermen and will add four sophomores on the first two teams. Coach Bill Jennings has proved his team is a giant killer—last year Nebraska licked both Army and Oklahoma. Nebraska is expected to field a team that can beat any other on a given Saturday, but must learn to play consistently to be a conference champion.

**Oklahoma State**—The Cowboys expect to be improved offensively, their great weakness last year. Coach Cliff Speegle reports of spring training, "We had a limited

amount of time to do too many things. Offensively we can't help but be somewhat better. There was definite improvement in our ability to run wide and throw the football. . . At the conclusion of spring practice, we had 11 sophomores and non-lettermen on our first two teams."

To counter the talented opposition, Coach Wilkinson has 17 members of the first two units returning and a good sophomore crop from which to draw. With the exception of quarterback, all starters are expected to be experienced performers. The lineup after spring training looked like this—Ronny Payne and Dale Perini, ends; Billy White and Leon Cross, tackles; Claude Hamon and Karl Milstead, guards; John Tatum, center; Jimmy Carpenter and Mike McClelland, halfbacks; Bill Van Burklee, quarterback; and Phil Lohmann, fullback. Seven of the starters have lettered two years.

The outstanding performer for the Sooners may be Billy White. An evaluation of his 1960 performance was made by his teammates when they elected him captain without benefit of co-captain—the first time in 15 years this has happened. He was the most consistent performer the Sooners had in 1960 and was the only Sooner who made the All-Big Eight team.

How strong will the Sooners be this season? Here's a guess. The 1961 team will post a record of seven wins and three losses. This guess is based on the premise that Texas and Kansas will beat O.U. and that a third loss will come at the hands of either Notre Dame or Colorado.

A season of seven wins and three losses would be a sensational comeback from the performance of the 1960 team. Whether or not the team can reach that level depends improvement of lettermen, a beefed-up defense and outstanding performances by sophomores.

The Sooners may not be a national power in 1961, but one thing is certain—The 1961 season will be one of the most exciting for football fans in the 15-year Wilkinson era.



Bill Van Burklee  
sophomore field general

## Oklahoma Football Schedule

Sept. 30 . . .	NOTRE DAME . . . . .	at South Bend
Oct. 7 . . . .	IOWA STATE . . . . .	Band Day at Norman
Oct. 14 . . . .	TEXAS . . . . .	at Dallas
Oct. 21 . . . .	KANSAS . . . . .	Dad's Day at Norman
Oct. 28 . . . .	COLORADO . . . . .	Homecoming at Norman
Nov. 4 . . . .	KANSAS STATE . . . . .	at Manhattan
Nov. 11 . . . .	MISSOURI . . . . .	at Columbia
Nov. 18 . . . .	ARMY . . . . .	at Yankee Stadium, New York City
Nov. 25 . . . .	NEBRASKA . . . . .	at Lincoln
Dec. 2 . . . .	OKLAHOMA STATE . . . . .	at Norman



Billy White  
left tackle and squad captain