

# Sooner Scene

**W**HAT a football season! Weekly reshuffling of top-rated teams throughout the nation has kept football experts on their toes and even caused some to ask for reclassification.

Injuries to key men have caused Oklahoma to begin each game with a different lineup. The team has played some excellent football in spots from the beginning of the season. But for five straight games the Big Red committed that fatal mistake at some point and could not win. Oklahoma played particularly well against an undefeated Colorado team and, it is my personal opinion, except for two bobbles in the fourth quarter, would have come through with a victory on that day. As Coach Bud Wilkinson predicted following the Colorado game, "O.U. could turn the corner and win some ball games." The following Saturday, the team traveled to Manhattan and beat a good Kansas State team, but it was at Columbia, Missouri, that the Big Red proved to themselves and everyone that they had the ability to play 60 minutes of "hardnose" football.

Bud Wilkinson has won the Coach of the Year award on two different occasions; however, it is in 1961 that he and Gomer

Jones have done the most impressive job of coaching. In spite of the injuries to key players and an unbelievable series of "bad bounces," they have come back each week with a team carefully prepared, highly pitched and ready to play to the best of their ability.

The coaches keep their attention on the objective ahead. They have instilled confidence in the team in spite of losing and this paid off in the Missouri game in a great defensive battle against superior personnel. Oklahoma was perfectly keyed for this game. As the players ran onto the field, the Missouri fans were kind enough to remind them that only the best effort would be good enough to win. They were greeted with a chant of "Hey, boys, where are you-all from?" and other stimulating jibes. All of this may or may not have helped, but it certainly did not dim their determination to win the game. Twelve times Oklahoma turned the Tigers back from scoring. One of these was early in the first quarter when Missouri had the ball on the one-yard line with four chances to make a touchdown. This goal-line stand was reminiscent of the Oklahoma-Maryland game in the 1954 Orange Bowl.

On most Saturdays Missouri may have the best line in the Big Eight conference; however on this particular day, Oklahoma had two lines that outfought them. This was a great tribute to the coaches and, particularly, to the boys on the alternate line who started the season at Notre Dame on a shaky, discouraging note.

The 1961 season will be one of the most talked-about seasons of the modern football era, arousing coffee shop quarterbacks whenever the subject is mentioned.

Here is a bit of football logic that doesn't mean anything, but it is fun to speculate. Missouri beat Minnesota, which beat a Michigan State team that defeated Notre Dame. If you eliminate one error from each of the games played this year, Oklahoma would be considered one of the real good teams of the country. Football is an exciting game only if played to win, and this above all is a mark of the Oklahoma teams. It is the terrific price the boys pay in concentration, effort and training which enables a team to pull itself up literally by its own bootstraps.

Before this is printed I may be proven wrong, but I predict this team will continue to improve with each game and will finish the season with no worse than a 50-50 record.

—R. BOYD GUNNING

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