



1962 Big Red

Hers The experts (including my husband two seasons removed from sports writing) are cautious, the players inexperienced, the opposition formidable. The pre-season predictors, in learned analyses colored by mention of the smoky smell of autumn, don't even bother to rank the 1962 Sooners.

But when I cross the campus, there is tangible optimism in the air—and near the practice field, I catch a hint of the sweet, orange blossom smell of success. The 1962 edition of Bud Wilkinson's Boys looks Very Big Red to me.

Armchair quarterbacks stare apprehensively at the schedule and shake their heads in gloom. Three opponents are bowl champions, and six rank in the nation's top 20—so nuts to those big mouths sneering at O.U.'s weak schedule!

Faint-hearted followers point out we've lost 16 lettermen (9 starters) and that young sophomores may fill nearly half of the top 22 positions. Speak to me no more of those graduated; they are, as my small daughter says, "all gone." Hang onto those

game tickets—they're good for a season of football reminiscent of the good old days.

This inexperienced squad is the same "depleted" team which roared into Owen Stadium in April and delighted us by squashing the star-studded alumni 47-24. Those young sophomores are sturdy, averaging over 205 pounds, with speed and mobility that belies their size.

Oklahoma's new football team has more depth, more speed, high morale—and a legacy of five victories to give a running start.

They regard their foes as they did the rugged alumni, with respect but not awe (after all, even Texas can play only 11 men at one time!). They have great physical potential (hooray for big huskies like Dennis Ward and Glen Condren). They want very badly to win.

We'll see familiar faces on Owen Field. Co-captains Wayne Lee and Leon Cross anchor what may be the best line in the conference. Look for aggressive Duane Cook and (continued)

BY MARY LYLE WEEKS

Forecasting—Family Style

Football predictions are risky business—especially when you know your sage analyses will reach the readers when the first game is history. It can also cause dissension within the family when the forecasters are husband and wife with decidedly different opinions. No more avid Big Red fans live than optimistic Mary Lyle Weeks and her realistic husband Jim, 1956 journalism graduates returned to Norman after two years in Odessa, Texas. As a former sports writer Jim tempers his bias with professional detachment; his wife admittedly recognizes no such limitations.

BY JIM WEEKS

His If Tommy McDonald, Stan West, Jerry Tubbs, Billy Vessels and a host of others who come immediately to mind were suddenly 20 again and eligible for Coach Bud Wilkinson's 16th Edition of the crimson-shirted musclemen, my wife might be more optimistic about the 1962 season. But I doubt it.

As she readily admits, Mary Lyle's optimistic about most things. Relying on illogical intuition, she has classified me as a frowning pessimist. Actually I'm a realist, especially when it comes to football.

I'll admit my hopes soared like hers after seeing last year's freshmen defeat Tulsa. The yearlings' substantial contribution to the Varsity's 47-24 victory over the somewhat disorganized but nevertheless talented group of alumni encouraged me too.

But there the similarity ends.

She not only foresees a Big Eight championship and a victory over a Texas team with talent enough to finish first *and* second in the clannish Southwest Conference—she's already invited guests to watch O.U. on our television on New Year's Day!

As much as I'd like to see this, I can't forecast such a bright future and be honest with the fans.

Oklahoma will face about the same caliber opposition it did

last year. The remarkable improvement expected by this sports fanatic I live with is to come from a group of green but highly regarded sophomores, and seniors and juniors who, for the most part, were reserves on teams which won only eight games in the last two seasons.

Now—I don't consider this year's upperclassmen as losers. Many of them were instrumental in the Sooners' almost unexplainable comeback of five straight victories in the last half of last season. (I too thought Bud had gone back in time to 1956 when he predicted that!)

I'm sure the memory of being a winner is still fresh in their minds. Stalwarts such as tackles Dennis Ward and Duane Cook, guards Jimmy Gilstrap and Leon Cross, centers Wayne Lee and Johnny Tatum, quarterback Monte Deere and halfbacks Gary Wylie, Paul Lea and Virgil Boll will want to repeat those triumphs.

Gilstrap, a scrapper from the Texas badlands, makes me recall two years spent covering sports there, a stubborn Sooner surrounded by "foreigners" chuckling at O.U.'s troubles. He came along fast as a sophomore but was hampered by a mid-season knee injury.

I'll agree winning becomes a pleasant habit and (continued)

Hers: a feeling that a good season is coming

hustling Melvin Sandersfeld. Don't forget the great desire of John Porterfield—remember Colorado '61? Three times they hit him and still that guy scored!

Roll out a really Big Red carpet for the sophomores—15 linemen and 11 backs regarded as top prospects. You'll welcome big, tough, fast men like Condren and Rick McCurdy, Newt Burton and Ed McQuarters. And the way a kid named Butch Metcalf splits the goal posts brings memories of Jim Weatherall. Speedy backs like Charley Mayhue and Jim Grisham run hard, hit hard. And watch a dark horse quarterback, 159-pound Ron Fletcher—low on weight maybe but long on guts!

The key word is inexperience. Sophomores and squad men must develop rapidly and learn early to avoid the costly blunder. (At this point, let us bury forever memories of the disastrous fourth-quarter kick in last year's Colorado game!)

I frankly admit (to Jim's surprise I'm sure) I'm no sports authority. My category is "never-say-die fan." Only one circumstance qualifies me as "expert." I've watched O.U. play since I was a third-grader in the 50-cent knot-hole section behind the south goal post. (As a recent alum, my seat is close to that south section again.)

I've cheered the Sooners in lean years and great—and there is a feeling when a good season is coming—a certain sureness that this year, envious enemies, we're gonna roll.

Unlike sportswriters, I am cowardly and won't venture a won-loss prediction. But out on my limb it looks like we'll beat either Syracuse or Notre Dame. If the Big Red downs both (Of course they can!) it could give them the impetus to stomp Texas (Oh, to revenge '58 and '59 I suffered while living among Longhorns). If Texas bows—beware Big 8, we're Miami-bound.

Whatever their record, this year we start up. You'll know the 1962 Sooners came to win, to "Play like a Champion Today." No Oklahoma fan could ask more.

His: just too much to ask of sophomores

certainly Co-captains Cross and Lee won't let the veterans forget it or allow newcomers to think for a moment it's supposed to be any other way. But a tough early schedule could change habits and the thought of Syracuse, Notre Dame and Texas makes me glad I'm 50 rows up in the stands.

Much of the talk is about the sophomores. Even our tight-lipped coaches have been free in their praise, expressing high hopes for the newcomers. (I've accused Mary Lyle of influencing them.)

If two or three sophomores develop fast enough to lend support with any consistency, I'll be pleased as any Sooner. But it seems to me it's asking a lot to expect eight or ten 19-year-old youngsters to suddenly play football like seasoned veterans.

Leading the corps of new linemen are end Glen Condren (220), Muldrow; tackles Ralph Neely (235), Farmington, New Mexico, and Butch Metcalf (205), Garland, Texas, and guard Ed (No Quarter) McQuarters (230), Tulsa.

Stepping out front among the new backs are quarterback Norman Smith (185), Monahaus, Texas; halfback Charley Mayhue (180), Ada, and fullbacks Jim Grisham (205), Olney, Texas, and Alvin Lear (200), Fort Collins, Colorado.

The sophomores may add some outstanding individual performers but it seems to me their major contribution will be an unquenchable desire to win and their pesky aim at first team slots. Sophomores don't produce championships, much as I'd like to have to eat those words in December.

Lack of experience, rugged opponents and the ever-present chance of injuries influence my feelings about prospects for a successful season. A won-loss record of 6-4 or 7-3 would be a reasonable improvement after the last two years.

But confidentially, should my pennant-waving wife prove to be the better forecaster, I'll be happy to set up bleachers in the Weeks' TV room on January 1.



Leon Cross

1962 Football Schedule

September 22	. Syracuse at Norman	. . . . .	1:30 p.m.
September 29	. Notre Dame at Norman (Homecoming)	. . . . .	2:30 p.m.
October 6	. . . . .	. . . . .	Open
October 13	. . . . .	. . . . .	2:00 p.m.
October 20	. . . . .	. . . . .	1:30 p.m.
October 27	. . . . .	. . . . .	1:30 p.m.
November 3	. . . . .	. . . . .	2:30 p.m.
November 10	. . . . .	. . . . .	1:30 p.m.
November 17	. . . . .	. . . . .	1:30 p.m.
November 24	. . . . .	. . . . .	1:30 p.m.
December 1	. . . . .	. . . . .	1:30 p.m.



Wayne Lee