

Quest for a Quarterback

the man-under will determine whether a fine Sooner squad finishes on top

By PAUL V. GALLOWAY



OKLAHOMA'S best football squad in seven years faces the toughest schedule in the school's history. The opponents are so formidable, in fact, that Coach Bud Wilkinson recently was prompted to suggest that Athletic Director Bud Wilkinson be replaced for arranging such a line-up of foes. But Coach Wilkinson has also stated that the 1963 squad is the best to happen along in some time, an uncharacteristic admission from the Sooner chief whose pronouncements in the past have been designed to serve as a governor on the zealous optimism of Big Red fans.

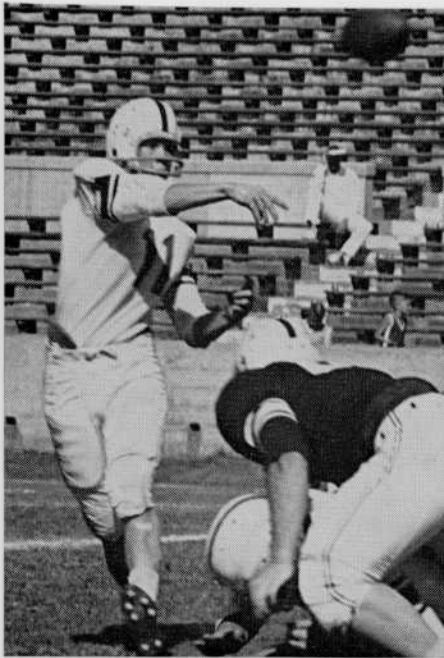
National prognosticators have unanimously placed Oklahoma in the pre-season top 10. If you have done any pre-autumn leafing through the proliferation of special football magazines that dot newsstands, you have seen O.U. ranked all the way from first to sixth but never lower.

The weekly and monthly magazines have also been encouraging in their appraisal of the Sooners' chances. Even *Playboy* bared its pre-season predictions (among other things) in its latest issue, placing O.U. third in the nation.

So what's to keep farsighted fans from making reservations for Miami (where Stars Fell to Alabama in January)? Well, quite a few things, really.

Oklahoma as yet has no starting quarterback. Only Charles Mayhue from last

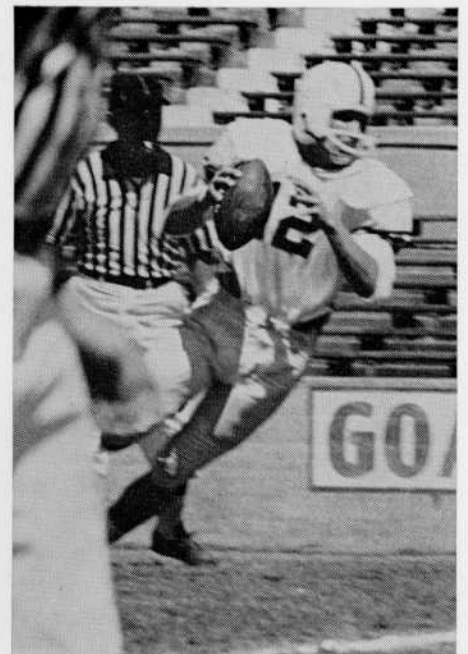
Last year's leader, Quarterback Monte Deere, shown here as he called signals against Missouri at Norman, is gone. Who will take his place?



Hammond?



Pannell?



Ringer?

year's defensive secondary is back. And there's the question of leadership, an intangible prerequisite for an outstanding team. Without strong leadership the O.U. team could merely look dangerous, like Ferdinand the Bull who preferred to lie in the meadow rather than mix it with the matadors in the arena.

There's no reason to be gloomy when the quarterback dilemma is mentioned. Three young men, sophomores all who couldn't possibly make a Gillette commercial, are the top candidates for the key position. None has played a down of college varsity football. All three have ability, but the one who wins the starting position will have to begin in fast company. In the first three games, O.U. meets Clemson, favorite in the Atlantic Coast Conference and picked in the top 10 teams of the nation; Southern California, last year's national champions who return most of their starters and have the nation's best pass receiver in Hal Bedsole and one of the country's top three passers in quarterback Pete Beathard, and Texas, which is enough said.

It's like asking a rookie pitcher to face Mantle, Mays and Musial the first time he throws. The cliché "baptism under fire" is woefully inadequate to describe the ordeal of the first three contests. In 1962 it took the first three games for Monte Deere and the Sooners to meld into a championship outfit. True, the Big Red has more experience in the line and in three positions of the offensive backfield this year, but it

is also undeniably true that inexperience at quarterback and in the defensive secondary will be a handicap difficult to overcome.

After the alumni-varsity game that ended spring practice, the leading quarterback candidates were John Hammond of Tulsa, Tom Pannell of Norman and Mike Ringer of Pauls Valley, in alphabetical order. Each has strong points, and each could find himself directing the team. Hammond is a thinking-man's play-caller and probably the most proficient in the mechanical execution of plays. His passing is also delightfully deft.

Pannell, who last year was tagged to become the first sophomore to start at quarterback for a Wilkinson team only to miss the season because of an ankle injury, has dash and the knack for making the big play. His poise is another important plus. The 20-year-old blond runs well although

he is not the fastest of the three. He gets the extra yard, relying on quickness and fine balance. Pannell, however, did not sparkle in the spring as he did last year and will have to fight for the starting nod.

Ringer is the strongest of the three, has the best passing range and can punt. At this point he lags slightly behind the other two as a tactician and technician. One thing that Wilkinson has going for him is that all three *have* played quarterback before. Hammond and Pannell were all-stars at the position, and although Ringer played halfback in high school, he has been at the man-under slot since coming to O.U. Having to switch a halfback to quarterback in the middle of his career as was done with Buddy Leake, Carl Dodd, Bobby Boyd and Jimmy Carpenter is unnecessary this year.

A darkhorse candidate for the signal-

Continued

1963 Football Schedule

September 21	-----Clemson at Norman -----	1:30 p.m.
September 28	-----Southern Cal at Los Angeles (CBS-TV) -----	2:30 p.m.
October 5	-----Open	
October 12	-----Texas at Dallas -----	2:00 p.m.
October 19	-----Kansas at Norman (Dad's Day) -----	1:30 p.m.
October 26	-----Kansas State at Manhattan -----	1:30 p.m.
November 2	-----Colorado at Norman (Homecoming) -----	1:30 p.m.
November 9	-----Iowa State at Norman (Band Day) -----	1:30 p.m.
November 16	-----Missouri at Columbia (CBS-TV) -----	2:00 p.m.
November 23	-----Nebraska at Lincoln -----	2:00 p.m.
November 30	-----Oklahoma State at Norman -----	1:30 p.m.

the Sooners face four teams that played in bowl games

caller's spot is junior Bobby Page who played last year, mostly in the latter part of the season. He could play a good deal of ball.

At any rate, when the Sooners enter Los Angeles' appropriately-named Coliseum, the quarterback will determine to a great extent who will be the lions and who will be the Christians.

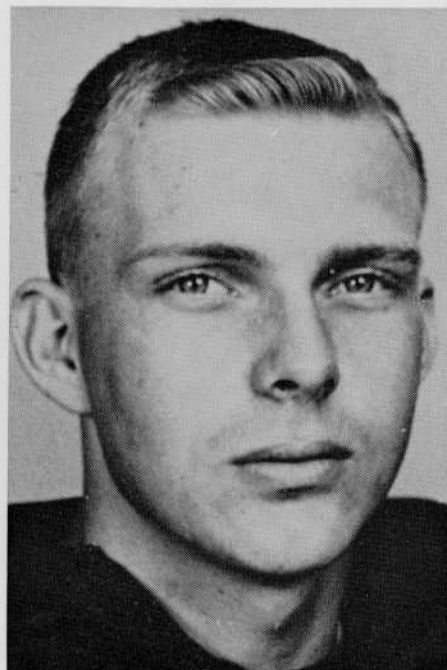
The defensive secondary headache must be relieved. As in the case of the quarterback situation, it isn't as if the talent weren't there—it is. The problem is in finding it and imbuing it with enough experience before the first game. Mayhue, who is a magnificent competitor, is all alone and must find two defenders to replace the graduated Melvin Sandersfeld and Paul Lea. Wes Skidgel, Larry Shields, Ringer, Hammond and Virgil Boll have shown ability to play the deep defensive positions. But facing offenses the likes of Clemson, Southern Cal and Texas right off the kickoff is a dangerous way to test their prowess. The coaching staff repeatedly points out to any alumni within hearing that the defensive secondary can make or break the team. A mistake by a lineman that allows a runner to get into the secondary can be diminished by a quick reaction from the deep defensive men. And when Bedsole of Southern Cal starts button-hooking and working the

stop-and-go, it would be reassuring to have a seasoned Sooner back there with him.

On the bright side, the starting line would put fear into the hearts of the Cosa Nostra. They are big, strong and conceivably could stop a Volkswagen either straight ahead or trying to turn the corner. The alternate line should come along rapidly although lacking the veterans of the starting seven.

From left to right the starting line will probably be John Flynn, Ralph Neely, Ed McQuarters, John Garrett, Newt Burton, Glen Condren (a converted end) and Rick McCurdy. Six of the seven are junior lettermen. The end position is so deep the Department of Agriculture might be tempted to declare it a surplus crop. Left half also has some fine prospects to push last year's home run hitter Joe Don Looney. Waiting in the wings are Skidgel, Shields, Jackie Cowan, Bill Thomas, Jon Running and others. Lance Rentzel had a fine spring and will keep right half Boll hustling. Fullback Jim Grisham's shoulder is just fine, thank you.

It might be pertinent to mention that O.U. plays other teams besides Clemson, U.S.C. and Texas. All happen to be in the Big Eight Conference, which is the tree you have to shake to get the oranges. Two of them, Missouri and Nebraska, won bowl



Page is the darkhorse in the quarterback race.

games last year and will have to be played on their home fields this year. Each is easily capable of upsetting the orange cart. And then there's Kansas, which will do battle in Norman. Colorado will be trying doubly hard this year since Eddie Crowder is at the helm. Kansas State is still Kansas State. Iowa State should be beaten handily; after all, Hoppman is finally gone. Oklahoma State is an unknown quantity; we'll have to wait and see.

A realistic prediction as to Oklahoma's finish this year would be eight wins, two losses, and at least a tie for the Big Eight. All ten games can be won, but Hammond or Pannell or Ringer or Page will have to play like a Royal, Mitchell, Crowder, Arnold, Calame, or Harris from the start. And the defensive secondary had better plant some land mines around in the Coliseum.

In closing, mention should be made of the year's new substitution rule which is designed to keep players honest by knowing how to play offense and defense, too. The rule states that only two players may be substituted on fourth down and when the ball changes hands. An entire team may enter the game on any other down when the clock is stopped.

Don't mention this rule to your wives or sweethearts, most of whom are only vaguely aware that a football game is taking place down there on the field. You will only confuse them more. They are probably still pondering that tricky four-downs-to-make-ten-yards rule.

Depth Chart

The depth chart for the first five teams after spring practice:

LE—John Flynn, John Porterfield, Ron Harmon, Greg Burns, Charles Pearce.

LT—Ralph Neely, Larry Vermillion, Jerry Goldsby, Ronnie Horn, Bill Hill.

LG—Ed McQuarters, Carl Schreiner, Robert Cunningham, Jerry Hayden, George Jarman.

C—John Garrett, Carl McAdams, Don Kindley, Bill Carlyle, Marion Bayles.

RG—Newt Burton, David Voiles, Ronnie Smith, James Mankins, Teddy Dodson.

RT—Glen Condren, George Stokes, Butch Metcalf, Charles Hall, James Alfieri.

RE—Rick McCurdy, Allen Bumgardner, Gordon Brown, Coy Kersey, John Goodner.

QB—Mike Ringer, John Hammond, Tommy Pannell, Bobby Page, Mike Kelly.

LH—Joe Don Looney, Wes Skidgel, Jackie Cowan, Bill Thomas, Larry Shields.

RH—Virgil Boll, Charles Mayhue, Lance Rentzel, Thurman Pitchlynn, Kenneth Aboussie.

FB—Jim Grisham, Larry Brown, Alvin Lear, John Benien, Nehemiah Flowers.