

Ten the Hard Way

FOR THE last nine years, Oklahoma has had its way in Big Eight swimming, placidly splashing to nine straight conference titles while developing a pool full of All Americans and a handful of national champions. Most of the time, the other league members were clearly in over their heads when they met O.U., and sometimes it seemed like *noblesse oblige* for the Sooners to swim in the same pool.

Not this year. The conference has grown stronger and has filled out. Disturbing waves of doubt began to appear in Oklahoma's tranquil pool of title hopes as the annual Big Eight meet approached. The other conference teams have always been

ready and willing to halt O.U.'s streak; this year two of them—Kansas and Nebraska—were able. Undeclared in nine dual meets, Kansas had a large, talented squad and could rely on its depth to second-, third- and fourth-place the Sooners to defeat. (Conference meet scoring is 7 points for first, 5 points for second, 4 for third, 3 for fourth, 2 for fifth and 1 for sixth in the finals of each individual event. Relay points are doubled, 14-10-8-6-4-2, for the six places.) Nebraska's husky young Huskers were coming in at their peak and were also good enough to win.

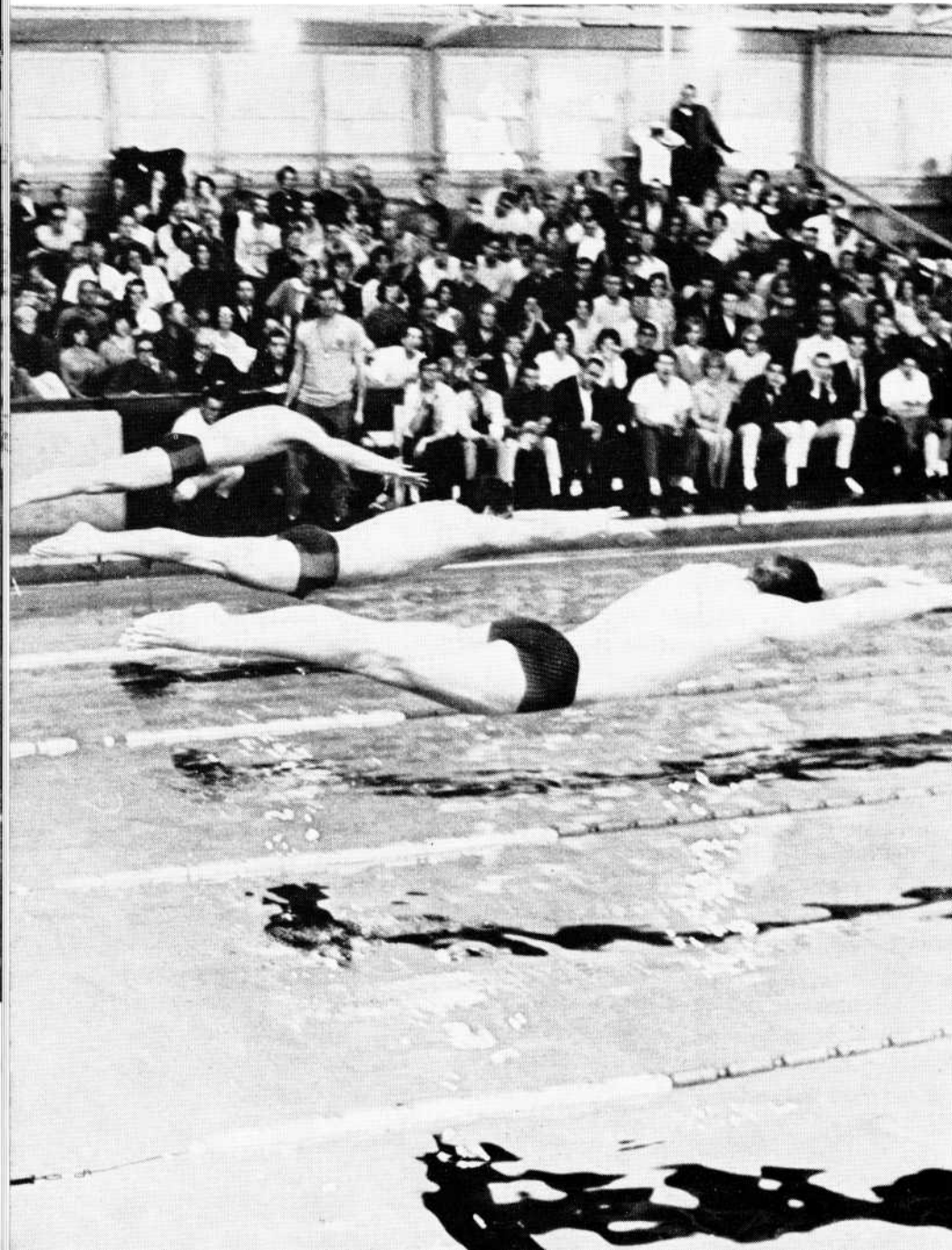
Oklahoma could count on a cluster of points from its three aces, All American

seniors Charles Schuette (pronounced SHOOT ee) and John Bernard and sophomore backstroker Joe Mashburn. In eleven dual meets this trio had amassed more points among them than the rest of the squad put together. When Schuette steps onto the starting box, his competitors might as well be the Mets. He virtually owns three events—the 200-yard, 500-yard and 1650-yard freestyle races. He has won each of these in two previous conference meets and holds more records than some squads have swimmers. Bernard is an explosive freestyle sprinter at 50 and 100 yards, has twice been named to the All American team. Mashburn had the best time in the conference in three races going into the meet and was favored to score well in two backstroke events and in the individual medleys in which each contestant must use four strokes—butterfly, back, breast and freestyle. Beyond these three loomed a big question mark.

To hold onto its crown, Oklahoma had to win by winning. It had to take enough firsts and seconds to offset its own lack of depth and to make up for the depth of the larger Kansas and Nebraska squads which would qualify more men for the finals. Schuette, Bernard and Mashburn would not be enough.

Coach Jay Markley, who succeeded the late Matt Mann last year, had three aces up his sleeve. One was John Kemp, a butterfly stroker who had suffered through a painful, frustrating senior year. Kemp had been bothered by bad shoulders ever since a good sophomore year. Cortisone injections had helped somewhat, but at times the pain was too great for him to lift his arms. Often he wasn't able to work out at all. It was doubtful whether he would be able to swim in the meet; he hadn't practiced for two weeks and his shoulders were hurting again. On the final day Kemp won the 100-yard butterfly in 55.1 seconds, tying the Big Eight record. He shaded Mike Downey of Kansas by a tenth of a second by going without a breath the last 15 yards. Usually a butterfly stroker takes a breath every other stroke. Kemp didn't come up for air for seven strokes, caught

Bodies extended, sprinters leave their blocks in the 50-yard freestyle. Two-time All America Johnny Bernard is the swimmer nearest camera.



Sooner swimmers swimmingly sustain their string of conference titles with a record-breaking salvo

Downey and finished first in a memorable final lap. Kemp also contributed 8½ points in three other events.

Another concealed butterfly ace was Rex Ball, a senior who has had a less than spectacular career. Ball has often swum in the shadow of Larry Jacobs, last year's conference champ who was ineligible second semester. Ball ended his eligibility with a burst of brilliance, winning the 200-yard butterfly in 2:07.3 to set another Big Eight mark.

The third bullet was Cooper Weeks. Plagued by injuries throughout his career, Weeks never lived up to his potential until this, his final conference meet. Swimming with a strong, precise pace, Weeks won the 200-yard and 400-yard individual medleys, setting Big Eight records in each and a new pool record in the latter. He also swam a leg in the record-setting 400-yard freestyle relay and picked up points in the 100-yard breast stroke.

Performances by Kemp, Ball and Weeks surprised many people. Sports writers were using words like "upset," "upstart" and "unknown." About the only persons not surprised were Kemp, Ball, Weeks and their coach. Said Markley: "They had the ability. They had the desire. And they were ready. I'm very happy, very proud but very unsurprised."

Oklahoma's impressive natatorium (highfalutin word for indoor pool) was the site of the three-day program held March 5-6-7. Slightly smaller than Lake Erie, the pool was inherited from the Navy when the South Base was turned over to the University in 1959. Its dimensions are 25 yards (for collegiate races) by 50 meters (for Olympic-length events). Seventeen events make up the meet—13 are individual races, two are relays and two are diving events off the one-meter and three-meter boards. Preliminary heats for five events are held the afternoon of the first day with the finals scheduled for that evening. In individual races, contestants with the six fastest times qualify for the finals. The eight divers with the highest total of points after eight preliminary dives go into the finals. One team from each school automatically qualifies for

Sophomore Joe Mashburn churns through the water in the 100-yard backstroke event. He won important points with three 2nd place finishes.

each of the two four-man relay events.

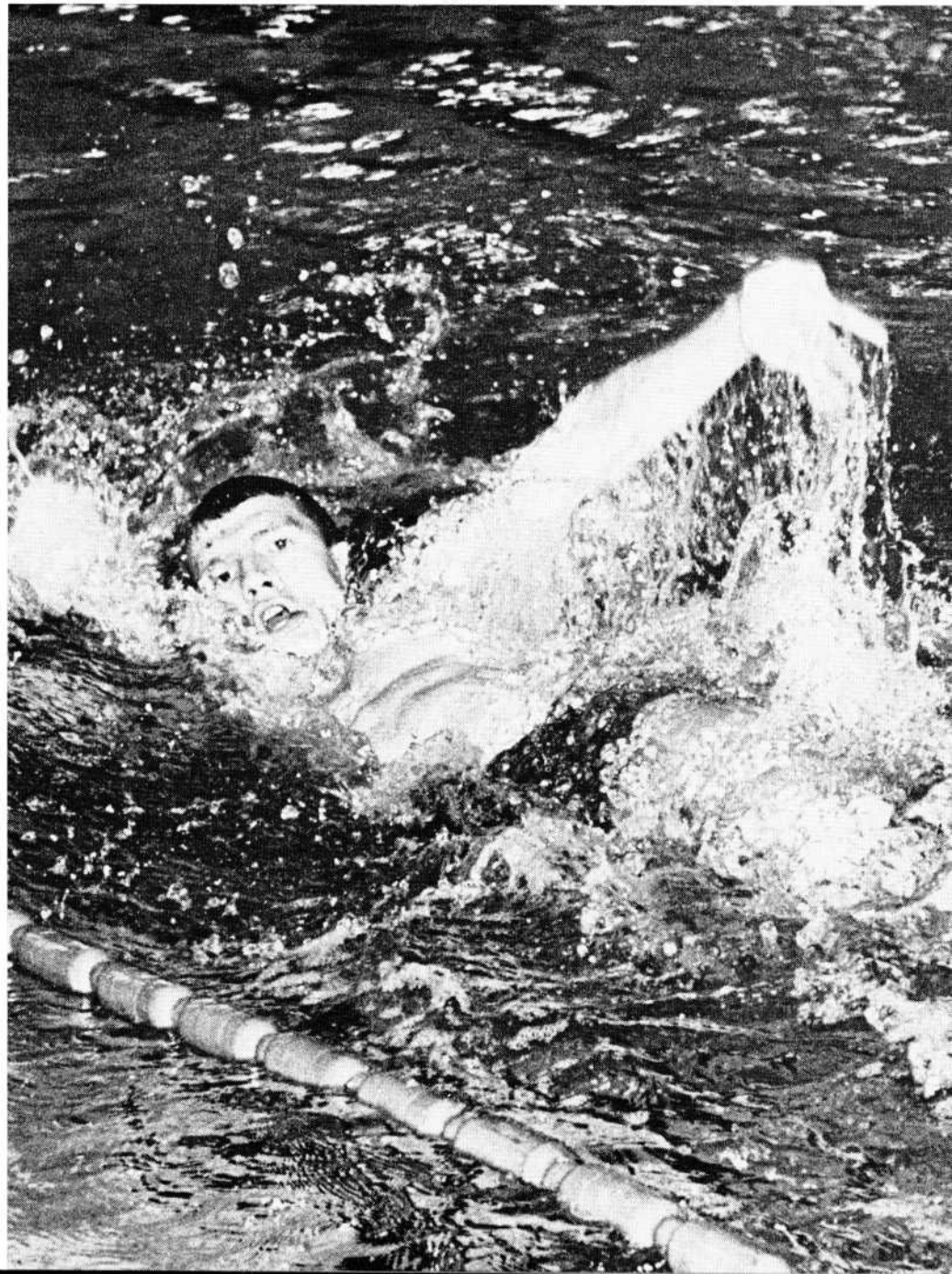
On the second day five more events are held with preliminary heats in the afternoon and finals at night. The remaining seven events are held on the final day.

The meet was the best in Big Eight history. Conference records were set in 13 of the 15 events in which marks are kept. (Diving totals do not go into the record book.) Three Oklahoma pool records fell. Kansas' depth kept them close, as predicted, but Oklahoma beat them soundly, 119 to 102, with Nebraska a strong third at 92 points. The Sooners won like champions, copping nine events with record-breaking performances in each and finishing second

in four other races they didn't win. Kansas did not finish first in an event and achieved its total on the strength of 4 seconds, 10 thirds, 5 fourths, 6 fifths and 6 sixth-place finishes. Nebraska had 6 firsts, 2 seconds, 3 thirds, 5 fourths, no fifths and 2 sixths. Kansas led in the number of contests qualified for the finals in individual events with 29. O.U. had 20, Nebraska 16.

Schuette the shot led off the meet with the first of his three individual gold medals. (He also swam a leg on the winning 400-yard freestyle relay.) In the 500-yard freestyle (20 lengths of the pool) Schuette stroked to a 15-yard victory over runnerup

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TEN THE HARD WAY

the seniors ended their careers with a grand flourish

Jerry Higgins of Kansas. Higgins grabbed the lead at the outset and held it until the eleventh lap when Schuette, swimming with the smooth power of a well-aimed torpedo, took the lead and began slowly, surely extending it until the record-smashing finish (5:06.3). Weeks took his turn in the limelight in the second event, the 400-yard medley, beating teammate Mashburn and breaking the conference and pool records he set in the afternoon preliminaries (4:38.3).

Bernard was upset in the 50-yard freestyle by Keith Ludwig of Nebraska. It was Lod-

wig by inches; both were clocked at 22.5.

After one day Oklahoma led Kansas 38 to 33, with Nebraska in third with 26.

Oklahoma added to its lead the second day, getting 35 points to bring the total to 73. Kansas could only come up with 24, while hanging onto second with 57. Nebraska began to slide up with another 26 to finish with 52. Ball started the Sooners off with a bounce with his inspired, heart-warming win in the 200-yard butterfly. Kemp, whose shoulders were beginning to loosen up, was third. Mashburn next brought home his second, finishing behind

Nebraska's William Henry in the 200-yard backstroke. Jerry Tate snared a fifth in the 200-yard breast stroke before Schuette put things back on the winning track with his second win, a record-shattering performance in the 200-yard freestyle. Weeks ended the day on a redeeming note with his second straight gold medal—in the 200-yard individual medley. He had set a league record in the prelims with a 2:06.0 clocking.

Oklahoma was in a comfortable position going into the final day, but it had to continue to win the events, for Kansas was sending in 12 finalists to the Sooners' seven. Nebraska, whose chances now seemed less than slight, also had seven finalists.

First event on the last day's card was the grueling 1650-yard freestyle, 66 lengths of the pool. Two heats were run with the winners determined from the times only. In the first heat Higgins of Kansas broke Schuette's Big Eight record with 18:43.8. Schuette, swimming against the clock in the second heat, obliterated the new mark with a 18:14.5 reading. His times never varied more than two seconds on each 100-yard leg; each was between 1:06 and 1:08.

Bernard redeemed himself in the 100-yard freestyle with a close, close judge's decision win over rival Ludwig. He swam the first 50 yards in 21.9, his fastest time ever at that distance. Ho, hum, another Big Eight record. 48.8.

Kansas picked up some points in the diving with three finalists and trailed Oklahoma by 13 points going into the meet's final event, the 400-yard freestyle relay. A disqualification of the Sooners and a first place victory by Kansas would give the Jayhawks the meet by a point. Nebraska was finally out of it, 21 points back. Oklahoma's team was Tobey Morey, Weeks, Schuette and Bernard. The idea was to be ever so careful not to be disqualified by leaving the box too soon. The Sooners, despite being overly cautious, won the event and the meet with a final record-smashing effort.

Coach Markley got the traditional toss into the pool, swam a length and climbed out. He was the only Sooner who didn't break a record of some kind, it seemed. The trophy happened to be the first O.U. has garnered this year, and it came the hard way—with pressurized performances by the favorite team, winning the races that had to be won.

—PAUL GALLOWAY

Coach Jay Markley encourages sprinter Bernard after he was upset in his specialty, the 50. He came back to win the 100 and set a record.

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