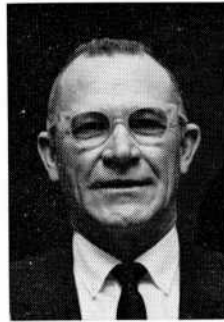




LAWRENCE E. "JAP" HASKELL. Born November 13, 1898, Butler County, Kansas, competed in high school athletics at Anadarko, attended OU where he played football, lettering four years at end (1918-21) under Coach Bennie Owen, and baseball, earning four letters as an outfielder. Captain of 1921 football team. Received BA in 1922. From 1927-41 was baseball coach at OU. Haskell teams won eight Big Six titles, finished second three times in his 14 years, winning 69, losing 21 conference games for .776. Sooners under Haskell once compiled 29-game winning streak at Norman. He was only coach to have better than .500 mark against Texas's Billy Disch whose teams perennially won Southwest Conference titles. Haskell teams were 6-5 against Disch although nine of the games were played at Austin. Haskell was freshman football coach from 1927-37, line coach under Tom Stidham for three years (1937-39). His 1938 line led nation in defense against rushing, allowing only one touchdown, in opening game, by land. Enemy teams gained only 433 yards in 10 games; OU allowed only 1.52 yards per rush. Athletic directorship included three years in Navy during World War II. As athletic director he was responsible for bringing Jim Tatum here as coach after war. Haskell Field, where OU plays baseball, bears his name. Became insurance executive in Tulsa in 1946. Died February 10, 1964, in Tulsa, at age 65.

A Coach for All Seasons



Eph Monroe, president of the Board of Regents, shown here as he looked when he was an infielder for the Sooners in 1937 and as he looks today, reminisces in this article about his college coach and friend, the late Lawrence "Jap" Haskell.

The name Lawrence "Jap" Haskell is a prominent one in OU athletic history. It appears frequently among the cold facts and figures of record books, alongside laconic entries of scores and percentages. To a person unfamiliar with OU sports tradition the records can show only a few impersonal data about Jap Haskell, data which disclose a fine college athlete, a successful coach and athletic director. What record books don't reveal is the kind of a man he was, for there are no statistics which can measure a man's humor or his integrity or his determination. The young men he influenced, the friends he made, and the memories he left are more important, more significant than all of Jap Haskell's many victories or any of his records.

In 1963, nine months before his death, Jap Haskell was honored by the University at the annual O Club banquet. A Salute to Excellence Citation and plaque were presented to him. Addressed to *The Master of the Squeeze Bunt*, the citation praised Haskell for *teaching young athletes the lasting values of desire, discipline, excruciating effort and always following the coach's instructions*. To present the award to him was a former Sooner infielder who had played for Haskell and who had become a good friend. His name was Eph Monroe, a

Clinton attorney and president of the OU Board of Regents. During his extemporaneous talk in which he recalled playing for Haskell, Monroe succeeded through a few stories in picturing Haskell the man as he was as a coach—tough, demanding, highly competitive, warm, incisively humorous. In a letter to sports publicity director Harold Keith, written before Haskell's death, Monroe reminisced again about his college coach, repeating some of the stories he had told that night:

"Frankly, Harold, it's not easy to describe the true Haskell, because I have never been able to understand how he could make you want to give a little bit more than you were capable of giving. On the field he was not subtle, he was not kind, neither was he mean, nor did he get your best by asking for it. I believe his own toughness, his own fierce pride made you want to give, and you knew that he demanded a little blood if necessary. One time Jap told me he didn't like to play against a good loser, because, he said, 'If I do beat him, I want to know that he's bleeding inside like I would if he beat me.' This, maybe, is the real Haskell. At any rate, he was a great leader, an intensive competitor, and a fine human being. There are some wonderful stories about Jap. I wish I had time to write all I can recall, but I'll give you a few of my favorites.

"In the summer of 1935, Jap was calling a tournament at Seminole in which several of his boys were playing, but on different teams. One day Jay Thomas, OU first baseman playing for Seminole, was batting and Jap was the plate umpire. On the first pitch, the ball appeared to be a little high, but Jap loudly and clearly called it a strike. Thomas, with a look of utter amazement, turned and berated Haskell for a full minute. The next pitch appeared to be in the same place, and Haskell called it a ball. At this point, Thomas turned to Jap and said, 'I told you you were blind—that pitch was exactly in the same place as the first one.' To which Haskell bellowed, 'Was it sure enough?' Replied Thomas, 'It certainly was.' Haskell then raised his right arm in great defiance and screamed 'Strike Two!' I need not tell you it remained just that. . .

"Another time, after Delmar Steinbock had made a bone-head play and after we had retired the side, Jap yelled to Stiney, 'Steinbock, what in the world were you doing?' Stiney started a retort, 'Jap, I thought—' and he got no further, as Jap said, 'Steinbock, every time you think you weaken this club, and it's weak enough already. . .'

"Jap thought the worst thing a pitcher could do was to hang a curve. I'll always remember his advice to his pitchers, 'If you hang a curve ball up high again, run like hell and back up third.' To Dillard Jackson I once heard Jap say, 'Wheyhead, you'd be a great pitcher if you could get your curve over, but about the time it gets half-way across the plate, somebody knocks the hell out of it.'

"In remembering Jap, a whole covey of his aphorisms always comes to mind, sayings which summed up his baseball philosophy:

There's a slide at the end of every steal.

Get your legs in shape and your arm'll take care of itself.

If that hitter digs in with men on, stick the ball in his ear.

On attempted double plays, take that pivot man out if you have to chase him to the dugout.

When running bases, the basepath is yours. If it's blocked, cut your way in.

A good hitter can hit a buckshot with baling wire.

If we win by one run, I won it. If we lose by a run, I lost it.

If you can catch a ball, you can bunt it.

"One of the best Haskell stories occurred when we were playing a four-game series against Nebraska in 1938 at Lincoln, and I believe we were ahead two games to one with the last game to be played on Monday. We were staying at the Cornhusker Hotel, and on Saturday evening, Jap had scouted around and found a non-sectarian church. He called us together that evening for a squad meeting and announced we would all be expected to attend church the next morning. We were to meet in the lobby at 10. It is my opinion that Jap figured he needed a little outside help as his pitching hadn't been too good. The next morning everybody showed up except Dillard Jackson, and Jap sent for him. Dillard put him off for some reason, and Jap told him, 'Wheyhead, you'd better get ready and go to church with us, because you are going to pitch tomorrow and it's going to take more than your curve to get us by.' Jackson made some excuse and about 10 or 11 of us piled into two cars with me driving the lead car and Jap sitting in the front seat with me. He began to direct me toward the church but with no success, and about every 30 seconds he would say, 'Where is that danged church? I know it's around here somewhere. I saw it last night.' After about 30 minutes he had me pull over. He got out, peered in all directions and murmured, 'Where is that danged church? I saw



The picture at right shows Jap when he was an outfielder for the Sooners in 1921. Jap received his nickname from Anadarko people who became so accustomed to seeing him in his brother Pat's rubber-tired, maple-wheeled buggy pulled by a mule named Jasper W. that they began calling the two Jasper W. and Jap. The photo below is of former OU president Dr. Joseph Brandt (left) and Haskell as they displayed their common academic habit of pipe-smoking.



the danged thing last night.' We looked for it some more before finally in exasperation Jap made the classic remark: 'Where do you suppose that danged church is? We've looked all over hell for it.'

"On the next afternoon Jap handed Jackson the ball and said, 'Wheyhead, you are in for nine innings. The quicker you get them out, the quicker we go home, but if it takes all day, get're going to pitch it all.' The truth is, we *did* pitch most of the day, and as I remember, it was 15-9 for us. I am sure, in my own mind, that Jap felt the failure to find the church was an omen that surely had something to do with Nebraska's getting nine runs.

"The last paragraph in my talk the night we honored Jap was the only part I wrote out. I wanted to get down on paper how I felt about Jap Haskell. I said, 'No person has had a greater influence on the spirit and pride of the athletic endeavors at the University than Lawrence "Jap" Haskell. His greatness, his indomitable spirit, his love of athletics and athletes should not be forgotten. His great contribution to hard, tough, but fair play, has made, and will continue to make him a legend on the campus of the University of Oklahoma.'