

sooner scene

a dramatic production

In spite of what later turned out to be insurmountable odds, an enthusiastic group of 500 Oklahoma boosters kicked-off Gator Bowl day with a nine o'clock breakfast at the Robert Meyer Hotel in Jacksonville. The University of Oklahoma band was never more impressive than they were that day, first at the breakfast, in a concert that followed, then during the game itself.

In many ways the Gator Bowl weekend was like a dramatic playhouse production. It had the beauty of the Florida countryside, interesting, happy and friendly people, excitement filled with suspense, frustration and finally an ending that in a play would have to be completely rewritten. Of course, this is where the illusion ends for no part of the drama can be rewritten. In my opinion, the recourse is not recrimination but is solid backing of a squad and coaching staff that is capable of developing a championship program in 1965.

The signing of professional undated contracts which caused four Oklahoma seniors to lose their eligibility the day before the game has caused considerable unrest and controversy.

I am not the judge. What I know of the situation I have read in the newspapers, but I do know from correspondence that alumni who live outside the OU geographical area want to know what is going on. So here are a few excerpts I consider pertinent to the athletic situation:

How did Gator Bowl officials and people of Florida react to the loss of key players? The president of the Gator Bowl Association, W. Ashley Verlander, praised Gomer Jones for his prompt and sensible action. The *Norman Transcript* quoted Verlander as writing, "It is clear to all that Coach Jones is a man who, without hesitation, acts with honor when a question arises that conceivably could affect the outcome of a game in which his team is involved. His action declaring four of his top stars ineligible one day before a bowl game must rank as one of the most unselfish moves in all sports annals. Of course, this action is what one expects from an outstanding institution such as Oklahoma and from

a nationally known and outstanding gentleman and football coach as Gomer Jones."

What can be expected from the professional leagues in future early signings? Nothing very encouraging came out of recent national meetings. Volney Meece pointed out in his *Oklahoma City Times* column, "Competition between the rival professional leagues being what it is, it's likely any promises made by the pros will be just that, promises." He quotes Pop Ivy, an experienced professional coach and scout, as saying that a little leniency on the part of the NCAA would be helpful. Ivy, expressing a professional's point of view, continued, "It seems to me the NCAA could do something about this very easily. I can't see why just because a kid puts his name on a contract it makes him a pro.

"If he lines up and plays against professionals, he's a professional. That's all there is to it. But if he has the opportunity to get an extra \$3-4,000 by signing before January 1, in a way it doesn't seem quite right he should lose it to play in a bowl game."

Do college coaches work for professional teams on the side? Are they "moonlighting," and does this represent a conflict of interest?

Again Volney Meece reports in his column, "This so-called moonlighting is a dust devil left in the wake of the hurricane kicked up by disclosure that four Oklahoma gridgers had signed undated pro pacts.

"Since the Sooner players were the ones 'caught' doing what is probably common practice in this day of fierce feuding betwixt the pro leagues, it was natural Sooner coaches would bear the brunt of investigations into the common practice of coaches cooperating with the pros. During a top level quiz session, Jones readily admitted he's reported on prospects. Unfortunately, one newspaper reported Gomer admitted 'scouting' for the pros. 'It wasn't scouting,' Jones corrected. 'It was filling out forms, like everybody did. But my first thought was to help the players. You're helping your kids. If you give 'em a good report, when they get up there (with the pros) they get

more. There was no rule against it. Baseball coaches have done it longer than football coaches, I imagine. It's been a known fact.'

"How general is the practice? 'It's done all over the U.S.,' Gomer said."

The University Athletic Council report that its members have "full and complete confidence in the integrity and ability" of the OU coaching staff was released January 23, by Eph Monroe, Clinton, president of the Board of Regents.

The Council found that some of the assistant coaches have completed "appraisal" forms for professional clubs. The fees received for this are modest. The practice is widespread among college coaches and has existed for years. The Council stated this violates no existing rule, it is not unethical and there is no conflict of interest.

Both the NCAA and the Big Eight Conference are considering rules that will regulate and clarify college-professional relations.



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