FAIR-HAIRED BOYS

"THEY" SAY THE SOONERS CAN EXPECT ANOTHER CHAMPIONSHIP YEAR BUT "THEY" DOES NOT INCLUDE A HOST OF VERY TOUGH OPPONENTS.

By David A. Burr, '52ba

THE FOOTBALL TEAM that has earned most of the distinctions the game has to offer kicks off September 27 against West Virginia at Norman.

With supreme confidence in the Sooner coach and the flow of material to Norman, many national forecasters have picked Oklahoma to finish the season in the top five teams nationally. One major publication, The Saturday Evening Post, tabbed the team as national champions.

Obviously, most of the predictors are expecting the Sooners to go undefeated again in '58 (although one forecaster predicted a tie with Colorado and another picked Texas to win).

What was the basis for optimism? Perhaps it was the statement by Coach Bud Wilkinson that "We hope to be a little more dangerous offensively than we were last season." Perhaps it was based on the return of 13 of the first 22 starters of last season. Eight of the first team members were gone—only Jackie Sandefur, back, Bob Harrison, center, and Joe Rector, end, return. But 10 of the second team members were ready to move up.

Whatever the reason, there were also some giant-sized obstacles in the way. And few sports authorities could agree on which would be the hardest to overcome.

Listed in alphabetical order, the major threats appear to be Colorado, Oregon and Texas.

Coach Terry Brennan of Notre Dame has mentioned Oregon as the team to watch. All of Texas and some of Oklahoma think Darrell Royal may have the best team. And no one discounts Colorado, the team that has consistently threatened the Sooners' 10-year domination of the Big Eight Conference.

What do the three teams have to offer? Oregon, coached by Len Casanova, the man who once coached Santa Clara to a 20-17 victory over Oklahoma and later lost 28-21, gained a large measure of prestige in the last Rose Bowl game. Against a good Ohio State team, Oregon lost 10-7. In losing, the Oregon Ducks played a whale of a football game.

Their prospects for 1958 are bright. The team returns 21 lettermen, including five starters and ten second team members of the Pacific Coast championship team. Coach Casanova sounds optimistic when he says, "Oregon's prospects for 1958 are
good, although we will need the same rapid
development of the new men, and good
game performances from the entire squad,
to repeat our championship of last fall."

Texas' quick return to its onetime
brilliance, during the first year of Darrell
Royal's coaching tenure, has caused many
prophets to believe that his young charges
are ready to take Oklahoma.

Royal may have trouble building a strong
enough line by Oklahoma game time, he
lost five interior linemen from the '57 team,
but no one expected him to earn a 4-1 read-
ing in Southwest Conference play last year
either. This is certain: if desire and good
coaching mean anything, Texas will be a
threat of major proportions.

Colorado makes no bones about it. They
want to beat Oklahoma so bad they can
hardly stand it. And if Sammy Baugh is
right, they will. He was hired to coach Col-
orado during spring training to help
strengthen the Buffs' aerial game. He was
impressed with the potential of the team.

"Colorado has the finest single wingback
running attack I've ever seen," Baugh stat-
ed. "And they've got tremendous depth.
I really believe that they can beat Okla-
home this fall."

Last year Colorado lost 13-14 at Norman
and this year catches Oklahoma at Boulder.
Colorado lost four first team and three sec-
tond team starters. They return backs Boyd
Dowler, Eddie Dove and Howard Cook.
They lost the great Bob Stransky. The line
will be anchored by All-American candi-
date John Wooten.

O

viously three teams do not comprise
the entire Sooner schedule. But these
three teams are the most likely to give Soon-
er partisans an uneasy afternoon.

What kind of a team will Oklahoma
field in '58? More offense, less defense and
multiple offensive formations. The first
unit will be experienced, with three first
team and ten second team lettermen ready
to begin the season. In addition, Wilkin-
son will start the season with an experi-
enced quarterback of great promise—Da-
vid Baker.

He has All-American candidate Bob Har-
rison at center and a fleet of halfback and
fullback speedsters to choose from. Co-
captain Joe Rector will man one end po-
sition.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the
team is an experienced second unit, and in
the words of Wilkinson, "We can not pos-
sibly be as strong defensively. We lack ex-
perience, particularly in the line."

Some of the names that probably will
make fall headlines include Baker, Harri-
son, Rector and new quarterback Bobby
Boyd, fast-rising halfbacks Brewster Hob-
by and Jackie Holt.

Oklahoma fans will see something new
this fall in addition to the multiple offense.
It is the new conversion rule that scores
kicks made from placement at one point,
and point-after-touchdowns made by rush-
ing or passing at two points.

With the new rule change, the addition
of a multiple offense, three BIG games and
a generally improved Big Eight Confer-
ence, the Sooners face a new season. It
promises to be one of the most exciting in
a long line of exciting football seasons.

Fairest of the fair-haired boys are Wilkinson's choices for the quarterback slot. David Baker (right), with alternate Bobby Boyd (above), will step into that spotlight this fall. Baker all but overshadowed the bowl-bound regulars last year by leading the alternate team to a pre-bowl 26-7 upset over the starters. His 94-yard pass interception runback is Orange Bowl history.
West Virginia at Norman, September 27: Last year won 7, lost 2, tied 1. Team returns four starters and seven members of alternate unit. Their Coach Art Lewis says, "We will be shooting to approximate last year's 7-2-1 record." He likes the way his backfield is shaping up but states his problem is to build a line for them. He has stated also that his schedule is divided into two parts, Oklahoma and the rest of the schedule.

Oregon at Norman, October 4: Last year won 6, lost 3, tied 1 and won Pacific Coast championship. Twenty-one lettermen return. Coach Len Casanova says, "The line appears strong but we will need immediate help from our rookie backs to give us a well-balanced team." Notre Dame Coach Terry Brennan and a number of other authorities have picked Oregon as one of the year's strong teams.

Texas at Dallas, October 11: Last year won 6, lost 3, tied 1 to finish second in Southwest Conference. Lost nine members of first two teams. Emphasis is still on youth. Only three seniors are listed in top 22 for '58. Coach Darrell Royal says, "I think we will have a pretty good ball club with a lot of youth and enthusiasm, but one that could wind up most anywhere in the team standings, depending on the breaks." Texas will play three teams before playing Oklahoma.

Kansas at Lawrence, October 18: Last year won 5, lost 4, tied 1. Team is considered the darkhorse of Big Eight Conference. With new coach Jack Mitchell, most observers believe Kansas capable of challenging for place finish in conference. Team has lost 13 lettermen but returns outstanding halfback Homer Floyd. Mitchell says, "We expect to be a fairly respectable organization by mid-season. The boys worked hard to make spring practice a success. But we will not be ready to contest a good football team."

Kansas State at Norman, October 25: Last year won 3, lost 6, tied 1. Played well last half of '57 season, holding Oklahoma to 13-0 and Michigan State 27-9. Kansas State lost 15 lettermen but gained a large crop of capable sophomores. Coach Bus Mertes says, "We have good depth—all of it real green. But for the first time since I have been head coach, we have strong competition at all positions . . . We are playing a lot of teams that probably are better than us, but we will make them prove it."

Colorado at Boulder, November 1: Last year won 6, lost 3, tied 1. Although halfback Bob Stransky is gone, backfield is solid with three holdovers of great ability. John Wootten, guard, is a prime All-American candidate. Coach Dal Ward reports, "It looks like Oklahoma again in the conference race. They'll be as tough as ever and should be more potent offensively than they were last year. Kansas and Missouri are in the next flight. I have to rate at least three teams above us. We have big problems at center and ends." Ward's testimony does not jibe with that given by Sammy Baugh (see opposite page).
Continued from Page 15

throughout all of the United States. The schedules of the teams have been of advantage because they have included games from Boston to the West Coast, and from Indiana to Florida.

"This Oklahoma football record has been noted, favorably, in every section of the country by people in almost all walks of life—because football, especially college football, has attracted the interest of people in every stratum of business and social life. Thus Oklahoma has benefited because our state's name has become known to untold thousands who heretofore would have been unable to pinpoint the geographic location of Oklahoma without searching over a map.

"But the winning of football games is not the only benefit Oklahoma's fine football teams have brought to our great state. The conduct and attitude of Oklahoma players and coaches has made a deep impression on millions of football fans.

"The team-work of the players: the humility blended with confidence—all leave a favorable impression, even on those who are extremely partisan during football contests.

"Business men, industrialists, leaders in the economic fields of our nation and those in other professions or occupations who influence investment and determine business and industry policies, are favorably impressed with the name "Oklahoma" through knowledge and contact with our splendid O.U. football teams.

"Yes, University of Oklahoma football teams have made a fine contribution to our state over the past ten year period. They represent success. They represent fine individual qualities of Oklahomans. They represent teamwork. What finer qualities could anyone seeking a new home, or, considering business expansion, desire from the citizens of a prospective state? People make up a state—and Oklahoma's 'Big Red' has shown the nation the finest group of citizens they could find in any state in the Union.

"These contributions, although perhaps intangible, are of far greater importance than most Oklahomans realize."

Dan Procter, '36m.ed, '43ed, former President of Oklahoma College for Women (now vice-president for Star Engraving Company, Houston, Texas):

Continued from Page 13

Iowa State at Ames, November 8: Last year won 4, lost 5, tied 1. With a new coach, Clay Stapleton, and an outstanding back, Dwight Nichols, the Cyclones may be an improved ball club. Team lacks depth and experience to be a real challenger.

Missouri at Norman, November 15: Last year won 5, lost 4, tied 1. Team lost 12 lettermen from '57 team and a coach. New coach is highly regarded Dan Devine. Excellent tailback Hank Kuhlmann returns.

Nebraska at Norman, November 22: Won 1 and lost 9 last year. Team lost 14 lettermen and will be inexperienced and lacking in depth. Coach Bill Jennings says: "We hope to improve as the season progresses."

Oklahoma State at Stillwater, November 29: Last year won 6, lost 3, tied 1. With an open date before meeting Sooners, Aggies are expected to field best ball club in many years. Team returns 18 of top 22 lettermen from '57 and nine additional lettermen.