Sooner Tennis Team Wins 4, Drops 1 in Big Six Matches

By Bob Payne, '48, Ardmore
O. U. Journalism Senior

Early this month, with the nip of winter still in
the air, and the March winds ahead of schedule,
Coach Walt Mead, '37-'41, assembled his varsity
tennis team candidates for initial workouts. The
netmen this year will play the first full schedule
since the sport was abandoned after 1942 because
of the war.

Coach Mead's 1946 crew played an abbreviated
schedule, winning four of five Big Six matches,
pasting Oklahoma A. & M. twice and losing two to
the O. U. club.

The Sooners have been undisputed kingspins of
Big Six tennis, capturing 10 championships in 15
years of conference play, beginning in 1929. Kan-
sas grabbed four titles, in 1931-32-33 and 1937,
and Iowa State tied the Jayhawks for the 1946
crown.

Oklahoma's practical monopoly on the courts
surpasses any performance in any other Big Six
school in any other sport, even Nebraska, whose
athletic teams have won nine undisputed champi-
onships in each of three sports—football, outdoor
track and indoor track.

Prospects for the current season are bright
enough to permit Mead to cast aside the usual
gloominess and pessimism prominent among mem-
bers of the coaching profession, and to admit that
his hopes of winning the loop pennant are high.

"One good thing about the squad right now,"
Mead said, "is that no one player stands out like
a sore thumb. I couldn't go down the line and say
this man's best, this one next, and so on.

"Anyone on the squad, after all the boys get in
shape, is likely to knock anybody else off the top
rung. Consequently competition is high, and team
spirit is abundant."

Prospective members of the net team, which
Mead expects to narrow to a 10-man working
squad and a 6-man travel squad, include Bill
Kessler, Wichita, Kansas; Charles Cunningham,
Ardmore; Stanley Draper, Oklahoma City; Randal
Clark, Tulsa; Jack Griggs, Ada; Eugene "Sonny"
West, Ada; Walter Moore, Oklahoma City; Mar-
vina Douglas, Tulsa; Tanell Dakil, Childress;
Walter Moore, Oklahoma City; Abe Ross, Denison,
Texas, and Jack Fretwell, Henryetta.

Two candidates expected to report later are
Gerald Tucker, All-American eager, from Win-
field, Kansas, and Carl Mitchell, Oklahoma City,
one-time National Interscholastic doubles cham-
pion.

Squad members have been working out two
hours a day, six days a week since February 1, and
should be ready for the first match March 4, when
Central State, Edmond, sends its tennis team to
invade Norman.

Schedule:
March 4—Central State of Edmond at Norman
March 7—East Central State of Ada at Norman
FEBRUARY, 1947

The score was 0-0 and the big clock at the end of the jam-packed football stadium showed less than a minute to play between the University of Nebraska and the Golden Gophers from Minnesota.

Minnesota had not lost a ball game in the past three years but it looked as if time had run out. Nebraska had used up its downs and was deep in its own territory when the Husker quarterback called for a punt.

Deep into Minnesota territory went the powerful punt. . . down to the Gopher 10-yard line where the signal-chirping Minnesota back had raced backward to receive it. Thirty seconds remained in the scoreless game.

The Gopher back galloped toward the sidelines planning his strategy, reversed the entire Nebraska field, handed off the ball to another Minnesota back planning his strategy, reversed the entire Nebraska field, handed off the ball to another Minnesota back. . .

The year—1935. The winning team . . . Bernie Bierman’s powerhouse national champs from Swedeland. The back who called the Minnesota signals, received the desperation punt and set up the winning touchdown . . . O. U.’s popular new coach, “Bud” Wilkinson.

Since his part in pulling this Gopher victory out of the fire, “Bud” has added two degrees, 12 years, a wife, two youngsters, a hitch in the Navy where the going was warm. Nine years of coaching experience and a head coaching contract with the University of Oklahoma.

Since Minnesota teams were famous for their power and strength, it is no surprise to learn that the new Sooner coach is a king-size product himself . . . 6-feet 2-inches tall and 195 pounds.

With just enough gray in his hair to add dignity and a sartorial sharpness to indicate that he reads Esquire as well as the Football Annual, the 31-year-old grid tutor could well pose for a Calvert ad, except that his players know full well that training and stamina are one of the Wilkinson long suits.

Except for through trips via Highway 66, “Bud” spent his first time in Oklahoma when he came to the campus as an assistant to Big Jim Tatum. His wife, an Iowa girl whom he married while she was attending the University of Minnesota, agrees with him that Oklahoma climate is tops.

Wilkinson, as player or coach, has never played against an Oklahoma team in his 13 years of active association with football.

He assures fans that the Sooners will continue to operate basically from the T this fall, at least offensively, with such variations as are necessary to adapt local talent to the formation.

With “Dutch” Fehring and Gomer Jones already signed as assistants for the next Sooner season, Wilkinson’s staff is lacking only one, or two at the most, additional helpers.

A golfing and hockey enthusiast and player, Big “Bud” admits that his avocations have suffered recently because of his concentration on the gridiron. A sub-80 shooter in his collegiate days, he is still looking forward to playing his first game of golf on the University’s 9-hole course.

Except for his brief tenure as hockey referee at Syracuse, his skating also has rusted from inactivity in the past few years.

O. U.’s new coach had another asset that is singular among big-time football coaches . . . a security ace-in-the-hole in the form of an interest in his father’s mortgage banking business in Minnesota. Inactive in the business now, he refers to himself as only an “heir.”

Wilkinson will teach a course in football theory as part of his work as coach this year.

Declining to single out one event that gave him the most pleasure as a coach, “Bud” does not hesitate to point out that the development of the Sooner football squad in the last three games and in the Gator bowl skirmish gave him a genuine satisfaction.
Drake’s ‘Basketball Beanpole’
Materializes, Surprises Critics
By Harold Keith

Bruce Drake, Oklahoma’s cage prexy, must have got a lot of satisfaction out of reading that AP story describing how Max Palmer, the seven-foot seven-inch Vance, Mississippi high school boy, was revolutionizing basketball along the Mississippi Delta.

Because in the January issue of Salute magazine, Drake predicted Max Palmer with amazing accuracy in an article titled “Basketball Beanpoles,” an Ohioan Walles preview of where Drake believes basketball is going under the present rules.

In his article Drake created a fictional young giant eight feet tall whom he called Gangleshank, coached him two hours and stuck him in a game. In Drake’s story Gangleshank stood by the side of the goal, fielded high passes from his team mates and in prose at least, proceeded to shoot the opposition club out of the gymnasium.

The young Sooner coach took a lot of kidding in his own state after that article appeared, but now that the world has heard about 7 7 Max Palmer, let’s compare Max with Gangleshank and see how often the Sooner coach called the turn.

Drake wrote, “Give me a boy 7 1/2 or 8 feet tall and I’ll have to work with him only two hours before he’d be ready to play a game of basketball.” The critics hooted at that, alleging it took Henry Iba, famous Oklahoma Aggie coach, four collegiate years to make a player out of Bob Kurland.

Yet the AP story reveals that Palmer, the 7 7 Mississippi boy, is only a ninth grader.

Regarding Gangleshank, Drake wrote: “We formed a four-man zone defense before their goal. Where was Gangleshank? He hadn’t gone down on defense. He hadn’t moved out of his tracks beneath our goal.”

By gum, neither does the real flesh-and-blood Mississippian sized player yet. Wait until basketball coaches start realizing the lowly freethrow.

Of Gangleshank’s “accuracy” Drake wrote in Salute: “Our feeding passes, miles over the heads of the opposition, were snared by Gangleshank who with his right hand held high in the air, moved the ball directly over the goal and released it neatly, like a barkeeper placing an olive in a martini glass. Two points, dead easy.”

The AP story from far-off Vance, Mississippi, said Palmer stands on tiptoes under the basket and “dunks basketball through the hoop like a kid feeding pennies to a piggy bank.”

In his Salute article, Drake has Gangleshank almost single-handed beating the other team 74-48. The AP story from Mississippi says 7-7 Max Palmer averages 40 points per game and quotes his coach, “He could score 100 if we wanted him in there.”

Drake wrote in Salute, “We haven’t seen a truly tall player yet. Wait until basketball coaches start pulling them out of the carnivals, off the backwoods farms.”

Of Max Palmer, the AP story says, “the University of Arkansas may be his next stop.”

The Oklahoma coach is now a member of the National Collegiate Basketball Coaches’ Association Rules Committee. He is frankly on the hunt for legislation that will prevent lads like Max Palmer “making a travesty of the fine game of basketball at the expense of thousands of average-sized players who out-number him 1,000 to 1.”

Drake, now in his ninth year here, was honored twice within one week recently. He learned he had been appointed as a member of the national rules committee of both the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the National Basketball Coaches Association. The former organization is basketball’s ranking rules group. Drake represents the fifth district on both rules bodies.

The Sooner coach succeeds George Edwards, former Missouri coach, on the N.C.A.A. committee.

John Jacobs, Oklahoma track coach starting his 25th season here, will guide the Sooner indoor track squad, Big Six Conference runner-up, through a four-meet schedule this winter.

Here is the Sooner slate:
Feb. 1, Oklahoma Aggies at Norman.
Feb. 15, Oklahoma Aggies at Stillwater.
Feb. 22, Nebraska at Lincoln.
March 1, Big Six Indoor Meet at Kansas City.

Returning such veterans as Andy Cary, Lynn Fellers, C. L. Grant, Jon Sharp, Laddie Harp, John Canaris, Lonny Chapman, Bill Weaver, Dick Cavendar and Plato Andros, Jacobs is hard at work developing the Sooner team.

Sharp was high point scorer of the Big Six Indoor meet last year. Sharp won the 60-yard dash, Canaris the two-mile.

Tucker Sets Sooner Record
With 15 Straight Free Throws

Coach Bruce Drake and Center Gerald Tucker of the Sooner cage squad are glorifying the low-free throw.

Tucker sank 15 consecutive free throws through the Missouri, Oklahoma A. & M., Iowa State and Texas Christian games before missing his first shot against Denver at Norman February 7. No other player in the history of basketball at O. U. has equalled that feat.

Drake has plenty of statistical proof that he coaches one of the soundest charity shots in the roundball business. Here are some of Oklahoma’s free-throwing accomplishments since Drake became coach:

1. The Sooners canned 41 of 51 free tosses in the game against Iowa State and Texas Christian for slightly over 80 per cent. They missed 20 of 25 against Iowa State, then two nights later hit 21 of 26 against Texas Christian.

2. Center Tucker hit 15 in a row, believed to be an all-time record at O. U.

3. Drake’s wartime Oklahoma team of 1945 sank 17 free throws in succession before missing no. 18 in a game against Kansas State at Manhattan, Kansas, to set a Big Six record. Incidentally, the Sooners hit 10 in a row against Iowa State here this year and sank the first 12 before fumbling one against T. C. U.

4. Oklahoma holds the Big Six record for hitting the highest percentage of free tosses in one game, 10-10 for 1,000 per cent against Iowa State at Norman in 1940.

5. Oklahoma hit 70.2 per cent of her free shots in the ten Big Six conference games of 1944, hooping 104 of 148, believed to be an all-time loop seasonal record.

Here are some free-throwing feats by Drake’s Oklahoma teams during the past seven years:
1941—Oklahoma hit 14 of 17 against Kansas at Norman, 8-9 against Kansas State at Manhattan, 14-19 against Kansas State at Norman.
1942—Oklahoma hit 12-14 against Iowa State at Norman, 10-12 against Iowa State at Ames, 18-21 against Missouri at Norman, 15-18 against Kansas at Norman, 13-14 against Kansas State at Norman.
1943—Oklahoma hit 13-14 against Kansas State at Norman, 15-19 against the 18th Field Artillery team at Norman, 11-13 against Iowa State at Norman, 19-23 against the Norman Navy Zoomers at Norman, 19-24 against Otahle Clippers at Norman.
1944—Oklahoma hit 15-17 against Kansas at Norman and 10-13 against Kansas at Lawrence, 8-11 against Iowa State at Ames, 8-11 against the Oklahoma Aggies at Stillwater, 18-24 against Missouri at Oklahoma City.
1945—Oklahoma hit 18-26 against Kansas State at Manhattan, 11-13 against Oklahoma Aggies at Stillwater, 9-11 against Iowa State at Oklahoma City.
1946—Oklahoma hit 29-24 against Kansas at Oklahoma City, 18-22 against Nebraska at Norman, 22-26 against Iowa State at Ames, 14-18 against Baylor at Oklahoma City, 19-28 against Nebraska at Lincoln, 14-19 against Oklahoma Aggies at Norman.

A scholarship award of $350 to an outstanding aeronautical engineering student has been made by the Oklahoma City Women’s Aeronautical Association.

The Old Central Hall bell in Aggieland won’t be tolling for a while. James McNeely (left), an Aggie graduate and now president of the University Student Senate, shows off clapper to Jim Tyler (right), Oklahoma’s all-timerecord at O. U.—A. D. in aeronautical engineering.

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