

The "off-season," a misleading term used to refer to the period between the final gun of the last game and the first practice in September, is as crucially important to a football coach as the weeks of casting and rehearsal are to the success of a Broadway show. The victories of the next two, three, and four years are directly, inescapably related to the months of recruiting and planning before autumn. The urgent activity of the off-season is intensified when a coaching change occurs. The new man in his first weeks must move quickly and decisively in three primary areas if he is to win the national championship and go to a bowl, which is all his patient, loyal fans ask. First, he must assemble a capable staff of assistants. Second, he must activate the recruiting machinery, which usually lies dormant during the transition. Third, he must acquaint himself with the boys who will play for him, simultaneously establishing control and gaining their respect. All this must be done, as well as a thousand and one other less consequential things, instantly, if not sooner. James Alexander Mackenzie, the personable, 35-year-old former Arkansas assistant who became OU's fifteenth football coach in December, has done these things quietly and competently, all the while exhibiting the confident aplomb of a man who has been dealt a royal flush.

His aides, though at first displaying regrettable ignorance about the location of Bowlegs and Wynnewood, are football-wise with solid credentials. The recruiting has gone well; 34 had been signed by the first of March including

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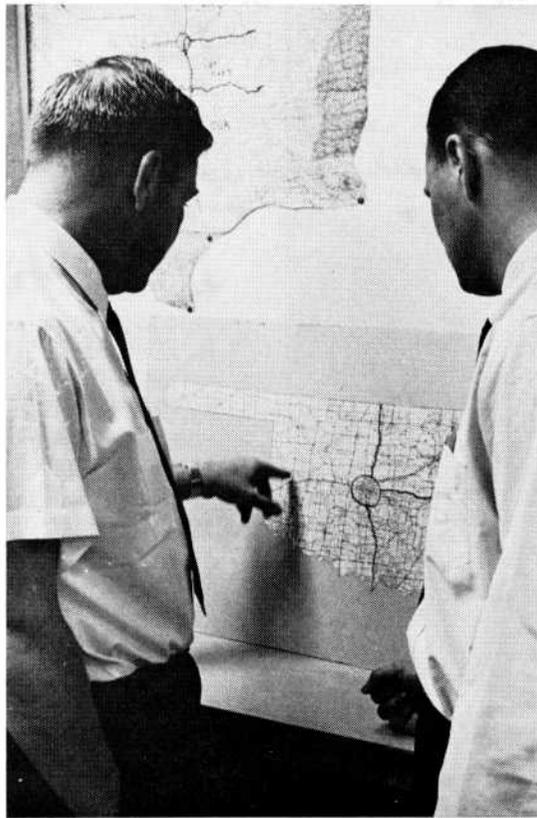


# MACKENZIE BEGINS

Organization of recruiting received top priority in the first weeks. Mackenzie and aides Switzer (*left photo*), Lacewell and Lee (*right photo*) covered the territory in search of wing-heeled halfbacks, teenage Johnny Unitases and agile linemen who can move mountains.

*Photos by Larry McDade*





Mackenzie began in a blizzard of activity—hunting and hiring a staff, catching up in the recruiting race. Hours found for the office were always filled with meetings, phone calls and interviews. During one typically hectic February morning before a luncheon appearance and an afternoon of recruiting in southern Oklahoma, Mackenzie held an impromptu meeting with Athletic Director Gomer Jones (*top, left*), pinpointed a prospect with Switzer in a mapping session (*top, center*), was treated by Trainer Ken Rawlinson for a throat sore from reciting the benefits of the University (*top right*), visited with halfback Eddie Hinton (*bottom, left*), and received a briefing on the spring practice depth chart from Port Robertson.



# *the Mackenzie family moves to Oklahoma*

Sue Mackenzie, the Sooner football coach's pretty brunette wife, is no stranger to moving. By the time the Mackenzie daughter Kathy, now eleven, was three years old, the family had lived in four states. For the past eight years, however, the Mackenzies have been settled in Fayetteville, Ark., and son Alec, 4, for one, had never been personally involved with a moving van until January. The family was welcomed to Norman by an uncharacteristically heavy snow (see pages 12 and 13) which slowed things down a bit but failed to dampen their enthusiasm in becoming Oklahomans. "We are delighted to be here," said Sue. "We have always heard of the Oklahoma football tradition, and it's marvelous for Jim to have the opportunity to coach here." Kathy was not completely overjoyed to leave her friends in Arkansas, and the move is probably hardest on her. "She is very proud of her dad," laughs Sue, "but she doesn't see why he can't commute." Alec, on the other hand, has made the transition with a flair. Coming to Oklahoma was his chance to get a pair of cowboy boots and hat which he now wears with the easy assurance of a native.

Sue, Kathy and Alec watch as the head of the house hits the recruiting trail. "Those who think the off-season is not busy are mistaken," says Sue.



Alec Mackenzie's first view of his new home was obscured by an Oklahoma snow.

Under the circumstances the only thing to do—moving day or no moving day—is enjoy it, quick, before it melts. Alec and Kathy waste no time.



## MACKENZIE BEGINS

Rick Baldrige, a 200-pound fullback from Lawton, who after several sessions last fall with an Arkansas man named Mackenzie had almost decided on the Razorbacks.

The Mackenzie brand has been most evident in the *esprit* of the '66 team. Sooner footballers are now required to get up for breakfast each morning, a curfew has been inaugurated at Washington House (12 on week nights, 1:30 on weekends), and an assistant coach has moved in. "Wash House used to be the noisiest, dirtiest dorm around. Now it's the cleanest and quietest," says one resident. After surveying the squad, Mackenzie declared, "There are too many fat boys on this team." Now all are enrolled in a special physical education class under Professor Mackenzie, who likes his players lean. One tackle who played at 230 last year is now at 208. ("And he wants me at 195.") Another lineman, 245 pounds last year, has shed 25 of them already. A halfback has gone to 185 from 200. When the varsity runs on the field for the Alumni spring game on April 23, something will be missing—something like half a ton of flesh. "They ought to give us green berets instead of helmets," puffed a slimmer Sooner just before spring practice. The discipline is building pride, the stuff all winners have, and though the season's first kickoff is still six months away, a lot of ground has been gained already.

Mackenzie leaves the stadium offices for a luncheon given by a group of supporters. With him are Ken Farris (*left*), associate athletic director, and Harold Keith, sports publicity director.

Alone in his darkened office after a day crowded with appointments, Mackenzie has time to pause as the film of a high school prospect flickers across a movie screen.

