

# Washington sparks devastating Sooners

By Dennis Onnen

The Oklahoma Sooners can be described in one word—devastating. Leading the Big 8 in virtually every team category, they have stormed past nine opponents this fall and vaulted into first in the national rankings.

On offense, the key to the Oklahoma attack is rushing. Led by Heisman Trophy candidate Joe Washington, the Sooners have run for 447 yards a game, tops in the nation. That total also has boosted them into the national lead in total offense with 531 yards a game and in scoring with 44 points a game.

Washington, who led the conference in rushing last year as a sophomore, again leads the league with an average of 124 yards a game. Last week he moved past Greg Pruitt into second place on the all-time Sooner rushing list behind Heisman Trophy winner Steve Owens. Barring injury, he should move past Owens sometime next year.

"Joe Washington is the best player with the ball in his hands the conference has had since Johnny Rodgers," Sooner Coach Barry Switzer said. "If Washington plays every game, I think it will take a heck of a team to beat us."

Washington is ably supported in the rushing department by fullback Jim Littrell, quarterback Steve Davis and halfbacks Clyde Russell and Elvis Peacock, who have darted for 64, 58, 45 and 44 yards a game, respectively. Peacock, a freshman, has averaged more than eight yards a carry and has been timed at 9.5 seconds in the 100-yard dash.

Tight end Wayne Hoffman and guard John Roush, both preseason All-Big 8 selections, anchor the offensive line. Tackle Jerry Arnold and center Kyle Davis were second-team picks in the vote by league coaches.

Steve Davis has completed only 26 passes, but they have been deadly. Eleven have gone for touchdowns to tie him with Husker Dave Humm for the Big 8 lead. His chief target is split end Tinker Owens, who has grabbed 18 passes, including five for touchdowns. Hoffman and backup split end Billy Brooks also are threats to go all the way.

Brazilian-born kicker Tony DiRienzo hasn't missed in 30 point-after-touchdown attempts this season and proved he has the range when he booted a 60-yard field goal last year for a Big 8 record.

Top Sooners on defense are All-American linebacker Rod Shoate, safety Randy Hughes and the Selmon brothers, Dewey and LeRoy. All four were picked to the coaches' All-Big 8 team.

Statistically, Oklahoma leads the conference in rushing defense, total defense and scoring defense and is second in passing defense. Cornerback Sidney Brown has four interceptions to pace the Sooners to a league-leading total of 18.

Sooner victories this year have come over Baylor (28-11), Utah State (72-3), Wake Forest (63-0), Texas (16-13), Colorado (49-14), Kansas State (63-0), Iowa State (28-10), Missouri (37-0) and Kansas (45-14).

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