

Tigers at 'Th

STORY BY CHRIS BLOSE

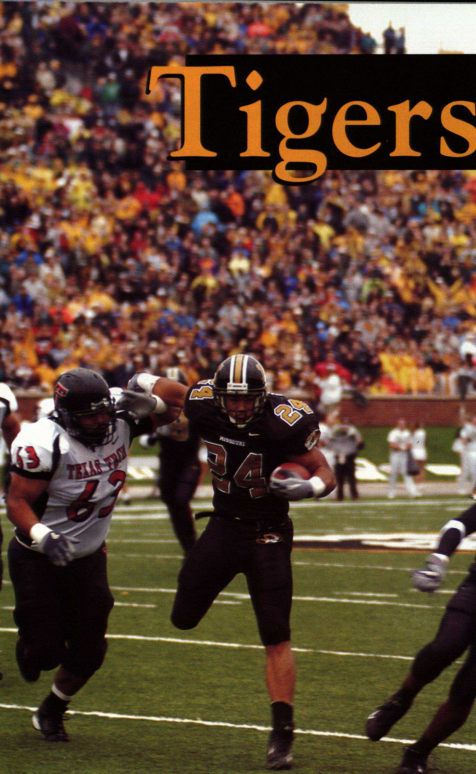
DURING THE 2003 SEASON, THE TIGER football team gave Faurot Field a new name: The Zou. It's an audacious move to give your home turf such an imposing name, especially if your team isn't a national powerhouse. If you're going to call your field The Zou, you'd better defend it with animal ferocity.

After six victories and no losses at home, the name seems to fit. As for being a national powerhouse, that's Coach Gary Pinkel's ultimate goal, one that seems a little closer after a season of new Mizzou records and national attention.

The season ended with uncharacteristic mistakes during a Dec. 31 loss to Arkansas in the Independence Bowl, Missouri's first bowl game since 1998. But to Pinkel, that defeat doesn't mar a season in which his team made great progress. "To say we're less of a team or a greater team because of it, we really don't do that," he says.

Instead, he focuses on what the Tigers did right in their 8-5 season, his third. Individual players broke 24 records and tied two. The team broke seven records and tied one (see list on next page). Quarterback Brad Smith and tailback Zack Abron, the 20th and 40th best rushers in the country,

PHOTO BY BOB HILL



Above, linebacker James Kinney grabs an interception against Texas Tech Oct. 25. Right, quarterback Brad Smith runs for one of three touchdowns against Texas A&M Nov. 15.

PHOTO BY STEVE MORAN



e Zou

WITH A BOWL-BOUND SEASON OF BREAKING RECORDS

AND DOMINATING AT HOME, COACH GARY PINKEL HAS MOVED HIS

TEAM ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE POWERHOUSE HE THINKS IT CAN BE.

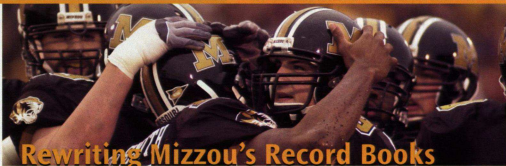
led the best rushing offense in the Big 12 and the sixth best in the nation.

Almost as strong was the Tigers' turnover margin, the third best in the Big 12 and the 10th best in the country. The improvement is dramatic considering the team wasn't in the top 50 in turnover margin during Pinkel's first year. The defense also has become a factor in the team's success. It finished fifth in the Big 12, a conference full of tough defenses.

For fans who followed the team or tuned in to its record nine TV appearances, the highlight of the season is obvious: the Oct. 11 victory over Nebraska, which at the time had the country's top defense and a 24-game winning streak over MU. That game was particularly important because it came after what was probably the season's low point, the loss to Kansas on Sept. 27. Pinkel points out that his team never lost two games in a row.

The coach has signed a contract through 2008 and has indicated that he's willing to make a career of coaching at Mizzou. He and his players know that to become a national contender they must improve the passing offense. Likewise, they need to become a tougher defense against the rush. But, all in all, Pinkel thinks the 2003 season moves his team closer to that top tier he wants to join.

When asked about how well his team handles pressure, something he has been negative about in the past, Pinkel says, "A year ago if you had interviewed me, we had lost several games in the last three minutes of the game, and I'd have told you we weren't good enough to do it. Now, this year, obviously we've taken another huge step forward." 🌟



Rewriting Mizzou's Record Books

PHOTO BY SARAH E.M. BECKING

Individual record-breakers in 2003 included:

Brad Smith, quarterback:

most points scored in a game (30)
most touchdowns in a game (5)
most rushing touchdowns in a game (5)
most rushing touchdowns in a season (18)
most touchdowns in a season (19)
most passes completed in a season (211)
most yards of total offense in a season (3,383)
highest average gain per rush in a season (6.6)
highest average gain per rush in a career (6)
most yards in total offense in a career (6,745)
highest average gain per play in a game (9.7)
most touchdowns responsible for in a season (scored 19, passed for 11)
most total offensive plays in a season (562)

Zack Abnon, tailback:

most points scored in a career (252)
most touchdowns in a career (42)
most rushing touchdowns in a career (40)
most rushing yards in a career (3,198)
most rushing attempts in a career (692)
most games with 100 yards rushing in a career (12)

Marcus James, wide receiver and kick returner:

highest average gain per punt return in a career (12.1)
most yards in combined kick and punt returns in a career (1,859)
most combined kick and punt returns in a career (128)

Mike Matheny, place-kicker:

most extra points made in a season (44)
most extra points attempted in a game (8, tie)
most extra points made in a game (8, tie)

A.J. Ricker, offensive lineman:

most consecutive starts in a career (47)

Team records:

most points scored at Faurot Field in a game (62)
most points scored in a season (399)
most touchdowns scored in a season (53)
most yards gained in total offense in a season (5,245)
most total offensive plays in a season (926)
most first downs in a season (274)
most wins at home in a season (6)
fewest fumbles lost in a season (5, tie)

Offensive lineman A.J. Ricker holds 4-year-old Edgardo Tintero during a bowl-week visit to the Shreveport Shriner's Hospital in Louisiana.

