The World of the Freshman Athlete

I was so homesick I didn't think I could stand it."

Joe Moore, a 6-1, 190-pound halfback with 10-second speed, was describing his first three weeks at Missouri. A freshman athlete is, after all, a freshman first, an athlete second.

"But the coaches seemed to sense that almost all of us had the same problem — they were real understanding — and after I went home one weekend, everything was fine."

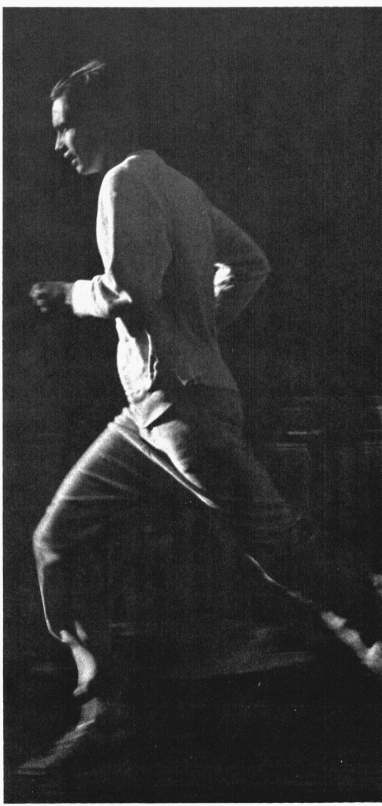
After he completed his high school football career at St. Louis Beaumont, Joe had been sought by 60 colleges and universities. Why did he choose Missouri?

"There were a lot of reasons. I'd followed the Tigers since grade school. Johnny Roland was one of my heroes; so was Russell Washington. Norris Stevenson was my coach for awhile, and my folks really were impressed with Coach Kadlec (John Kadlec is Missouri's offensive line coach). I never really thought I'd be playing for the same school that those guys played for."

As a matter of fact, Joe wasn't even planning on college. He had a B average at Beaumont, but Joe is an extremely modest lad. He didn't believe he was a good enough player to get an athletic scholarship. "And my parents couldn't afford to help me."

Mark Wilson, on the other hand, knew he was going on in school, just as he is quietly confident that he will be running the mile in less than four minutes by the time he's a senior. For Mark it was simply a matter of deciding where to pursue his studies, at a strong academic university or one with a good track program.

Graduating 44th in a class of 600 at Omaha Central, Mark was offered academic scholarships from three highly regarded private universities — including one in the Ivy League — and athletic scholarships from several other schools. Missouri's assistant track coach, Bob Teel, con-



Mickey Kephart, left, freshman guard from North Kansas City, awaits the kickoff of the Missouri-Kansas game. (Incidentally, Tigers won, 14-7.) At right, Mark Wilson, long-distance runner from Omaha, Neb., practices his trade in fall twilight.

vinced him that at Missouri, it was possible to participate in top track competition as well as attend a University where the principal emphasis for athletes was on education.

"I knew," Mark remembers, "that was an easy thing to say. And I about half expected to find something different when I arrived in Columbia — more athletic pressure than they said. But it's true; study really does come first here."

The Missouri concern for scholarship is no accident. It's based on long tradition, dating back to the arrival of Don Faurot as head football coach in 1935. And in Dan Devine's 10-year tenure, this is the remarkable record: All but one football player who has gained senior status, has gone on to receive his degree.

This achievement undoubtedly is due in part to the tutoring program, one which Ed Dissinger, assistant to the athletic director, describes as "the best I know of."

Coming to Missouri last spring, Dissinger served nine years on the Kansas State staff and 17 years before that as a high school coach. He has the responsibility for keeping a check on the student-athletes' grades.

"When a boy spends two or three hours a day practicing and loses additional time on out-of-town trips, his study time is restricted. That's the big reason for our tutoring program: to provide concentrated help."

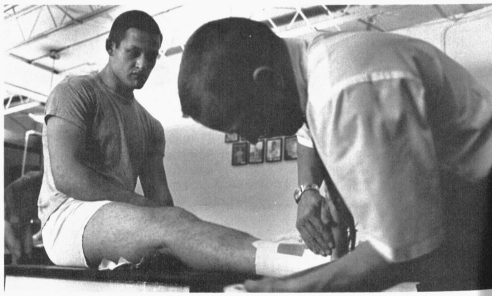
And that's just what is is — help. Missouri has no "special" classes for its athletes. They take a regular course of study. And there is no pressure put on the professors; it's up to each boy to complete the required work.

"We'll employ from 50 to 75 tutors a year," says Dissinger. "Right now there are 15 big tutoring classes, and 20 or so smaller ones. And I'm looking for a good tutor in French."

Individual counseling also is available from Dr. Joe Johnston, an assistant professor of psychology at the University. Dr. Johnston has general supervision of the entire tutoring program.

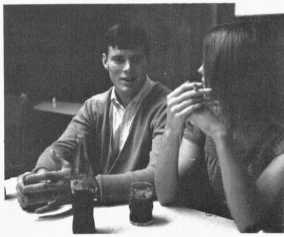
Tutoring sessions are required for freshmen and upper classmen who have grade deficiencies. But tutoring also is available for the B and C students who want to improve their grade point averages. All freshmen sessions are held in Hatch Hall, a men's residence, which has one floor occupied entirely by the freshmen football squad and some members of the varsity. It marks the first time Missouri has even re-

Dan Devine watches MU-KU freshmen.

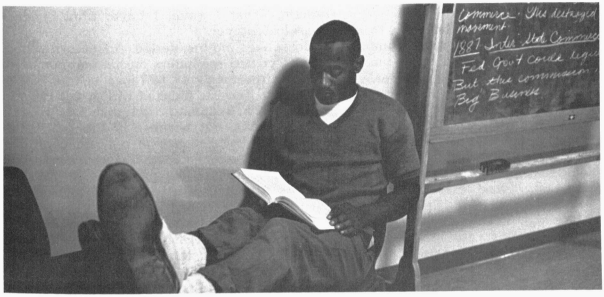


Aledo, Ill.'s Jim Smith gets attention from trainer Freddie Wappel.

Coach Keith Weber goes over game strategy with quarterback Guy Gardocki.



John Cowan and friend take a Coke break.



Joe Moore, first-year student from St. Louis Beaumont, "hits the books."

motely experienced an athletic dormitory type of situation.

The Missouri position on athletic dormitories always has been, "We don't have them, and we don't want them. It's better for the boy to mingle with, and be a part of, the entire student body."

There's little doubt that athletic dorms are an administrative convenience for coaches. And its obvious that some schools have successfully utilized plush athletic dormitories as a recruiting device.

At these same schools, however, the rest of the students sometimes refer to the athletic dorms as zoos or animal houses. In Hatch Hall, in fact, the first floor is called the "jock floor" by some of the building's non-athletic residents. But as Joe Moore succinctly puts it, "One thing I like about the student body at Missouri is its attitude. No one regards me as a 'beast.' "

Dan Devine, head football coach and athletic director, explains that this year's utilization of Hatch Hall is strictly experimental.

"We wanted to see how it affected the boys academically. It's still too early to evaluate the results, but you can rest assured of this: Missouri never will use an athletic dormitory as a recruiting gimmick."

The freshmen themselves are divided as to how well they like the dorm experiment. Some think it's fine; others believe that there is too much togetherness. Everybody agrees, however, on the athletic dining hall: It's great. Bolstered by 35 beeves a year, 30 hogs and 2500 pounds of turkey donated by friends of the University, the dining room staff prides itself on providing tasty, nutritious, and plentiful meals for hungry boys. Steak for breakfast is not uncommon.

It takes quite a bit of food for Jim Smith, the 6-3, 215-pound all-state halfback from Aledo, Ill., and he's high on it. He's also high on Freddie Wappel, Mizzou's veteran trainer. (Many people are high on Jim, too; he received some 40 scholarship offers.)

Slowed by an ankle injury throughout the fall, Jim had ample opportunity to assess Wappel's abilities. "There just couldn't be a better trainer in the nation," Jim says. "Injury care is very good, and for everybody, not just the stars."

Aledo is a small community of 3100 persons. The University of Missouri's Columbia campus has more than 20,000 students. And Jim still gets that lonesome feeling once in a while. "It's different from what you're used to, and it takes some adjusting. My brother is a graduate student at Illinois, and he felt the same way. It's getting better for me, though."

John Cowan, a linebacker from Springfield, has had few pangs of loneliness: his roommate is tackle John Gillespie, a neighbor of the Cowans for the past 14 years. But Cowan almost didn't end up at the University.

"My mother had heard that Missouri was a 'party school' and she wanted me to go somewhere else. My dad favored Missouri, and we had quite a bit of conflict for awhile. But now she's glad I'm here."

Is Missouri a party school?

"It could be if you wanted it to be," says John. "But it doesn't have to be one. I like the motto on the dressing room door at the stadium, 'What I gave, I have; what I didn't give, I lost forever.' "

John likes mottos, period. An intense young man, he posted reminders on his bedroom wall after the freshmen's 41 to 7 loss to Iowa State. The young Bengals finished with a 2-2 record.

Missouri's freshman won and lost record is often spotty, not because of the caliber of the players, but because of a basic coaching philosophy. Freshmen footballers never scrimmage the varsity, for example.

"The two main things a young man needs to learn when he comes to college are (1) how to study, and (2) how to adjust to being largely on his own," says Dissinger. "We aim to help him do both. At Missouri that comes first."

John Cowan underlines Dissinger's statement, "The last thing the coaches tell us after practice is, 'Hit the books.' " □