

Stull starts Operation

By STEVE SHINN

A success wherever he's been, Bob Stull took losing football programs at Massachusetts and Texas-El Paso and made them winners.



Big Eight commissioner Wayne Duke called the 1969 Missouri-Kansas State football game "the most exciting ever." The Tigers finally won, 41 to 38, after the two teams rolled up 1,300 yards in an offensive frenzy before 60,000 fans in Columbia.

On the K-State sideline that November day was a young graduate assistant coach—Robert William "Bob" Stull.

Next fall, 20 years later, Stull again will be on the sidelines of Faurot Field—this time on the Missouri side as the Tigers' 29th head football coach. He'll be working to bring back the excitement of MU football games that filled the stands and

produced winners.

The 1969 Tiger team won the Big Eight championship—the last for Missouri. But Stull is not predicting Big Eight championships, at least not yet.

"Realistically, we'll be trying to get into third place in the conference. Right now, Missouri is not third. It's not fourth, either. If we work ourselves into third—and third in this league is pretty darn good—you've got a chance to compete with Oklahoma and Nebraska."

Stull, 43, signed a five-year contract in mid-December at a base salary of \$85,000 a year. He replaced Robert "Woody" Widenhofer, who resigned under pressure

after posting a 12-31-1 record in four seasons.

Stull directed turnarounds in the football fortunes at two schools—the University of Massachusetts (1984-85) and the University of Texas-El Paso (1985-88). Before becoming a head coach, he was the offensive coordinator at the University of Washington, during which time the Huskies went to the Rose Bowl twice.

"Bob Stull has been a winner wherever he has been," says MU Chancellor Haskell Monroe, who was president of UTEP when Stull was hired there. "He is recognized as a bright, innovative young coach, he has proven himself as an outstanding recruiter of both players and coaches, and he

Turnaround



Jeff Adams photo

has demonstrated his ability to relate well to all university constituents—students, faculty, staff, alumni and media.”

At UTEP, Stull inherited a program that had posted 15 wins and 114 losses since 1974. His first year, with the nation's sixth-ranked passing attack, the Miners went 4-8. In 1987, he upped that to 7-4, and UTEP enjoyed the nation's largest average attendance increase (15,265) to a school-record average of 42,805 fans a game. The Miners were 10-3 in 1988, including a 38-18 loss to Southern Mississippi in the Independence Bowl.

UTEP, like all Western Athletic

Conference teams, played a wide-open offense. Stull brings that philosophy, as well as all nine of his UTEP assistant coaches, to Missouri.

Stull, who quickly ditched the Widenhofer flexbone, says he favors a balanced attack. That certainly was true of last year's UTEP team, which had a per-game average of 219 yards passing and 201 yards rushing. Defensively, the Miners gave up a lot of yards, but less than 20 points a game. The defense probably will need adjusting because the Big Eight is much more run-oriented than the WAC.

Stull also brings with him a philosophy of team discipline.

“First of all, we try to recruit character,” Stull says. “We teach responsi-

Tigers Lure Recruits

If there were ever any doubt about Bob Stull's plans to discard the flexbone in favor of a more pass-friendly offense, his first class of MU recruits dispels it. Of the 20 new players the Tiger coach has attracted to Missouri, four are big, drop-back quarterbacks, and seven are wide receivers.

Three players already are in school: quarterbacks Kent Kiefer, a junior-college transfer from Tempe, Ariz., and Mark Ramstack, a freshman from Santa Ana, Calif., and wide receiver Damon Mays, a junior-college transfer from Phoenix, Ariz.

Big names among the high-school seniors who signed national letters-of-intent in early February were tackle Mike Bedosky of Jefferson City, a high-school All-America; defensive back Maurice Benson of Manhattan, Kan., player-of-the-year in Kansas; and wide receiver Byron Hamilton of Fort Worth, Texas. Another standout is St. Louisan Linzy Collins, a highly recruited junior-college transfer from Bakersfield (Calif.) College, who chose Missouri over Houston, Miami (Fla.) and Arizona State.

Another promising note: Few, if any of the recruits appear to be academic risks. Of the 16 high-school seniors signed, all but one has met Proposition 48 requirements; the other is a B student who has not received his test score.

bility. It's the player's responsibility to go to class, to be on time for practice. If someone always is checking up on the player, the player may make the checker responsible. If something goes wrong, it becomes the checker's fault. Taking responsibility for your own actions builds character and establishes confidence. And confident players do well in the classroom and on the field.”

A native of Davenport, Iowa, Stull has bachelor's and master's degrees from Kansas State University. He is married to the former Kimberly A. Morck. They have two children, daughter Shannon, 7, and son Kevin, 5. □