

1986 SCHEDULE

- Sept. 13 UTAH STATE
Sept. 20 TEXAS
Sept. 27 INDIANA
Oct. 4 At Syracuse
Oct. 11 COLORADO
(Homecoming)
Oct. 18 At Nebraska
Oct. 25 At Kansas State
Nov. 1 IOWA STATE
Nov. 8 At Oklahoma
Nov. 15 At Oklahoma State
Nov. 22 KANSAS

Kick-off time
1:30 p.m.

(Subject to TV Change)

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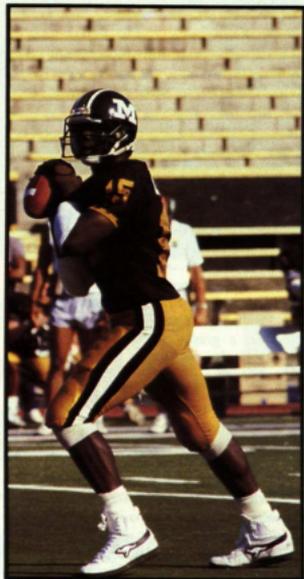


By PAUL HOEMANN

COME BACK, TIGERS



All-America tackle John Clay (77) will be looking to lead running back Darrell Wallace (43) into the end zone often in 1986. Wallace scored five touchdowns in 1985, while rushing for 1,120 yards. However, the right arm of quarterback Ronnie Cameron (15) may be the key to a potent Tiger offense.



"I've toured the state for two years in a row, talking Missouri football. But the bottom line is, you have to put a good product on the field and win."—Coach Woody Widenhofer

THE THEME of this year's athletic department promotions is "Come back to Of Miz-zou," a plea to Missouri football fans to pack Faour Field as they did in the late '70s. An average of 47,129 watched seven home games in 1985. But, as Widenhofer indicates, getting the football fans back may first require a Tiger comeback from the disappointing 1-10 season of a year ago.

There is precedent for such a turnaround. After finishing 1-10 in 1971, the 1972 Tigers, playing one of the nation's toughest schedules, rebounded to 6-5. Included was a stunning 30-26 upset of eighth-ranked Notre Dame. A Fiesta Bowl berth was the Tigers' reward.

Widenhofer and his young, but seemingly talented, Missouri team are aiming to bounce back like the '72 Tigers.

"We want to do away with turnovers, execute better and score more points offensively and improve our team speed on defense. If we accomplish those goals, we'll be a better football team and win more games," Widenhofer says.

Coach Woody refuses to predict a 1986 win-loss ledger. Instead, he points out that Mizzou, starting seven freshmen and nine sophomores, lost six of seven 1985 games that were decided by just two to eight points.

"I would be very disappointed if we didn't win many of those games this year," he says.

Two consecutive outstanding recruiting efforts by Widenhofer and his staff may have the Missouri football program pointed in a winning direction. Headlining this year's class was St. Louis' Tony Van Zant, *Parade Magazine's* 1985 High School Player of the Year. But the sensational running back injured a knee in a high school all-star football game July 26 and is out for the year.

"I FEEL BAD for him personally," said Widenhofer, "but on the bright side, he's got four years left, and the doctors feel the knee will be 100 percent. Instead of bringing him back early, we felt it was in his best interest to have him lay out the year."

The Tigers are fortunate that running back appears to be one of their strengths. Van Zant probably would have had a tough time dislodging Darrell Wallace from the No. 1 spot, anyway. The 5-7, 170-pound junior developed into a second-team All-Big Eight performer in 1985.

The identity of Wallace's running mate is unknown. More frequent use of the option by the 1986 Tigers will require the fullback not only to block well, but to run and catch the ball, also. If senior Ed Esson can avoid injuries, he has the physical tools to excel, says Bill Meyers, assistant head coach and offensive coordinator. Redshirt freshman Tommy Stowers and versatile senior Jon Redd will battle Esson for playing time.

There's little uncertainty about the Missouri offensive line. Overall, it is the strongest part of the team.

"If they stay healthy, I think we'll have one of the top offensive lines in the country," Widenhofer says.

As he has done so well in the past two seasons, tackle John Clay, all 270 pounds of him, will anchor the right side. The senior from St. Louis earned second-team All-America and first-team All-Big Eight honors last year. Meyers, a former NFL assistant coach, says, "Clay is the best offensive lineman in college football."

ENTRENCHED next to Clay at right guard will be senior Phil Petty. Expect the Tigers to run behind this twosome frequently in 1986. The coaching staff was impressed in spring play with senior left tackle Ted Romney, one of four transfers from Drake University, which discontinued football. Widenhofer labels him an NFL prospect. Lined up next to Romney will be improving junior guard Jeff Rigman. Senior Dal Lockwood claimed the center.

Barring injury, sophomore quarterback Ronnie Cameron probably will be at the offensive controls in 1986. A sore throwing arm, believed to be a muscle strain, has plagued Cameron since last fall. Widenhofer insured the position by obtaining Jim Arneson from Ellsworth Junior College.

Nevertheless, Cameron outdueled Brent Cook for the No. 1 job during spring practice. A classy runner and strong-armed when healthy, Cameron "can be a real force in this league," Meyers says. He lacks only game experience. That situation will be helped some by the elimination of complicated, pro-style offensive schemes employed by the 1985 Tigers.

A fleet receiving corps supplies the potential for Cameron and the Tigers to score from anywhere on the gridiron in 1986. Herbert Johnson, a first-team All-Big Eight pick, hauled in 49 passes for 806 yards, good for 16.4 yards a catch and four touchdowns in 1985. Junior Victor Moore, sophomore Patrick Overshown and freshman Kevin Hagens each possess blazing speed, but the latter two are untested under game conditions. Junior college transfer Robert Delpino was a standout during spring drills. Seniors Joe Close and Brent Peterson, an all-conference pick at Drake last year, will handle tight end duties.

On occasions when the offense fails to find the end zone, consistent Tom Whelihan, a junior, will try to fill the scoring void. He hit on a Mizzou record 61.5 percent of his field goal attempts in 1985, including a 54-yarder,

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Time

Cash Bar 10:00 a.m. — 1:00 p.m.*
Buffet 10:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.*

*subject to change due to television coverage

Cost

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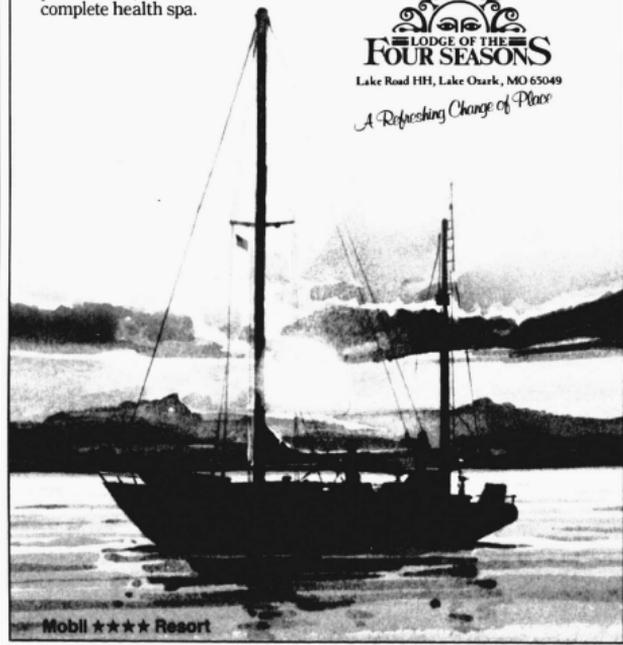
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and his 64 points led the team. This year, Whelihan also will be the regular punter.

A stout defense is a Missouri football trademark, but that was not the case in 1985. Opponents averaged a hefty 223 yards rushing per game against Mizzou's 3-4 defensive alignment. At times, it seemed the Tigers simply didn't have enough speed to corral opposing ball carriers.

Defensive coordinator Jim McKinley links lack of speed and aggressiveness to inexperience. "The more you play, the more confident and aggressive you become. With a year under their belt, some of our young players will be more aggressive."

McKinley believes the return of seniors Mike Vestweber and Gary Justis, combined with sophomores Terry Walker and Steve Vandegrift, will give the Tiger linebacking corps a swifter look in 1986. Vestweber and Justis missed most of 1985 due to injury, while Walker and Vandegrift emerged as Big Eight-caliber linebackers.

The safety positions will be in the capable hands of junior Erik McMillan and sophomore Stan Long. "They're as good as anybody in the league," says Widenhofer.

Left cornerback will be handled by sophomore Pat Ray, redshirted last year after starting three games in 1984. Right corner will be contested between junior Rodney Shepherd, sophomore Kenny King and freshman Jesse Holmes. A knee injury has sidelined last year's part-time starter, Cordell McKinney.

Up front defensively, senior Dick Chapura returns at left defensive end. Chapura was outstanding in 1985, recording 98 tackles, 12 for losses. "We're expecting big things from him again," McKinley says.

Sophomore Darryl Darling asserted himself at nose tackle last season, but will have to battle juco transfer Darren Grossich for the 1986 starting nod. Right end is undecided. Newcomer Jeff Cross, a swift junior college transfer, will challenge holdovers Kevin Fair, Marland Beaudan, Scott Vollet and Kevin White.

NOW, THE CALL GOES OUT for alumni, students, faculty, staff and all Missouri football fans to "Come Back to Ol' Mizzou."

"We want to make a football Saturday an event," says Laura Toy, administrative associate for marketing/promotions.

A new event will be Salute to Agriculture Day, appropriately slated for the Sept. 13 opener against the Utah State Aggies. Co-sponsored by the athletic department and the College of Agriculture, Missouri farmers and agribusinessworkers are being offered a special package, including a half-priced football ticket, barbecue, open house and departmental and industry exhibits in the Hearnes Building.

"We want to emphasize that this is part of the game, too," Toy says. "If people look at a football weekend as more than the football game, then they'll say they had fun, win or lose."

No doubt, though, when fans journey to Faurot Field this fall, they'll be looking for wins from the Tigers. □