

Mizzou
defensive
coordinator
Carl Reese
coaches high-
school
players
attending the
Missouri
Tigers'
Football
Camp in June
at the Dutton
Brookfield
practice field.



CARL REESE: Bullish on the Tigers

Story by PAUL HOEMANN
Photo by JEFF ADAMS

The "Bull" is back at Mizzou. After a four-year absence, Carl "Bull" Reese, nicknamed for his fierce running style as a Missouri full-back, has returned to put some charge in the Tiger defense.

He's quite familiar with his defensive coordinator job, but the state of the Missouri football program is unfamiliar to him. The Tigers have gone 14-30-1 and one head coach has been fired since Reese, BS Ed '66, left after the 1982 season. That's unsettling to a

guy who has experienced a lot of success, as a player and coach, at Mizzou.

"The situation is as upsetting to me as it is to any alumnus," says the Springfield, Mo., native. "Having been here in the past, knowing that Missouri's program can be good, I never questioned coming back."

Woody Widenhofer wanted to hire Reese after being named Mizzou's head coach in December 1984. But Reese then was under contract as defensive coordinator with the United States Football League's Birmingham Stallions.

When it became obvious the USFL was going to fold in 1986, Reese called Widenhofer and told him that if he's ever looking for an assistant coach, "keep me in mind."

In the meantime, Reese earned his Alabama teaching certificate and found a job at a Birmingham, Ala., junior high school teaching social studies and coaching football, wrestling and track.

"A lot of coaches sit around and say they could sell this or that, or be a stock broker," he says. "When the USFL got shaky, I took a look at what else I would want to do and decided I'm a football coach"—even if it meant coaching junior-high-school kids.

As the head football coach at Rudd Junior High, Reese watered the field, striped it before games, scheduled referees and served as equipment manager and trainer.

"It was a lot of fun. It opened my eyes to public education and the amount of time teachers and coaches spend doing their job at that level."

Meanwhile, in Columbia, after Mizzou's 3-8 season in 1986, rumors circulated that two of Widenhofer's assistants were in line for jobs elsewhere. Speculation had Reese returning to Missouri, but as the new year began, there still were no vacancies on the coaching staff.

Then, in late January, assistant

head coach and offensive coordinator Bill Meyers resigned, and defensive coordinator Jim McKinley was named Missouri's assistant head coach and offensive assistant. That scenario opened up the defensive coordinator job for Reese, 44, who says, "I've still got the black and gold in my blood. Knowing Woody well and the situation he's in, it's a real challenge to help get this program turned around."

Widenhofer and Reese have been friends since the mid '60s when both played for Missouri. Back in the days of the two-way player, they competed against each other at linebacker and fullback. Entering the 1963 season, the twosome backed up Gus Otto, an outstanding two-way starter. Reese, then a sophomore, was the offensive specialist and Widenhofer, a junior, the defensive specialist. In the season-opener against Northwestern, Otto came to the sidelines to rest at the end of the first quarter. Reese took his place, and on his first carry ripped off a 55-yard run. He ended the day as the game's leading ball carrier with 67 yards, good enough to become the starting fullback. Otto continued to start at linebacker and Widenhofer says that for the remainder of the season, he spent more time than he wanted on the sidelines.

Reese, a tri-captain of Mizzou's 1966 Sugar Bowl champs, always played with a lot of heart, Widenhofer says. "He was very much like he is as a football coach. He was serious about being as good as he could be. He had high academic as well as athletic goals. To show you the kind of guy Carl is, he started dating his wife, Pam, in eighth grade." Married in 1965, the Reeses have two children, Jennifer, 18, and Andy, 11.

Rollie Dotsch, the assistant who coached Reese at Missouri, was his boss at Birmingham and is now an assistant with the Minnesota Vikings. He remembers that Reese wasn't an exceptionally big or quick player, "but he was a winner. He had all the qualities of a coach. I could tell even then that he was going to be a darn good coach."

Though a fullback during his playing days, Reese says he's always had a mind for defense. He attributes that to Dan Devine, his college head coach,

who instilled in his players that a strong defense will control and win football games.

Naturally, Reese inherited his defensive philosophies from Devine. Reese likes to play as many people as possible on the line of scrimmage to stop the run and also generate a fierce pass rush. He's also a firm believer in technique football. That is, each player has four or five techniques that he must execute well to play his position. For example, stance and alignment are different for a defensive tackle and a safety, but each must execute these techniques properly to ensure that the defense works. He compares defensive football to chess.

"When the game starts, the offense makes a move and then it becomes a guessing game. You're trying to make the offense guess what you're going to do. You have to scramble sometimes though. They may make you adjust. If you can't dictate the action, you want to at least make sure it's a guessing game."

Ultimately, Reese's goal is to be a head coach at the collegiate or professional level. He was a head coach in 1974—for three hours. As a 31-year-old assistant at East Carolina University, Reese accepted the school's head coaching reins when offered by the ECU president. But three hours later, Reese went to the athletic director and turned the job down. "I was afraid of stepping into something I didn't know enough about," he says. "I wasn't mature enough."

Yet, he's acquired a wealth of football knowledge since beginning his coaching career as a Mizzou graduate assistant in 1966. Reese has been linebacker coach at Northern Michigan and Kansas, defensive line coach at Southern Illinois University and defensive coordinator at East Carolina and Virginia. In 1977, Al Onofrio named him Mizzou's offensive backfield coach. When Warren Powers was hired in 1978, he retained Reese as the team's defensive coordinator. Under Reese, Mizzou continued its tradition of rugged, hard-nosed defense. Missouri ranked seventh nationally in total defense and eighth in pass defense in 1981. In 1982, the team led the nation in pass defense. Many of Reese's Missouri players have gone on to professional careers.

After the 1982 season, Reese de-



TIGER SCHEDULE

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|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 12 | Baylor |
| | (Agriculture Day) |
| Sept. 19 | Northwestern |
| | (Band Day) |
| Sept. 26 | at Indiana |
| Oct. 3 | Syracuse |
| Oct. 10 | Kansas St. |
| | (Homecoming) |
| Oct. 17 | at Iowa St. |
| Oct. 24 | Oklahoma St. |
| | (Parents Day) |
| Oct. 31 | Nebraska |
| Nov. 7 | at Colorado |
| Nov. 14 | at Oklahoma |
| Nov. 21 | Kansas |

cided he wanted to try professional football, too. That's when he was offered the Birmingham defensive coordinator job by Dotsch. Under Reese's guidance, the Stallions led the USFL in rushing defense and were second in passing and total defense in 1984. The team led the league in all three categories plus turnover margin and pass interceptions in 1985.

"Birmingham was like a graduate course in football," he says. "The pro offenses can do so much against you. You're playing an 18-game schedule plus the playoffs. You're with the team all day, either in meetings or at practice. It's all geared to football."

In a college job, he says, only a few hours a day may be used for studying football. Coaches are busy with recruiting, finding summer jobs for players and making sure they advance scholastically. "All of that is not football," Reese says, "but it's all a must, and it will help you win."

Reese is used to winning. As a player, one of his greatest thrills was Mizzou's 20-18 Sugar Bowl victory over Florida in 1966.

Like many Missouri fans, Reese will never forget Sept. 9, 1978, a hot, humid day in South Bend, Ind. In his first game as Missouri's defensive coordinator, Reese's black-and-gold defensive charges made the Notre Dame offense black and blue. They repulsed numerous Irish threats—some in the shadow of the Mizzou goal post—to lift the Tigers to a startling 3-0 win over the defending national champions.

"We didn't know what to expect," Reese says of the game. "We really didn't have that great of talent on defense, but we sure got the job done that day."

Getting the job done is what Reese did as a player and what he continues to accomplish as a coach. His intensity and enthusiasm for the game trickle down to the players, Widenhofer says.

"He's a great teacher with a lot of patience, but he's also demanding."

"Regardless of the score or talent, if my players don't hustle, I'm not going to put them on the field," says Reese. "When our guys strap on that black and gold, I want to see a great effort. That's what Missouri fans are used to seeing." □

Darrell Wallace, 1986 conference rushing champ, energizes the offense.



Tougher Tigers to run 'Woodbone' offense

Wanted: some tough Tigers.

That's the call Coach Woody Widenhofer and his staff gave to the Missouri football squad before the start of 1987 spring practice. During Widenhofer's two-year tenure, Mizzou often has been criticized for playing like paper tigers, especially on defense.

Long practices with lots of contact characterized workouts last spring. "The discipline and character of the players are improved because we demanded more of them this spring," Widenhofer says. "They responded well to what we asked them to do and worked hard."

Offensive players were required to reprogram their minds and bodies to run the Flexbone offense, or "Woodbone," as some have dubbed it. It's a triple-option attack, featuring the quarterback, two halfbacks, a fullback and a wide receiver lined up in various formations similar to the Wishbone. But have no fear, fans of the forward pass. Widenhofer says Missouri's offense will not resemble three yards and a cloud of omniturf. An advantage of the Flexbone is that a team can run or pass the football equally well.

"That's why it's called the Flexbone," he says. "You disguise passing plays by lining up and throwing to your running backs."

The targets will include 1986 Big Eight rushing leader Darrell Wallace; Robert Delpino, who sparked during the spring after being converted from wide receiver to halfback; Smiley Elmore, a transfer from Wichita State; Mike Logan, a superior athlete who also could play linebacker or quarterback; and possibly Tony Van Zant, the high-school all-America who is testing his rehabilitated knee in fall practice.

"Our players love the offense," Widenhofer says. "We had more big plays last spring than in the previous two years combined."

Which quarterback will be pitching and passing the pigskin will be determined during fall practice, he says. Ronnie Cameron, recovered from broken ribs sustained last spring, is the front runner. Jeff Henningsen played well in the spring, but his lack of speed raises doubt about his ability to run the option. Brent Cook and Southern Methodist University transfer John Stollenwerck also are in the running.

A sure offensive weapon in the Tigers' arsenal is placekicker Tom Whelihan, who booted a 62-yard field goal against Colorado last year, a Big Eight record. His first successful kick in 1987 will give him a school-record 32 field goals.

Guard Jeff Rigman, the only returning starter up front, will lead an unproven offensive line. Defensively, Steve Vandegrift's successful switch from linebacker to defensive end opposite Jeff Cross solidifies the Tigers' front-line defense. The addition of tackle Robert McDade, an SMU transfer who verbally committed to Mizzou, will provide depth.

To stop the run, the Tigers may switch to a 4-3 alignment in the fall, says defensive coordinator Carl Reese. To help, Mizzou has received verbal commitments from linebackers Reggie Ballard and Alvin "A.J." Miller, also SMU transfers. If they come to Mizzou, both will shore up a position at which nobody really took charge last spring, Reese says. Other linebackers likely to see a lot of action include Ben Corl, Jerold Fletcher, Darren MacDonald, Ron Walters, Byrian Johnson and Lee Johnson.

Possibly the strength of the 1987 squad will be the secondary, led by safety Erik McMillan and cornerbacks Pat Ray and Adrian Jones, the 1986 Big Eight Newcomer-of-the-Year.

"If we're going to win at Missouri," Widenhofer says, "it's going to be with defense." —Paul Hoemann