

WELCOME HOME, WOODY

By Bill Callahan, Mizzou Sports Information Director

Football Saturday. Home opener. Faurot Field. Excitement. Color. Fun. Anticipation. Is this the year? Welcome home, Woody!

When Coach Woody Widenhofer leads his 1985 Tigers onto Faurot Field Sept. 14 against Northwestern, it will mark the stadium's 60th home opener. But this one is special: A new coach who also is a Mizzou graduate, a new all-weather turf and what seems to be a new enthusiasm for Tiger football.

Athletic officials hope the enthusiasm translates into fans—something Mizzou's games have been somewhat short of lately—and that Woody will be welcomed by a crowd that rivals the record 62,168 for home openers.

The game will have difficulty rivaling the first home contest of 1948: the Tigers' 20-14 win over Southern Methodist. That one was an upset of national reverberations, a stunner over the Mustangs and Deak

Walker, that, through the years, has had an incomparable aura of distinction for season-opening games, or any game for that matter, played in Missouri's sunken stadium.

SMU CHARGED into the stadium with a No. 4 national ranking Oct. 9, 1948. The scenario on that perfect Indian summer afternoon pitted Madison "Matty" Bell's Mustangs, winners of 16 straight games, against Don Faurot's best postwar Split T team. The Texans had beaten Pittsburgh, 33-14, and Texas Tech, 41-6, while Missouri lost to Ohio State, 21-7 at Columbus and then walloped St. Louis U., 60-7, in St. Louis.

Fittingly, a record Memorial Stadium crowd of 30,892 watched the unforgettable classic. For the Mustangs, Walker's all-around skills were coupled with sharpshooter Gil Johnson's deadly passing (13-for-19). Ol' Mizzou countered with the option wizardry of quarterback Bus Entsminger—and a textbook Split T running game that totaled 356 ground yards.

Mizzou came back from a 7-0 halftime disadvantage to score three times, getting the clincher after a timely fumble recovery by fullback-linebacker Win Carter. Halfback Loyd Brinkman danced 50 yards down the sidelines to set up the game-winning score. Entsminger also broke on a 58-yard carry in the second half.

When the heart-stopper was over, a visiting SMU band remained in the stands for almost an hour to entertain appreciative spectators. Tiger fans buzzed about the All-America heroics of Walker, whose contribution in a losing effort was both SMU touchdowns, two conversions, two interceptions and several touchdown-saving tackles.

Coach Faurot was acclaimed Coach of the Week nationally by United Press International. Southern Methodist never lost another game all season, repeated as Southwest Conference champion and returned to the Cotton Bowl, defeating Oregon, 21-13.

It was a game to remember, a handsome victory to savor, a forever conversation piece among those who saw the game or heard the broadcast.



Since being named head coach last December, Woody Widenhofer has crisscrossed the state, recruiting, mending fences and generally enthralled alumni. During spring practice, Widenhofer got to do what he likes best: teach. As the photos demonstrate, the Tigers are getting lots of personal attention.

SEPTEMBER'S Mizzou-Northwestern game won't rival the first contest ever played in Memorial Stadium, either. The new artificial turf will see to that.

Two weeks of incessant rain preceded the historic christening of the new stadium Oct. 2, 1926, and a contest involving Missouri and Tulane. The wettest summer in many years delayed sodding the playing field. Tanbark and sawdust were used as substitutes. A crowd of 10,000, clad in multicolored slickers, was the second largest turnout ever to see a football game in Columbia.

The Tigers, coached by Gwinn Henry, turned back a fourth-quarter Tulane drive to earn a 0-0 standoff, aptly labeled a "mudpie tie" by sportswriter Bob Broeg in his *Ol' Mizzou* football chronology. Curiously, just 15 years later, that muddy scene was re-enacted in a Tiger home opener against Colorado. The occasion was another historical milestone—a "first" that was undoubtedly of little significance to the scant 5,000 fans who braved an unrelenting rain. Only one-third of that turnout was around at the finish.

So it was that the unveiling of Faurot's brand new Split T formation for the home folks did poorly at the box office. On that dismal afternoon—Oct. 4, 1941—Mizzou came away a 21-6 victor. Despite the horrendous field conditions, described by *The Kansas City Star* as "a bog that . . . turned the silver-clad Buffaloes and the gold-clad Tigers into unrecognizable men from

Mars," the Missourians' new offensive wrinkle baffled the Buffs. A Mizzou backfield of Harry Ice, Erv Pitts, Bob Steuber and Don Reece led the 346-yard rushing romp.

Long plays abounded. Steuber had a 65-yard scoring sprint, and Maurice "Red" Wade duplicated that feat on a 64-yard breakaway. Ice returned a punt 73 yards for the third score. Those '41 Tigers, equipped with a better football formation that would be around for a long time, finished as college football's best rushing team that season with a 307-yard average per game, en route to a Big Six championship and a Sugar Bowl date with Fordham.

FAUROT'S BEST-EVER team at Missouri? Probably so, even conceding that those Tigers had an element of surprise going for them. How about the 1969 football gang coached by Dan Devine? Were they the most talented of his 13 productions at Mizzou? Again, probably so.

But that group narrowly avoided a booby trap in their opener against Air Force Academy in Columbia.

With 32 seconds left, the spunky Falcons grabbed a 17-16 lead on a 68-yard air strike. That should have been a mortal thrust, but Mizzou quarterback Terry McMillan unloaded a first-down bomb following the kickoff that was taken in stride by wide receiver John Henley for a 66-yard pickup.

MEL GRAY, the Tigers' fleet deep threat, was double-covered on the play, and McMillan chose Henley as his secondary target. Two running plays and clock-stopping timeouts moved the football to point-blank field-goal range. Henry Brown then kicked his fourth three-pointer of the day, a 24-yarder, to salvage a 29-17 thriller and supply the impetus for a 9-1 co-championship and Orange Bowl season.

Three years later, Al Onofrio's Tigers duplicated that frenetic fieldgoal finish on Faurot Field. Greg Hill's placekick with six seconds left defeated Oregon, 24-22, in a yo-yo game, nullifying Dan Fouts' brilliant passing. John Cherry, who would be the quarterback hero of the Notre Dame upset five weeks later, brought Missouri back into contention with two TD passes and a clutch

pass completion to Jack Bastable to set up Hill's 31-yard kick.

Warren Powers' teams enjoyed more success in opening games than any of his immediate predecessors—Onofrio, Devine or Faurot. Two of his team's most notable, inaugural wins were the 3-0 upset of Notre Dame at South Bend in 1978, and the 28-18 ambush of Illinois on Faurot Field in 1983.

SIGNIFICANTLY, favored Illinois—similar to SMU's stunt after the '48 upset here—blazed through the rest of its schedule without a defeat, won the Big Ten title and the Rose Bowl bid.

Nevertheless, on Sept. 10, 1983, Marlon Adler choreographed a 344-yard offensive outburst against an Illinois team that returned nine defensive starters, and Mizzou's young defense also distinguished itself.

Adler passed for two touchdowns, and when Illinois made it close after lagging 21-7 at halftime, he weaved 21 yards on an option run for the clinching score.

Powers' 6-1 scoreboard for all opening games (5-2 for home openers) included a 45-15 defeat of San Diego State in 1979—a contest witnessed by the aforementioned top crowd of 62,168 for an opening home game.

Onofrio's teams were 4-3 for all openers, and 4-3 at home. Devine-coached clubs were 7-6 for all openers, and 9-4 in Columbia. Faurot's teams, so often pitted against powerhouses Ohio State and Maryland, were 7-12 for all openers—and 11-8 for openers at home.

That's the box score for the past 50 years, excluding Chauncey Simpson's three wartime years as head coach and Frank Broyles' one term as Missouri's football leader. Trivia buffs note: Only one tie game was recorded during that span—Broyles' 1957 Tigers played to a 7-all deadlock with Vanderbilt in a night game at Nashville. There haven't been any opening-day ties at home since that first one 60 years ago. Don't expect Coach Woody to start any new trends along that line. □