THE ROARING TIGER’S ’20s

By Bob Broeg


Coach Gwinn Henry

Abe Stuber

Bert Clark
If ever there were a period in the past perhaps to be envied, it would be the era of the Roaring Twenties. Through the center cut of that vibrant decade, Missouri enjoyed a football prosperity that would be matched only at Don Faurot’s coaching peak, Dan Devine’s sensational Sixties and, potentially, Al Onofrio’s exciting Seventies.

The architect was Gwinn Henry, a coach for whom Faurot held great respect and even affection, though when Don had been late for practice one day, Henry disciplined him by forcing the mortified fullback to stand on the sidelines the rest of the afternoon.

Abe Stuber, like Faurot a coach of stature and a career football man, evaluated Henry as “a great person, greatest handling a squad.”

To Stuber, the soft-spoken St. Joseph back who later coached Westminster, Cape Girardeau, Iowa State, and then assisted two professional teams before becoming scouting director of the St. Louis football Cardinals, Henry had the “ability to get players to play and to make the big plays.”

Said Honest Abe, as Rusty Casteel always called Stuber: “They said Henry was only so-so as an offensive coach, but the fact is that he was a very good pass coach, using his backs to slip out of the backfield with good patterns. And I thought he was a great talker. I can remember games he had half the players crying.

“He was a low-key recruiter, but in his own Texas way he had a way of getting things done.”

Indeed he did. For a three-year period, 1924 through 1926, Henry’s teams won eighteen games, lost only four, and tied three. Add 1927, and the four-year record of three conference champions with a narrowly missed fourth became a sparkling 25-6-3.

Moreover, with expanded schedules that brought the Tigers into intersectional — and tougher — competition, the result was national recognition.

“Except for Dan Devine’s 1969 team, I don’t believe any of our teams ever rated higher than Henry’s,” said Faurot, aware that Devine’s 1960 squad narrowly missed the national championship and that his own 1939 and 1941 teams ranked extremely high.

“There were no coaches’ or press polls in Henry’s day,” Faurot pointed out, “but the Dickinson system named for a professor at the University of Illinois was widely accepted.”

Faurot and Stuber, though loyal to their own playing era and proud of the Black and Gold’s accomplishments in their days on campus, would not compare the game they played with the one they coached and certainly not the one played now by men of superior size and speed.

But one who has followed Missouri closely since the mid-1930s wondered if, taking everything into consideration, the Roaring Twenties were not the best-balanced for proper perspective.

“If you mean,” said Faurot, “the most accomplishment with the least amount of pressure on players and coaches, I’d say, yes, most definitely.”

It was a time of joy. The “war to end all wars” was behind. Though highways had become something more than planked roads and the automobile as no longer a novelty, four wheels were still rare enough that life on the campus was well-knit and cozy.

The traveling big-band era, which would reach a crescendo just before World War II, was at hand. So, too, were the campus eating and meeting joints at which students of musical talent played for their supper.

Ah, times were good. Construction boomed on campuses. Patriotically—and a bit slyly, too, if you do not mind the cynicism—colleges built campaniles and other memorials to the war dead, including, not so coincidentally, football stadiums.

Missouri, as usual, dragged its feet on building a new athletic facility, but by the time Ol’ Mizzou got around to a new stadium, the performance of the Tigers certainly merited one.

The 1924 Missouri team showed the basic homestate makeup of most Ol’ Mizzou teams. To give an idea of the size and shape of things to come as the Tigers be-

From 1924 through 1926, Coach Henry’s teams
Won 18, lost 4, tied 3.

One-Hundred-eighty-two-pound tackle Ed Lindenmeyer, Mizzou’s first All-American griddler.
began a sparkling three-season run at national recognition, only eight seniors were listed on Henry's varsity.

Missouri's opening opponent in 1924 was one of the gridiron powers of the country for years—the University of Chicago. Chicago, coached by the immortal Amos Alonzo Stagg, was champion of the Big Ten when the mighty Maroons kicked off to Missouri at Stagg Field before 35,000.

In what was regarded as an upset Missouri won, 3-0, when Charles Van Dyne blocked a Chicago punt on the Maroons' 13-yard line. There, Warren Coglizer kicked a field goal.

Playing next to Faurot and the only linebacker when Missouri went into a 7-1-3 defense that day had been Clyde Smith, the first of three brothers who starred as "rov­ing centers." Glenn and Ray followed Clyde Smith, a 195-pounder lauded by Faurot.

"He was great. I was reminded of him when Darold came along, driving right through blockers," said Faurot. Jenkins was all-American in 1941.

Clyde Smith's interception against Kansas State in 1924, setting up the winning TD, was so exciting that aroused Missouri fans over-ran the field fence at Rollins and surged over the track and onto the gridiron at the 3-yard line, where Smith had completed his return. The referee, Ed Cochrane, sports editor of the Kansas City Journal-Post, threatened to penalize Missouri because of the crowd action. The threat restored order so that Bond could score the winning touchdown.

Missouri lost two outstanding players that day with broken legs, Maurice Moulder and Shorty Swof­ford. In a touch of sportsmanship that all players and coaches might ponder, the Kansas Aggie team sent flowers to the Tigers after the game.

Against Washington U., sophomore Abe Stuber ripped off runs of 40 and 60 yards. Son of an ice-plant operator in St. Joseph, Stuber, one of seven children, had been recruited for Missouri by his high school coach at St. Joe Central. [Anton J.] Stankowski, just as Stan had been wooed and won for MU by St. Joe's Bud Sanders, quarterback of the 1909 team with that big impressive "M" on his sweater.

Abe Stuber's brother, George, also played in the Missouri backfield later and so did Abe's son, Dick. That is the way recruiting went before it burgeoned to a full-time job for some members of large coaching staffs spending more than $50,000 a year to keep tabs on the top talent. Ohio State's Woody Hayes reportedly spends $27,000 a year on phone calls alone.

Back there when college football was not quite the pressure-cooker it became, the BIG game still was as big as now—and maybe more so.

Against Kansas, playing 15 men, the Tigers broke a scoreless game in the third period when White­man raced 20 yards. A 14-0 victory was capped fittingly when Captain Bond, en route to Oxford and a Rhodes Scholarship, intercepted a long pass on the Tiger 6-yard line as the gun sounded.

Before the bowl game era, this should have been the last game for Bond and for his other seniors—Clyde Smith, unanimously selected as center and captain of the all-Missouri Valley team; "Chase" Van Dyne, a great tackle; Jerry Lewis, all-Valley at guard; Johnny Walsh at end, and in the backfield scrappy Jimmy Palermo and the fella who thought he would go into the orchard business, Don Faurot.

Instead, a wonderful thing happened. Southern California had tied Stanford for the Pacific Coast Conference championship, but the Rose Bowl, passing up the Trojans, had tapped Pop Warner's team, led by legendary Ernie Nevers, to play Knute Rockne's Four Horse­men of Notre Dame.

To honor the Trojans, Los Angeles decided to seek the best possible team from the rest of the United States to meet USC on Christmas Day. Missouri, as Valley champion and the only team to beat Big Ten titleholder Chicago, was invited.

The invitation was accepted because MU brass figured the publicity would help boost the Memorial Stadium Fund. Twenty-one players, who had not practiced for two weeks, were taken west.

No Missouri athletic team probably ever had such a tour—unless it was the "lost" team of 1896. For one thing, rapid plane trips, begun in the brief coaching era of Frank Broyles, made travel an in-out experience for athletes. For another, no ordinary train trip came close to matching the goodwill tour of gaping and glad-handing.

Present-day coaches would rebel at all the banquets through which Gwinn Henry's dutiful squad sat. But then, young people were not so sophisticated when Don Faurot was the name of an undergraduate rather than of a football field.

Remember, if you will, that the student athletes were helping to raise money for the new stadium, for which Faurot and others helped grade the field.

The Mizzou party left Columbia December 19 in one of the worst sleet storms ever. The Tigers' train was met continually by alumni groups en route. At Needles, Califor­nia, a half-day's stay included a workout.

On arrival at Los Angeles the morning of December 23, they were met by the mayor of Los Angeles and the USC band and paraded to the Ambassador Hotel. Including fund-raising dinners before and after the game, a trip to San Pedro and the USS Maryland,
On a postseason trip to play Southern California, the 1924 Tigers visited an MGM movie set and met silent-screen idol, Rudolf Valentino.

a boat ride to Catalina, and a train excursion to San Francisco, the sightseeing was highlighted by a tour of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movie studios.

There the Tigers met great stars of the silent screen...Rudolf Valentino...William S. Hart...Blanche Sweet...and Lon Chaney. Chaney, the character actor of horror classics, interrupted filming to pose for a picture with Art Bond in which the 1924 Tiger captain looks so much like his son, Kit.

An even greater treat for the Tigers was a studio party given by Douglas Fairbanks, the handsome swashbuckler for whom Chuck Lewis then was personal trainer. Lewis and the acrobatic Fairbanks teamed in an aerial darts match against road roommates Faurot and Stuber.

The weeklong trip was a gasser, climaxed by a tour of the Grand Canyon and a New Year’s Eve masquerade ball at Williams, Arizona, but there was one flaw in the fairy tale — the ball game.

Before 40,000-plus at the Coliseum, Missouri held Southern California scoreless at the half, but then, as Abe Stuber recalled it, there was an inadvertent foul-up. A movie studio apparently had paid a fee to film against the crowded stands, for a Harold Lloyd silent comedy, The Freshman. But no one told Gwinn Henry.

So while the Tigers stood around, shifting nervously over the delay, the Trojans relaxed in their dressing room. Led by a gifted Indian athlete, Wallace (Chief) Newman, a back who became coach at Whittier College, USC scored three times on long gainers in the third period and won 20-7.

The final intercollegiate game ever for Rollins Field was on November 14, 1925. The setting was perfect. The once-tied Tigers were unbeaten and a homecoming crowd of about 10,000 saw MU go out a winner.

Oklahoma not only scored first, but also stopped the Tigers on the Sooners’ 1-yard line. When, however, OU punted out, Bert Clark ran the kick back 35 yards for a touchdown.

A 33-yard field goal by Coglizer put MU ahead and a 35-yard pass, Whiteman to Bacchus, set up Jackson’s wrapup touchdown in the 16-14 game.

Some could shed a tear for Rollins Field, of course. One, Art Nebel, who as a boy had watched games there, could remember when the university power plant was located at the spot now occupied by the Education building just off Conley Avenue.

After home games at Rollins, as spectators wended their way back toward town, an imaginative stationary engineer at the power plant would manipulate his steam whistle so that it softly played the strains of “Old Missouri.”

But Nebel, son of a High Hill lumberman, was just entering the university when the commitment was made to build a 25,000-seat stadium as a natural amphitheatre with proposed stages of superstructure to 35,000, 55,000, 75,000 and 98,875.

“That figure, probably scaled down to about 91,000, would be possible if the north end of the stadium, where the rock ‘M’ is located, were closed in,” said Nebel, dean of the School of Social and Com-
MU won last title of unwieldy 10-member Missouri Valley league.

way between Columbia and Kansas City was something else again. More than 60 cars were wrecked. Many persons were stranded in Boonville.

The handsome Memorial Tower was dedicated the same day as the stadium, but football rules would undergo a considerable change before the proposed Student Union at the south side of the Gothic Tower became anything except a yawning foundation, a monument to bad times ahead. In the rain-soaked season of 1926, for instance, a penalty was imposed for all incomplete passes after the first one in a series of downs. The referee was privileged to change a wet or muddy ball, but just once—at half time.

Missouri groused that the 1926 Missouri Valley Conference championship was awarded to Oklahoma A&M, which had played only four league games, but four was the required minimum. And though the Aggies had played neither Nebraska nor Missouri, they did manage a 14-14 tie with the Tigers’ conqueror, Oklahoma.

The Valley then was an unwieldy 10-team league. Its membership included seven state schools and three private ones, Washington, Drake, and Grinnell. The old league was splintering, but before six of the state schools would break away, Missouri won the last championship—in 1927.

Some of the big names of the past three prosperous seasons were gone, including Edgar Lindenmeyer, later a coach at Lake Forest (Illinois) College and remembered fondly by Abe Stuber for having sacrificed for the good of the team by moving from tackle to end as a senior. But in 1925 Lindenmeyer, as a junior, still had managed to achieve the first all-America first-team recognition given a Missouri player. It was from Ed Sullivan in the New York Graphic. Grantland Rice, the dean of American Sportswriters, recognized Lindenmeyer, too.

Other Tigers of that era followed scholarly Herb Blumer into pro football, then a sport of little profit. Blumer, the Phi Beta Kappa captain of 1921, had gone with the Chicago Cardinals to help pay his way to a Ph.D. by which he achieved academic stature in sociology. Now, Chase Van Dyne was at Buffalo, Bacchus at Cleveland and—

Big George Flamank [was] captain in 1927... Even larger than when he was a 210-pound fullback on Henry’s last great team, Flamank talked at Columbia, where he was running a small hotel and quietly watching his youngest son, Bill, play basketball just as, earlier, he had quietly observed George, Jr.

Big George wished, too, he could take back the injuries that plagued him and his teammates in 1927, but it was a team of courage and accomplishment.

This was, if you please, the peak of prosperity. The school year began with 469 student automobiles registered at Columbia, where season tickets sold for $8.50. They really got their money’s worth, particularly in the second game of the season, truly a classic. It is remembered so well that when Missouri in 1973 upset Nebraska, ranked No. 2 in the nation, in a 13-12 thriller at Columbia, Don Faurot hurried down the press box aisle and said grinning: “This had to be 1927 all over.”

Faurot was coaching at Kirksville in 1927, but like many who were not there, as well as the 12,000 who were, he knew by heart the story of the game in which the Tigers were roundly outplayed, yet beat Nebraska for the third straight year.

Fans got their money’s worth in victory over Nebraska powerhouse.
Blue Howell put Nebraska out in front with a touchdown in the opening minute of the second quarter, but Mizzou's Bob Byars blocked the extra-point attempt.

Although yielding 327 yards on the ground to just 28, giving up 20 first downs to 5, the Tigers really hung tough. Miller Brown, Bill Gibson, and Bill Smith all blocked punts—that is right, three in one game—and Brown, Earl Diemund, and Enoch Drumm intercepted passes.

So Howell did not cross the MU goal line again and his famous running mate, Glenn Pressnell, not at all. The Missouri touchdown, before Paul (Dutch) Maschoff kicked the extra point that held up for a 7-6 Tiger triumph, is one that made the combination of Flamank-to-Clark legendary in MU football.

"Funny thing about it," Flamank reminisced, "but I didn't really throw that many passes. As the fullback in Henry's short punt formation, I caught more passes than I threw, but Bert Clark and I, both hurt, did come in off the bench together.

"Clark was something special, a little guy from Chillicothe and a Christian Scientist who'd read the Bible when we roomed together on the road. He became, you know, a good coach and very fine administrator at Principia College.

"Bert, stationed up close behind the line in the short punt, had a knack of hiding, then slipping out late to get clear, even when they were looking for him.

"We hit a flurry of passes and I threw one to him from about 12 yards out and he took it in, and Henry promptly took us out, both limping. Know something? We scored four touchdowns, beating Nebraska three straight times—and Bert Clark scored them all."

The Valley would never be the same. For the most part, meaning for too many years, neither would Missouri football. The era of good times for the country and Ol' Mizzou was near an end.

The Tigers had picked up their last pennant for a 1-o-n-g time.

Bob Broeg's Labor of Love

In the book's forward, Bill Callahan, the Tiger's long-time sports information director, calls Bob Broeg's OI Mizzou "truly a labor of love." It's an accurate description. Broeg, sports editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and a BJ '40, is a reporter of the Grantland Rice school rather than Howard Christman reminisced, and wrote about Missouri's long football history, and the men who made it, sympathetically and affectionately. There is none of the "new journalism" in Ol' Mizzou.

But it's an entertaining book, and even the casual Missouri fan will want to add it to his library. "For one thing," writes Callahan, "he [Broeg] could personally identify with University of Missouri football for nearly half of those 84 years that the sport has been in existence here. More important, Broeg always has enjoyed the complete confidence and trust of Mizzou's coaches, players, and administrators. Along with his keen insight, it is their reflections and recollections which add so much vitality, authenticity, and real flavor to this narrative of Tiger grid lore.

"So it is that the Don Faurots, Paul Chirstmans, Dan Devines, 'Stan' Stankowski, Herb Bunkers, 'Abe' Stubers, and Al Onofrios among others do indeed emerge through the author, as contributing, authoritative personalities in this intriguing chronology of Missouri football."

Broeg and Christman were contemporaries at the University, and the chapter on the legendary passer is one that only Broeg could have written. The author is especially close to Faurot and Devine with the result that Broeg was privy to information that few others have. The author's admiration for the two Missouri coach-es also means that they are treated with exceptional kindness—as they generally should be. But some long-time Tiger watchers will interpret differently some of the events surrounding the two eras, for example the generally disappointing 1946 season and the losses to Kansas in 1960 and to Penn State in the 1970 Orange Bowl.

But if those are flaws, they are minor ones. Callahan points out that, "Bob's exploration of the record books; Savitar yearbooks, [Missouri Alumni magazines] and 'Stan' Stankowski's personal files, coupled with his own recall of past heros, enable hundreds of Tiger athletes to stand tall again in this colorful account of their accomplishments. Not just the all-conference or all-America headliners, either. He spotlights innumerable less-publicized players for another encore." In fact, if just the persons mentioned in the book buy one, Ol Mizzou will have a pretty good sale.

The 406-page book has 24 chapters, and their titles illustrate Broeg's colorful writing style: Athens Of The Persimmon Belt; 'M' Stands For McRae, Too; Growing Pains; A Kangaroo Comes to Columbia; 'A Team That Won't Be Beaten'; Mr. Brewer, The Indian, And The Irishman; Mr. Hyde—And Dr. Jekyll; The Roaring Tiger's Twenties; Little One Of The Big Six; And Dr. Rae, Too; Growing Pains; A Kansas In The Thirties; 'T' And 'F'; 'Stan' And 'OJ'; The War Years; Close, But No Cigar; Twilight In The End Zone; They're Living On A Cloud Up There... ; 'Dan' In The Tigers' Den; Flawed Perfection; Dee-Fense; Sugar In The Bowl; A Bear-Hug And The Bomb; A Fall And Farewell; Uncle Al.

In addition, there is a complete record section. The liberal use of photographs also is a plus.

O1 Mizzou retails for $7.95, but dues-paying members of the Alumni Association are being offered the work at a 25 percent discount. The price to dues-paying members, including handling and postage, is just $5.95, a two-dollar savings. — Steve Shinn

Order your copy of Ol' Mizzou from The Alumni Association 312 Jesse Hall Columbia, Missouri 65201
 Make check payable to the Alumni Association $7.95 for non-members $5.95 for members