



Will Favorite's Role

Uneasy lies the head that wears a pre-season football crown. For Coach Dan Devine, the favorite's role was downright disconcerting this back-to-school month of spiraling footballs. After four seasons at Ol' Mizzou where his teams never have finished lower than a tie for second place in the conference, Devine fidgets on the hot seat this fall. Missouri is picked to lead the Big Eight pack home, and be some shakes nationally.

"We've lost seven starters," grouched the M.U. coach recently, "and six other key players through scholastic ineligibility who could have helped us this year. I don't see how anybody could be real high on us."

Alas, Coach Devine should have done his moaning earlier and louder—last spring, for instance, when the forecasters were researching their September magazine articles.

The Saturday Evening Post's Pigskin Preview picked M.U. as the nation's 12th best team and Look magazine had the Tigers 16th. Paul "Bear" Bryant, Alabama coach, esteemed Missouri highest—No. 8 nationally—in his syndicated story for a Sunday magazine supplement.

Within the Big Eight, actually, Missouri was not

a predominant favorite over the likes of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa State. The prediction was a tightly-bunched race, with any of those five teams capable of taking the title, and only Colorado, Oklahoma State and Kansas State destined for the lower environs.

There'll be a rich crop of classy sophomores, quoth the experts, to excite and entertain Big Eight fandom come autumn.

Each team is proud of at least one, touted rookie back—with Gale Sayers of Kansas, Tom Vaughn of Iowa State, Kent McCloughan of Nebraska, and Missouri's Johnny Roland among the most-heralded newcomers.

For Oklahoma, the "good sophomore" angle took a sour turn earlier this month when Tommy Pannell, brilliant new quarterback who engineered a win over the Sooner Alumni last spring, broke an ankle and was lost indefinitely.

In Tigerland, as Mizzou moved toward its opener with California in Berkeley, puffed-up Tiger followers were feeling their oats. Ignored for the moment were Devine's protestations of "no breakaway speed" and



Quarterback Keith Weber of Jefferson City and halfback Johnny Roland of Corpus Christi, sophomores shown above, are expected to stand out this year although Weber is hampered by injuries. At left are linemen Conrad Hitchler, Dave Gill, Tom Hertz, Jimmie Vermillion, Roger Phillips, Jerry Wallach, and Don Wainwright with Assistant Coach Al Onofrio.

Prove Bugaboo?

an "untested second-unit line."

Twenty lettered holdovers, fullback and end depth, and an abundance of good overall talent were major assets cited by the fan-in-the-street. Too, the chirpers were quick to delineate the merits of sophomores Roland at halfback, and Keith Weber, the nifty quarterback who was lost to the team after six minutes of the 1961 opener. Knee surgery finished Weber last fall. The poised Jefferson Citian was mending nicely until he strained the other knee in a baseball game two months ago.

That knee buckled in the second week of September drills, as Weber was directing the Bengals' No. 2 backfield, and Missouri's coaching staff had to re-evaluate their quarterback strength. Weber's readiness, it appeared, might be an on-again, off-again proposition all season.

Operating at first-string all the while was Jim Johnson, the senior left-hander who played chiefly on defense as Ron Taylor's relief last fall. His first-string backfield mates were Roland and Bill Tobin at the halfbacks, and Andy Russell, fullback.

Paul Underhill, a hefty and quick 214 pounds,

could be the offensive fullback, should Russell be earmarked for heavy defensive duty.

Depth among the M.U. backs will permit training of a defensive secondary to work almost entirely as specialists. Veterans Carl Crawford and Vince Turner—possibly Johnson and Russell, both experienced defenders—and sophomores Gus Otto and Vince Tobin are the best possibilities. The highly versatile Roland may double here also. Insofar as possible Coach Clay Cooper, in charge of the deep defenses, will try to develop a set combination as was true in 1960.

Up front, Missouri's No. 1 line will be all new except for ends Conrad Hitchler and Don Wainwright, the only returning regulars; however, line coach Al Onofrio has 1961's tough, alternate line returning intact. Filling the gaps are such familiar names as Tom Hertz and Roger Phillips, guards; Jimmie Vermillion, center; and Jerry Wallach and Dave Gill, tackles. Gill is the only non-letterman.

Biggest concern is maturation of a second-team line, notably at the guard positions. However, the expectation is that Hertz and Phillips will be called on for at least 45 minutes of duty in early games.