

Sugar and season sour for Sooners

By RAY McALLISTER
Collegian Sports Editor

Four months after it was played, Penn State won the 39th Annual Sugar Bowl Classic.

More appropriately, second-ranked Oklahoma lost the New Orleans affair along with three-fourths of its 1972 football season yesterday when it announced recruiting violations would cause nine games to be forfeited.

An investigation launched by the Big Eight Conference — it reportedly did not include the NCAA — turned up recruiting irregularities involving freshman quarterback Kerry Jackson and freshman center Mike Phillips. Both immediately were declared ineligible for the upcoming season.

"It has been verified by conference officials that the transcripts of both Jackson and Phillips have been tampered with and that Jackson had stayed in the athletic dormitory during two visits to the Oklahoma campus while he was a senior in high school," United Press International reported Oklahoma Athletic Director Wade Walker as saying yesterday.

"This is in violation of Big Eight regulations."

The violations also cost offensive line coach Bill Michael his position. Walker said Michael's resignation was asked for, and received, after the coach admitted having knowledge of the tampering of Jackson's transcript.

One of the more interesting questions which still remained to be answered last night was what knowledge, if any, former head coach Chuck Fairbanks had of the incidents.

"I can't answer that," Walker said when asked of any possible involvement on the part of Fairbanks, now coach and general manager of the professional New England Patriots. "I do not know."

Both Walker and University President Dr. Paul F. Sharp, however, were quick to absolve Jackson and Phillips from complicity.

"To the best of our knowledge," Sharp said in a prepared statement, "neither Kerry Jackson nor Mike Phillips was aware that their transcripts had been tampered



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with, and therefore are presumed innocent of any wrongdoing."

Walker echoed the president's words in defending a position which appeared somewhat unlikely: "There is no evidence at the present time that either Jackson or Phillips had any knowledge of the tampering or of any wrong-doing whatsoever. As a result, every effort will be made to encourage them to continue their education at the University of Oklahoma."

Barry Switzer, who succeeded Fairbanks after the latter accepted the Patriots' position which Penn State coach Joe Paterno had rejected earlier, said that he was not aware of who was directly responsible for the tampering. He said he understood Michaels' involvement was only that he had knowledge of it.

Asked a similar question, Walker responded by answering: "I can only say this is under investigation."

Walker did say, however, that "Coach

Switzer has assured me that no other member of his staff was involved in the activity now under investigation."

At Penn State, coach Paterno, Athletic Director Ed Czekaj and several others briefly huddled in Rec Hall after learning of the incident late yesterday morning. Prepared statements by Paterno and Czekaj were released to the press a short time afterwards.

Essentially both statements indicated that Penn State regretted the incident but, regardless of what punitive action might be taken, Oklahoma had clearly shown its superiority on the playing field.

To this Paterno added: "Perhaps the irony is that if freshmen were not allowed to participate, the recruiting irregularity would have come to light before their participation caused another embarrassing situation for intercollegiate athletics. This might be an appropriate time to again appeal to the National Collegiate

Athletic Association governing bodies to get proper enforcement of our rules. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Switzer earlier said there was no indication the NCAA might enter into this investigation.

Switzer's loss of Jackson may be a particularly severe blow. Last season Jackson rushed for 308 yards and hit on 11 of 38 passes for 144 yards.

In the Sooner's 14-0 Sugar Bowl victory over Penn State, Jackson carried for six yards on three carries and connected for 20 yards on the only pass he attempted. He had emerged as Oklahoma's number one quarterback in spring drills.

Switzer said he informed Jackson Monday that something had come up and his eligibility for the next season would be cancelled.

"You know what the kid did?" asked Switzer. "He just sat there and he didn't say a thing. Then I told him coach Michael resigned and he sat there and cried."

Both Jackson and Phillips, said Switzer, had indicated they will stay at Oklahoma.

Evidently the tampering charges brought against Oklahoma involved direct changing of the class rank of the two athletes.

Walker set the two would be eligible under the current conference rules which sets a 2.0 grade point average as the only standard. Apparently, however, they would not have made it under the rule used at the time which computed a formula of grade point average, class rank and college entrance test scores.

"The information is correct," the Associated Press quoted a Big Eight spokesman in Kansas City as saying, "and the Big Eight Conference office has no further comment at this time."

The nine games which Oklahoma must forfeit are those nine in which Jackson played — Phillips saw no playing time at all this season — and include the Sugar Bowl as well as a regular season loss to Colorado. The Sooners thus will lose eight victories and their 11-1 season record will go into the books as 3-8.

Oklahoma thus will retain victories over only Kansas State, Iowa State and Nebraska — the only three games in which Jackson did not play. Presumably Nebraska will be declared Big Eight Champion for last season.



Photo by Joe Rudrick
Kerry Jackson, caught for a big loss yesterday, sprints free in Sugar Bowl

Penn State reaction

Statement by football coach Joe Paterno: "It's a shame that a great effort by an Oklahoma football team has to be marred by an inexcusable recruiting violation such as this incident. However, irrespective of what action Oklahoma or the Sugar Bowl would take in regard to the forfeit, our players and the Oklahoma players know who won the game. "Perhaps the irony is that if freshmen were not allowed to participate, the recruiting irregularity would have come to light before their participation caused another embarrassing situation for intercollegiate athletics. This might be an appropriate time to again appeal to the National Collegiate Athletic Association governing bodies to get proper enforcement of our rules. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Statement by Athletic Director Edward M. Czekaj: "The Sugar Bowl was decided on the field of play and regardless of this regrettable incident, the result of the game itself is unchanged. Any other decisions would have to be held in abeyance until any possible NCAA action is taken."

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