

# No surprise here: Holieway makes Sooners the best

By JAMES SUROWIECKI  
Sports Editor

When confronting the intimidating task of picking a college Top 20 for the year ahead, many questions come to the prognosticator's mind. Questions like: Is Tim Brown the best player in America? What kind of an impact will the SMU transfers make? Did Sartre and Bertrand Russell really get wasted together? And most of all, should I show some guts and not pick Oklahoma as No. 1? The answer to the last question, of course, is no. This isn't Sport magazine, after all.

**1. Oklahoma** — Quarterback Jamelle Holieway is a California city boy transplanted into Sooner territory, and he plays like it, with flash and guts. Keith Jackson is a devastating physical specimen, and the team as a whole brings new meaning to the word unstoppable.

**2. UCLA** — The Pac-10 has returned to its glory days as a powerhouse conference, and the Bruins are the class of it. SMU transfer David Richards will solidify the offensive line and help clear the way for Marcus Allen-like Gaston Green. But UCLA will face a tough test when it visits:

**3. Nebraska** — The Cornhuskers are, as usual, exceptionally deep and feature I-Back Keith Jones, who should gain 1,000 yards without any trouble. But Nebraska plays UCLA, South Carolina and Arizona State, in addition to its Big 8 slate.

**4. Clemson** — The Tigers are strong where Nebraska is weak: in

their schedule, which is so soft as to make an undefeated season a real possibility. Rodney Williams is the East Coast Holieway.

**5. Washington** — Don James has done a consistently excellent job of turning out professional players, and has one of his best ever in QB Chris Chandler. The biggest question is on defense, where six starters are gone. But the Huskies have become one of the few teams for whom winning is truly a tradition.

**6. LSU** — The Tigers manhandled Texas A&M in their opener, and should be the first LSU team to repeat as SEC champs in 50 years. They feature a veteran squad and a passing attack which means Hilliard and James are no longer needed.

**7. Miami, Fla.** — Yes, Vinny is gone. Yes, he will be missed. But the Hurricanes showed no signs of regret in blowing out Florida, and sophomore Steve Walsh will play better knowing freshman Craig Erickson is waiting for him to falter. The defense, by the way, may be the best in the country.

**8. Penn State** — Joe Paterno will keep the Nittany Lions in the Top 10, despite having just seven returning starters. QB Matt Knizner is better than the departed John Shaffer, and Blair Thomas should shine in the backfield. Pete Gifopoulos, about whom Miami fans still have nightmares, will solidify the defense.

**9. Ohio State** — Chris Spielman is the best linebacker in America, averaging 15.8 tackles a game. The Buckeyes' defense will be brilliant, but

the loss of Cris Carter will do damage to the team psychologically. Plus, they play LSU and Michigan on the road.

**10. Auburn** — Brent and Bo are gone, but they're not forgotten. Is this the story of Johnny Rotation? A veteran defense should keep the team going until QB Jeff Burger recovers from his offseason traumas.

**11. Florida State** — The Seminoles are back, and they are experienced. Sammie Smith gives them a ground game, and the secondary got plenty of practice catching during the baseball season.

**12. Notre Dame** — The Fighting Irish have an awesome schedule, which of course is a double-edged sword. Quarterback Terry Andrysiak is no heir to Theismann or Montana, but with Holtz at the helm and Tim Brown everywhere else, the sword will more often than not cut the Irish way.

**13. Arkansas** — Humiliated in the Orange Bowl by the Sooners and featuring the world's biggest lineman, the Razorbacks' schedule is so cushy that one might think Ken Hatfield and Danny Ford were cousins.

**14. Arizona State** — Excellent slate of foes for a solid team. The big question is who will call signals in place of Jeff Van Raaphorst.

**15. Michigan** — Jim Harbaugh is now one of many for the Bears, and receiver Ken Higgins is one of many at Harvard Law School. But Jamie Morris is a legitimate Heisman candidate, and offensive tackle John Elliott may be the best lineman in the country.

**16. North Carolina** — This is the team this whole tabloid is about. And there was much rejoicing.

**17. South Carolina** — You just have to love sophomore QB Todd Ellis and the run-and-shoot, especially when Sterling Sharpe is there to catch Ellis' passes. And there's no need to mention Joe Morrison's kid.

**18. Michigan State** — Lorenzo, Lorenzo, Lorenzo the Magnificent. And the defense is rather impressive, as well. The Spartans looked devastating in their win over USC.

**19. Texas A&M** — The Aggies were dominated by LSU in their opener, and Craig Stump was ineffective at quarterback. But after they play Washington, the Aggies can coast to victory after victory in the SWC.

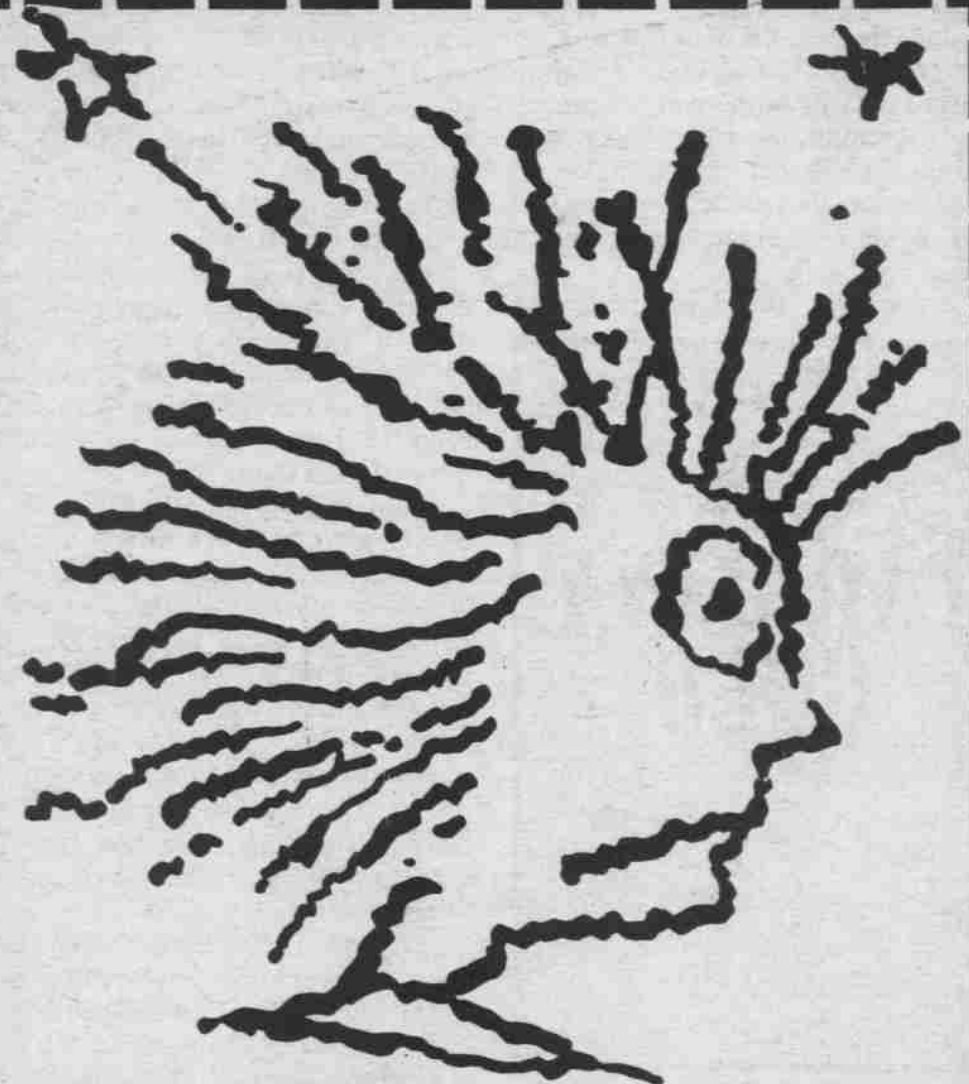
**20. Tennessee** — Not just because of the win over Iowa. QB Jeff Francis is one of the nation's best, and no way can the defense be as bad as it was last year.

One last thing. Write your senator now and tell him: Gordie Lockbaum for the Heisman!

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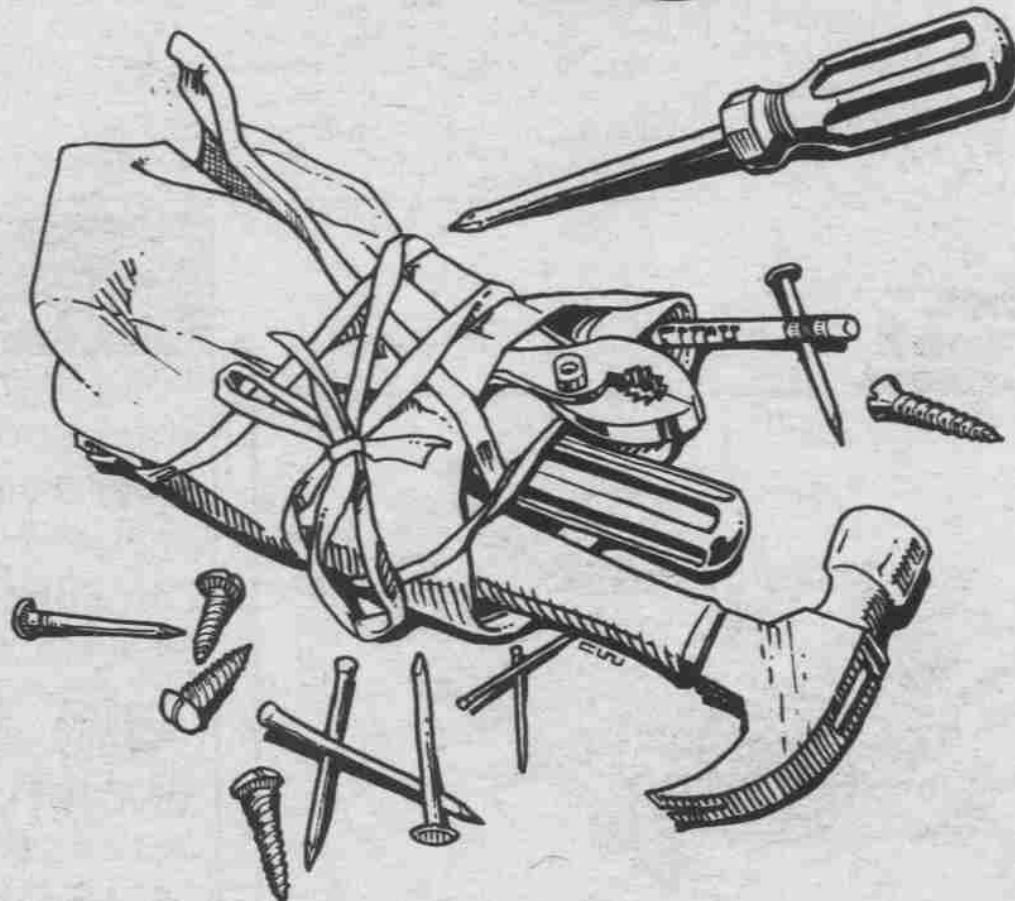
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