

history of ou football

History of OU Football is a tale rich with tradition, triumph, and a storied legacy that has captivated fans for over a century. The University of Oklahoma's football program, known as the Sooners, has become a cornerstone of college athletics and a symbol of pride for its university community. With a history dating back to the late 19th century, OU football has evolved through various eras, achieving remarkable successes and enduring challenges along the way. This article delves into the key milestones, legendary figures, and unforgettable moments that have defined the history of OU football.

The Early Years: 1895-1920

The inception of OU football can be traced back to 1895, when the team played its first game against the University of Texas at Austin. Although the early years were marked by limited success and sporadic organizational challenges, the groundwork was laid for a burgeoning football program. Key developments during this period include:

- **First Game:** The inaugural game against Texas in 1895 ended in a loss, but it marked the beginning of a competitive spirit.
- **Formation of the Oklahoma Intercollegiate Athletic Association:** Established in 1908, this association helped formalize college football in Oklahoma.
- **First Coach:** In 1899, the Sooners appointed their first official head coach, J.B. "Buck" McCulloch, who laid the groundwork for future coaching success.

Despite a lack of consistent success during these years, the Sooners began to build a foundation that would support future growth.

The Rise to Prominence: 1920-1940

The 1920s and 1930s marked pivotal moments in the history of OU football. The Sooners began to establish themselves as a formidable force in college football, thanks in part to several key figures and significant achievements:

The Influence of Coach Biff Jones

Biff Jones, who coached the Sooners from 1934 to 1939, played a crucial role in transforming the program. Under his leadership, the Sooners achieved:

- **First Conference Championship:** In 1936, OU won its first Big Six Conference championship, setting the tone for future success.
- **Impressive Records:** The Sooners finished the 1938 season with a remarkable record of 8-1, marking a significant turning point for the program.

The Impact of World War II

The onset of World War II brought considerable challenges to college football, including player shortages and program disruptions. Despite these difficulties, the Sooners managed to maintain a competitive edge, largely due to their resilience and the commitment of their coaching staff.

The Barry Switzer Era: 1973-1988

The history of OU football would not be complete without mentioning the legendary Barry Switzer. Taking over as head coach in 1973, Switzer transformed the Sooners into a national powerhouse:

Key Achievements During the Switzer Era

Under Switzer's guidance, the Sooners celebrated numerous accomplishments, including:

- **Three National Championships:** OU won national titles in 1974, 1975, and 1985, solidifying its status as a dominant force in college football.
- **Unbeaten Seasons:** The Sooners recorded an unbeaten season in 1974, a feat that would be celebrated for decades.
- **Innovative Offense:** Switzer's wishbone offense revolutionized college football, earning accolades for its effectiveness and creativity.

Switzer's tenure not only brought success on the field but also fostered a sense of community and pride among fans and players alike.

The Bob Stoops Era: 1999-2016

After a brief period of transition following Switzer's departure, Bob Stoops was hired as

head coach in 1999. Stoops' arrival marked another significant chapter in the history of OU football:

Major Achievements Under Bob Stoops

Stoops' leadership resulted in several remarkable accomplishments, including:

- **National Championship in 2000:** Stoops led the Sooners to a national title in just his second year, with a perfect season record of 13-0.
- **Consistent Bowl Appearances:** Under Stoops, the Sooners made 18 consecutive bowl appearances, establishing a legacy of excellence.
- **Heisman Trophy Winners:** The program continued to produce Heisman Trophy winners, including Jason White in 2003 and Sam Bradford in 2008.

Stoops' tenure not only brought wins but also created a culture of discipline and excellence that became synonymous with OU football.

Recent Developments: 2017-Present

Since Bob Stoops' retirement in 2016, the OU football program has continued to evolve under new leadership:

Lincoln Riley's Impact

Lincoln Riley took over as head coach in 2017 and made an immediate impact on the program:

- **Dynamic Offense:** Riley introduced a high-powered offense that broke numerous records and consistently ranked among the top in the nation.
- **Playoff Appearances:** The Sooners reached the College Football Playoff multiple times under Riley, further solidifying their place among college football elites.
- **Player Development:** Several players flourished under Riley, with quarterbacks like Kyler Murray and Baker Mayfield winning the Heisman Trophy.

However, Riley's departure in 2021 to USC initiated a new chapter for the Sooners as they look to maintain their competitive edge.

The Transition to the SEC

In 2022, OU announced its move to the Southeastern Conference (SEC), a significant shift that promises new rivalries and challenges. The transition is expected to impact recruiting, fan engagement, and the overall landscape of the program.

The Legacy of OU Football

The history of OU football is not just about wins and losses; it is also about the community and traditions that have developed over the years. The Sooners have a dedicated fan base, known for their unwavering support, and a rich tradition of home games at the iconic Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium.

- **Rivalries:** The Red River Showdown against Texas is one of the most storied rivalries in college football, drawing significant attention each year.
- **Traditions:** Fans participate in various traditions, such as the Sooner Schooner, the university's mascot, which adds to the vibrant game-day atmosphere.
- **Alumni Impact:** Many former players have gone on to successful careers in the NFL, further enhancing the program's reputation.

As OU football looks to the future, it does so with a rich history and a legacy that continues to inspire players and fans alike. The journey of the Sooners is far from over, and the excitement surrounding the program only intensifies as they prepare for new challenges in the competitive landscape of college football.

Frequently Asked Questions

When did the University of Oklahoma football program begin its existence?

The University of Oklahoma football program was established in 1895.

How many national championships has the OU football team won?

The University of Oklahoma football team has won 7 national championships, with titles awarded in various years including 1950, 1955, 1974, 1975, 1985, 2000, and 2008.

Who is considered one of the greatest coaches in OU football history?

Barry Switzer is widely regarded as one of the greatest coaches in OU football history, leading the team to three national championships and a record of 157-29-4 during his tenure from 1973 to 1988.

What major rivalry does OU football participate in?

OU football has a major rivalry with the University of Texas, known as the Red River Showdown, which is played annually at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas.

What notable achievement did the OU football team accomplish in 1971?

In 1971, the OU football team achieved a remarkable feat by going undefeated and winning the national championship, finishing the season with a record of 11-0.

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