Backfield To Blend Old With New; Speed, Power Will Be Improved

By JOHN DURHAM

Head coach Jess Neely and backfield coach Harold "Bud" Hagan agree that the Owls should not be a problem this year. There are good men at every position and the Owls seem ready to roll.

At quarterback, Walter McReynolds, who had such a glorious debut against LSU last year, is back for a second year as the solid field generalship. "Mac" is a very good forward passer, and he can be a dangerous runner. He has the poise needed to direct the team successfully on offense.

WILD-CARDING for McReynolds on defense will be Ronnie Cervenka, one of the best defensive backs on the squad. Ronnie is capable of running the team offensively, too. He is a good sprint-out passer and a fine runner.

Benny Hollingsworth is the number two offensive back. According to Hagan, "Hollingsworth has made tremendous progress."

THERE ARE TWO lettermen returning at tailback, Gene Fleming and Ronnie Hatfield. However, they are both playing behind the much-heralded sophomore Gene Walker. Hagan pointed out that in addition to being a "real fine football player, Gene is a good morale guy. He's a good hustler and brags on the line men."

Fleming is a good, solid back who can run, catch passes, and return kickoffs very well. Hatfield was a defensive regular last year and led the team in punt returns. He will probably be used most this fall at what he does best—defense.

THE NUMBER ONE wingback for the Owls is Georges Parry, a converted end. Commenting on Parry's switch from end to wingback, Hagan said, "He's one of our electric athletes. He's a good blocker, receiver, and runner.

Wingback appears to be in good hands with Parry, but if he should falter, Billy Hale is ready to step in. He wore a gold jersey at wingback last year, and he is a solid, tough performer who excels on defense.

SOPH DAVID Ferguson is the number three wingback. He's a good defensive player and an excellent prospect for future stardom.

The Owls should have more problems like trying to choose between Russell Wayt and Paul Piper at fullback. Both are juniors, both earned varsity letters last year, both are devastating runners, and both were the two leading rushers for Rice last fall.

WYAT IS CURRENTLY wearing the gold shirt, and his physical attributes are awesome. He has size, speed, and power. In addition he's a good receiver.

The number two fullback is Paul Piper, last year's leading ground gainer for the Owls. He is a fine breaking threat and picks his holes well according to Hagan. He and Wayt give the Owls what is probably the best 1-2 fullback punch in the country. MIKE O'GRADY, who moved up after R. J. Nitsche was injured, is the number three fullback. He is a sophomore and one of the toughest runners on the squad.

If the backfield lives up to Neely's and Hagan's expectations, and if the blocking is present, there could be more genuine excitement about the Owl offense than there has been in many of the recent years.