

New Centers Boost Interest in Tourney

BY DON PIERCE

Special Correspondent

LA WRENCE—The Big Seven's new crop of centers will be measured in head-to-head warring for the first time next week when they face off in the conference's 10th annual pre-season tournament in Kansas City's Municipal Auditorium.

The five new regulars (Lew Johnson of Kansas and Oklahoma's LeRoy Bacher are the only holdover starters from 1954-55) will carry as much interest as did their shiny gang of predecessors who dominated most of the first nine meets. But for a different reason.

The question now isn't whether B. H. Born can defend Burdette Haldorson or Clyde Lovellette outscore Marcus Freiburger. It's a mere matter of whether any of the

fresh pivotmen can approach any of the old guard and whether any one of them is good enough to swing the scales of tournament victory, and subsequently the league race.

Three of the newly-spotlighted post-men are sophomores. They include Don Medsker, 6-8, Iowa State; Jim Thom, 6-9, Nebraska, and Jack Parr, 6-9, Kansas State. The others, Chuck Denny of Missouri and George Hannah of Colorado, are seniors. But they are seeing their first season as regulars.

Parr and Medsker have been equalling advance notice. The former tops the entire complement of league centers at this writing with a 19.5 average in four games. Medsker is four points back at 15.3.

Thom must be considered a disappointment to date. Per-

haps too much was expected of him. At any rate he has scored only eight points in four games. Fact is, he isn't even a starter for the Cornhuskers when Rex Ekwall, 6-5 converted forward, is available.

A heavy cold kept the brawny junior out of the Michigan and Wichita games, both of which Nebraska lost. Thom apparently has a ways to come.

Denny and Hannah may prove better than any of the rookies by the time the finals of the four-day affair close December 30. Both have come up the hard way, playing behind two tall and prolific scorers over the past two years.

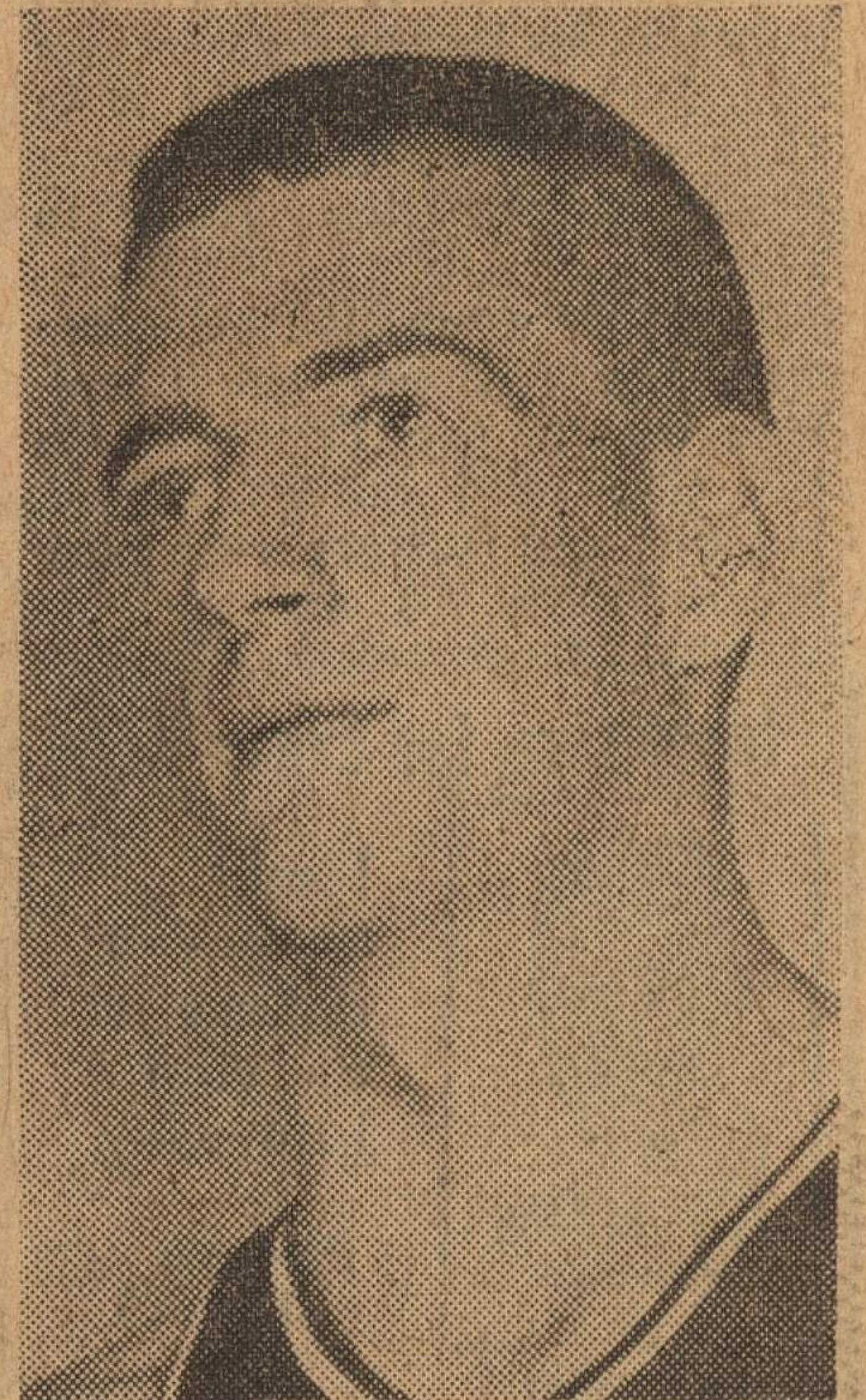
Subbing for Haldorson, the 6-7 Hannah averaged 2.6 last year. He now is traveling at 10.0 through the Buffaloes' first three games.

Denny averaged 3.1 in 20 games last season. This 6-5½, 223-pound workhorse is a somewhat larger though cruder edition of Bill Stauffer, Tiger great of 1950-51-52. He fights all the way for rebounds and came along steadily in all departments through the final half of last season.

Johnson, who started all 21 games for Kansas last season as a sophomore, now finds himself the most experienced regular among league centers. He owns some glossy credentials despite his mere junior status.

He set a school mark of 24 rebounds against Oklahoma last year and, with 230 recoveries, outstripped the sophomore rebound figures of Lovellette and Born. He averaged 10.0 points over the 1954-55 route and was travelling at

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JACK PARR
... K-State's Soph Center