Norm Stewart Puts Zip Into Tiger Cage Team

A BIG, blond scoring demon named Norm Stewart has made Missouri the Big Seven bellcow as the Tigers head into defense of their Big Seven tournament championship next Wednesday night at Municipal Auditorium.

With Stewart rocketing along at a 26.2 average through M. U.'s first six games, Sparky Stalcup's gang has been more impressive than any tournament team. Its record won't lift any eyebrows at 4-2, but consider these facts. . . . (1) Only seven points separate Missouri from a perfect 6-0 figure, and (2) Its average margin of victory, 12.5, would have ranked as high as tenth among the nation's college teams last year.

Lose to Big 10 Teams.

Lone losses have been to Indiana, eighteenth ranked in the latest Associated Press poll, 78-81, in Columbia, and to Purdue, 58-62, in Lafayette. Between times, the Tigers have run over South Dakota, Texas Tech, Illinois, and Idaho. M. U. disposed of the latter, 81-57, Monday in its tournament dress rehearsal and thus left more than a week to prepare for its opener against Nebraska.

This will be the leadoff game of the second night of first-round warring. Kansas and Cornell play for the other lower bracket semifinal spot in the nightcap. Colorado and Oklahoma lead off Tuesday's show with Iowa State and Kansas State matched in the second upper bracket tiff. Consolation play will fill Thursday and Friday afternoons with the championship bracket moving to a climax Saturday night, following a third-place play-off between Friday night's semifinal losers.

Stewart's terrific early firing has led a general increase of Tiger averages at almost every point. Center Chuck Denny is 11.2 against a 3.1 figure last season. Eddie Ronsick and Bill Ross also are up. Stewart's backline mate, Lionel Smith, is close with 9.6 compared to a seasonal level of 10.2 last year. So is Forward Redford Reichert at 6.0 against a 7.8 mean last season. Team offense is at 75.6, an increase of 4.1 points a game

dications, however, it appears that Denny, always a willing workhorse who puts out 100 per cent and Stephens, will patch that gap even better than expected. Denny, foul-prone through his first two years, hasnt' drawn five in a game yet.

The backline with Stewart and the versatile Smith is the league's best. Ross, after scoring only eleven points in sixteen games last year, has advanced to the point where Stalcup is mounting three capable forwards. Ronsick and Reichert are the other two. Engelhoff may be a fourth solid hand before the season is far advanced.

May Hurt M. U.

Only two items can hurt the Tigers . . . (1) Defensing a good pivotman of 6-8 or taller, and (2) Lack of enough scoring support around Stewart, especially when he runs into those inevitable cold nights.

Missouri is facing a tournament hoodoo that says no champion repeats. But the Tigers are in the best position to defend since Kansas State's 1951 edition dropped a 90-88 overtime semifinal to Kansas in quest of its second straight.