

M. U. THE CHOICE

Impressive Record of Tigers
Makes Them the Favorite in
Big 7 Cage Tourney.

CLUB IS SPARKY'S BEST

Not Since 1939 Has Missouri
Fielded a Crew With Such
Potential Power.

(This is the first of a series of analyses of team personnel of the clubs which will participate in the annual Big Seven conference tournament. The 4-day affair opens December 27 in Municipal Auditorium.)

TIGER SCOREBOARD.

Record to date—44, Illinois 77; 64, Indiana 61; 97, Iowa 94; 67, Wisconsin 56; 77, Arkansas 58—Won 4, lost 1. Pct. .800.

Returning lettermen (8)—Charles Denny, c; Lloyd Elmore, g; Gary Filbert, g; Lee Fowler, f; Med Park, f; Red Reichert, g; Bob Reiter, c; Norm Stewart, f.

1954 Big Seven Finish—Third, 6-6; all games, 11-10.

Previous Tournament Finishes—1946, seventh; 1947, sixth; 1948, sixth; 1949, first; 1950, seventh; 1951, second; 1952, third; 1953, third. (14 W. 10 L. .583).

Remaining Pre-tournament Schedule—December 23, Houston at Houston. First Round Opponent—Nebraska, 9:45 p. m. December 27.

Barring a defeat of Missouri by Houston Thursday in Houston, the Tigers will come into the ninth annual Big Seven tournament a perceptible favorite. The 4-day extravaganza opens December 27 in Municipal Auditorium.

There is little doubt now that the present Bengal edition is Sparky Stalcup's best in his 9-year tenure at Tigertown. One is obliged to look back fifteen years, in fact, to find a Missouri squad that compares with it. George Edwards had Blaine Currence, Haskell Tison, Clay Cooper, Marty Nash, John Lobziger and Herbie Gregg in those days and won co-championships with them in 1939 and 1940.

M. U.'s known qualities were impressive even before the season started. Its early record is equally imposing. The Tigers won their fourth game in five starts, all from well-regarded opposition, last Wednesday with a 77-58 thumping of Arkansas at Columbia. Previously they chained together three consecutive Big Ten scalps, most prominent of which is Iowa. The Hawkeyes fell, 97-94, at Columbia, as the Bengals established a new single-game scoring high. Indiana was nipped, 64-61, on the front side of the Iowa victory; Wisconsin, 67-56, on the back side.

A Potent Combination.

Stalcup's present club is built of veterans of proven ability and youthful talent of blooming strength. Bob Reiter, the 6-foot, 9-inch center with the sweeping ambidextrous hook, and Med Park, the 201-pound backboard hercules, are playing their fourth seasons—they were good enough to letter as freshmen.

Norma Stewart, who likely will go down as one of the finest

pressure. Only eight men played in the victories over Indiana and Iowa. The Wisconsin and Arkansas decisions were under control all the way and the 44-79 loss to Illinois so wide that tension was removed.

Denny Must Improve.

The second-line problem is unsteady only at the pivot, however. If Reiter is victimized early, or lost altogether on fouls, the Tigers will drop off sharply at that spot. The 6-5½ Denny averaged only 2.6 last year and is not close to Reiter in finesse, rebounding or defense. Behind him are two sophomores, Arnold Kaestner, 6-6½, and Tom Graham, 6-6.

Filbert and Fowler can hold the fort capably behind Stewart and Park. With Elmore sidelined, Stalcup must turn to four other rookies—Truman Blackman, Gary Rust, Eddie Ronsick and Bill Ross—for backline depth.