

Big Seven Quintets Tip Off Pre-Season Tourney Tonight

By JAY SIMON
(Daily Oklahoman Sports Writer)

KANSAS CITY, Dec. 26—The ninth annual Big Seven basketball tournament opens at Municipal Auditorium here Monday night with guest team California apparently having the best chance to lift the championship from conference members since Southern Methodist won the initial meet in 1940.

Coached this season by Pete Newell, who shifted from Michigan State, California has compiled a 7-1 record in pre-tournament action, including 57-44 and 59-45 decisions over Colorado, one of the favorites to win the Big Seven crown.

The Golden Bears, paced by all-America hopeful Bob McKeen, trimmed Ohio State, 74-63 and 54-50, last week while handing the Buckeyes their first defeats of the campaign. Cal's only loss thus far was an 88-77 double-overtime decision to College of Pacific.

Kansas, which seems to have another title contender despite the loss of three regulars from last year's co-champions, enters the four-day mixer with the only unblemished record. The Jayhawks have rushed past Louisiana State, Tulsa and Rice twice while remaining at home and preparing a deep squad of youngsters for the tournament and the league race which begins the following week.

Missouri, claiming three triumphs over Big Ten quintets; Kansas State, winner of its last three starts over major foes, and Colorado, which didn't lose a single man from last year's team which tied Kansas, all must be considered serious challengers along with California and Kansas.

Oklahoma, still seeking its first victory after four starts, and Iowa State and Nebraska, both rebuilding under new coaches, all are capable of springing surprises, but do not figure to contend for the title.

Iowa State, guided by former Colorado A&M coach Bill Stranigan, boasts a 4-1 record, but hasn't beaten a real good team yet. The loss was to Bradley by 12 points.

NEBRASKA, which stands 2-3, riddled Bradley 93-68 at Peoria but in turn lost to Memphis State as well as Iowa and Alabama. The Huskers are coached this season by Jerry Bush, who fashioned winning teams at Toledo before moving into the Big Seven last summer.

Oklahoma, which has bowed to Ohio State, Wisconsin and Baylor twice, tips off the tournament at 8 p. m. Monday against Colorado. The second game Monday night matches Missouri and Nebraska.

The first-round will be completed Tuesday night with Kansas and Iowa State colliding in the opening game and California opposing Kansas State in the other. Semifinals are slated Wednesday night and finals Thursday night. The four first-round losers will play consolation bracket games Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.

After Southern Methodist won the first Big Seven tournament title in 1946 the only guest teams to reach the finals were Oklahoma A&M in 1947 and Minnesota in 1950. Both were beaten by Kansas State in the title match. Last year's guest team, Washington, failed to win a game.

Oklahoma was runnerup to Kansas last year, the Jayhawks winning in the finals, 82-73, for their second title. Kansas State owns three tournament crowns and Missouri and OU one apiece.

Probable Starters

OKLAHOMA	Pos.	COLORADO
6-3 S. Thompson	f	B. Jeangerard 6-3
6-0 Bobby Burr	f	Bob Yardley 6-3
6-3 Fred Muller	c	B. Halderson 6-9
5-10 Lester Lane	g	Tom Harrold 5-11
5-9 Jimmy Peck	g	Chas. Mock 6-0

TIPOFF—8 p. m., Municipal Auditorium, Kansas City.

NEBRASKA	Pos.	MISSOURI
6-2 Stan Matzke	f	Norm Stewart 6-4
6-5 W. Fagler	f	Med Park 6-2
6-5 G. Rentzelman	c	Bob Reiter 6-9
5-10 Duane Buel	g	Lionel Smith 6-1
6-2 Chas. Smith	g	Red. Reichert 6-1

TIPOFF—9:45 p. m.

The Pairings

Here are first-round pairings in bracket order with won-lost records of teams in parentheses:

UPPER BRACKET

8 p. m. Monday—Colorado (3-3) vs. Oklahoma (0-4).
9:45 p. m. Monday—Missouri (4-2) vs. Nebraska (2-3).

LOWER BRACKET

8 p. m. Tuesday—Kansas (4-0) vs. Iowa State (4-1).
9:45 p. m. Tuesday—California (7-1) vs. Kansas State (3-2).