

Mizzou Choice for Meet Crown

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KU, Cats Finally Take Back Seat

FOR the first time in five years neither of the Sunflower powers, KU or Kansas State, will be favored to carry off the Big Seven tournament championship when conference squads converge on Kansas City's Municipal auditorium December 27-30.

Not that the Jayhawkers and Wildcats, who have split the last four tourney titles, will be soft touches. Kansas, in fact, went into the week-end series against Rice at Lawrence, undefeated in two starts. Kansas State was accorded a good chance of leveling its seasonal mark at 2-2 against Washington in Manhattan Saturday night.

The Jayhawks dismantled LSU, 83-58, in their opener, then wrought a mild surprise by outlasting Tulsa, 73-66, in their second start. The Golden Hurricane had come into that one unbeaten in four games. K-State rebounded from road

losses to UCLA and Arizona with a 70-50 lathering of towering Wyoming in the Purple's first home start.

But these are ordinary feats in the face of recent Missouri achievements. The Tigers, mounting the best team in Sparky Stalcup's 8-year tenure, absorbed a fearful 77-49 wallop at the hands of Illinois in their opener, but since have vaulted high among the nation's elite. And for good reason. They knocked down Indiana, 63-60, two nights after the clubbing at Urbana. They followed with a 91-94 win over Iowa's Big Ten favorites at Columbia. This was garnished with a 67-56 win over another Western conference foe, Wisconsin, and a 77-58 victory over Arkansas, thus mounting a 4-1 level thru the early going.

MU is riding sixth in the

latest AP poll and ninth in the UP.

STALCUP'S CLUB is built on solid veterans of proven brilliance. Two of these, Bob Reiter, 6-9 center, and Med Park, 6-2, 201-pound forward, are playing their fourth seasons. The other regulars are Norm Stewart, strapping 6-4 junior forward who ranked with Kansas' Dallas Dobbs as the loop's finest sophomore last season; Red Reichert, lettered junior, and Lionel Smith, talented 6-1½ sophomore, who man the backline.

Previous to the Arkansas game Wednesday, Stewart, Reiter, Park, and Reichert were traveling among the top 15 scorers of tournament entries . . . this includes California, the 1954 guest team . . . thus giving Bengals more men in this select circle than any other club.

Stewart took a 16.5 average into the Porker affair, good enough for fourth place on the composite listings. Reiter was tenth of a 13.9 mean; Park and Reichert tied for eleventh at 12.3. This is an impressive listing. Furthermore, Stalcup's teams always play stoutly on defense—they have won four Big Seven team defense titles since Sparky assumed command in 1947—and are wicked off the backboards.

Colorado and California both are regarded as better than the two Kansas schools at this writing. How good both might be likely will be reflected from analysis of their week-end series at Berkeley.

MU and CU are clustered in the tourney's upper bracket which means, of course, that only one of them can reach the finals. Only one of the Sun-

flower entries can make the king row too, since they are grouped in the lower bracket. K-State meets Cal in the final first-round game December 28, and the Bears could make their mark right there. Could be they will eliminate both Kansas clubs. The Jayhawkers meet Iowa State in the first lower bracket game and will be favored to win that one.

ABSENCE of a Sunflower champion or finalist will furnish a strange sight indeed. The Jayhawks won last year and in '51, with State interspersing championships in 1952 and 1950. Fact is, the Jays and Cats have captured all but three of the previous eight titles between them.

The Purple won its first crown in 1947. And Kansas has been thrice a runner-up. This means those two teams have filled 50 per cent of the finalists' berths since the meet's inception in 1946, and snared 63 per cent of the championships.