

# Baylor may surprise despite absence from rankings

By Dennis Onnen

Looking at the national rankings, one might think the Huskers will have an easy romp over Baylor today. Five Southwest Conference teams are rated in the Associated Press Top 20 (Texas A&M, sixth; Texas Tech, seventh; Texas, ninth; Arkansas, 16th; Houston, 19th), apparently making Baylor at best sixth in its league.

But first appearances can be deceiving. The Bears, now 1-1, returned 10 starters and 27 lettermen from last year's 7-3-1 team, including leading rusher Gary Blair and the top four receivers.

Although the Bears dropped their first game to Texas Tech, 17-7, they earned the respect of Tech quarterback Rodney Allison, who said, "The Baylor defense hit as hard as any team I've played against." Supposedly that includes Nebraska's defense in last year's Astro-Bluebonnet Bowl.

Then, Baylor bounced back last week to down 16th-ranked Kentucky, 21-6. In that game, the Bears showed their ability to cash in on an opponent's mistakes. Blair scored the first touchdown after a fumble recovery on the Kentucky three-yard line. The Bears began their second scoring drive on the 12 after the ball sailed over the head of the Kentucky punter, and the final tally came on Mike Singletary's 12-yard return of a blocked punt.

Injuries at quarterback seem to be plaguing Baylor as much as Nebraska. Sammy Bickham started the first game, but he played only sparingly last week with a dislocated finger. Freshman Scott Smith started last week but left with a dislocated shoulder. Thus, Greg Wood should start today despite just recovering from a sprained ankle.

With quarterback so uncertain, the Bears have relied

mainly on their running game. Blair led the team with 857 yards last year, the third best total in school history. Fullback Steve Howell had the best average on the team last year, gaining 5.7 yards a carry.

If the Bears decide to throw the ball, they have two good receivers in Tommy Davidson, who caught 45 passes last year, and All-Southwest Conference tight end Ronnie Lee.

On defense, the Bears received a blow when All-American noseguard Gary Don Johnson suffered knee ligament damage against Texas Tech. He underwent surgery Tuesday and will not play today. Despite his absence, the defense has been tough, allowing 289 yards in total offense a game. The secondary, led by All-Southwest Conference safety Ron Burns, has been especially effective, giving up only 49 passing yards a game.



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