

Big 12 Notebook

The Oklahoma State football team was dealt a serious blow Friday when the Cowboys lost several players — including three probable starters — due to academic ineligibility.

Included in the group is senior running back Andre Richardson, who has rushed for more than 2,000 yards in his first three seasons as a Cowboy.

Other starters lost were sophomore linebacker Raymond Cato, who was the team-leading tackler in 1996, and sophomore defensive back Alvin Porter.

"It hurts to lose guys that can contribute to the team like they can," said Bob Simmons, OSU coach. Simmons refused to comment about whether or not the team was appealing the suspensions.

With less than a week to go before Baylor's season opener Saturday night against Miami, the Bears still have to name a starting quarterback.

First-year coach Dave Roberts must decide between senior Jeff Watson, junior Jermaine Alfred and redshirt freshman Odell James.

"It's a heck of a situation we have," said Baylor Coach Dave Roberts. "We've got a guy with one hurt knee (Alfred), a guy who got in trouble in the spring (Watson), and a guy who really doesn't know the offense (James). It's a tough choice."

Missouri Coach Larry Smith dismisses the notion that his team will be one-dimensional on offense and stick primarily to running the football this season.

"We can pass the ball, I don't care what anyone says," Smith said. "We're out to prove that we can be a balanced football team and that we can do more than just plow the ball up the field."

Last year, Missouri was ninth in the nation in rushing the football at 250.7 yards per game. However, they were 101st in the nation in passing yardage with a paltry 127.5 yards per game — just one spot behind Nebraska.

Oklahoma kicked off the Big 12 season with a 24-0 loss to Northwestern in the Pigskin Classic in Chicago. Oklahoma turned over the ball four times and missed two field goals in the first half before the Wildcats broke open the game in the fourth quarter. Sophomore running back Demond Parker led OU with 78 yards on 17 carries.

This week's Big 12 schedule

UAB at Kansas (Thursday)
Miami at Baylor
Oklahoma State at Iowa State
Akron at Nebraska
Texas Tech at Tennessee

Big 12 Notebook compiled by staff reporter Sam McKewon.

Redshirts rear up for new season

Hot recruits from 1996 prepare for new positions; but injuries, career choices keep some off the field.

BY ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Reporter

Two of the biggest names from the 1996 Nebraska football recruiting class, freshmen quarterbacks Eric Crouch and Bobby Newcombe, chose different ways to start their NU careers.

Newcombe decided not to redshirt this season and will be the No. 3 quarterback behind senior starter Scott Frost and sophomore Frankie London. Junior quarterback Monte Christo is injured.

NU Coach Tom Osborne said Newcombe, a Parade All-American, will see significant

playing time, but not all of it under center.

"Newcombe, right now, will be on our No. 1 punt return team and our No. 1 kickoff return team," Osborne said. "He's prepared to play a little receiver, if necessary, although he's a quarterback."

The decision not to redshirt Newcombe came mostly from his play on special teams, Nebraska quarterbacks coach Turner Gill said.

While Newcombe is returning kicks for the Huskers, Crouch will be watching from the stands. Crouch, who has been slowed this season by tendonitis in the knee that he injured last track season as a senior at Millard North High School in Omaha, will redshirt this season.

Another true freshman will see playing time in the Nebraska backfield. Correll Buckhalter is listed as the No. 2 I-back, with injuries sidelining sophomore DeAngelo

Evans, freshman Dan Alexander and senior Jay Sims. Evans and Alexander are expected to return later this season.

Buckhalter, who is NU's first scholarship athlete from Mississippi, is also the other No. 1 kickoff and punt return man for NU.

"Buckhalter might have redshirted had it not been for injuries," Osborne said.

The last true freshman on the offense will be split end Matt Davison. Davison, from Tecumseh, is listed at third on the depth chart behind Kenny Cheatham and Jeff Lake.

For the defense, two true freshmen and one junior college transfer will forego their redshirt season. In the Husker secondary, Brandon Harrison, a transfer from Blinn College in Gainesville, Texas, is listed second on the depth chart behind sophomore Jerome Peterson at left cornerback. Erwin Swiney will see playing time at right cor-

nerback, backing up returning sophomore starter Ralph Brown.

Kyle Vanden Bosch is listed as the No. 3 left rush end behind Chad Kelsay and Mike Rucker. Vanden Bosch has impressed coaches all through fall camp and has proved he has the physical ability to play.

True freshman Joe Walker also will not redshirt. He did, however, play spring football for Nebraska. Walker will see time in the Husker secondary and is listed as the No. 2 rover behind sophomore Mike Brown.

NOTE:

Freshman I-back Dan Alexander went in early from practice with a possible injury to his foot. Osborne said it was a sprained toe. Freshman fullback Willie Miller and sophomore Ben Kingston returned to practice Monday. Miller has not been cleared to play in a game.

Teams build momentum in early season

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Staff Reporter

Many college coaches often talk about the importance of conference football victories for a successful season, but often a team's momentum is either won or lost in September during non-conference games.

The 1996 season served as a prime example for the Big 12. Both Nebraska and Colorado lost to Arizona State and Michigan, respectively, dashing their national-title hopes. Texas dropped two games to Notre Dame and Virginia. Texas A&M suffered the worst, losing to BYU and Southwestern Louisiana to start the season 0-2, and thus, not receiving a bowl invitation.

"We're never certain how the non-conference is going to play out in any given year," Texas Coach John Mackovic said. "Schedules are usually made so far in advance, we don't know what the schedule going to look like."

Nebraska has some non-conference opponents scheduled through the year 2000.

Scheduling of those non-conference opponents has helped, and hurt, certain Big 12 teams.

Kansas State has probably benefited the most in recent years from its non-conference schedule. While playing teams considered to be in the lower half of the 240 teams in Division 1-A and even some Division 1-AA teams, the Wildcats have won 18 of their last 19 non-conference contests. Those early season victories have helped send the Wildcats to four straight bowl games.

Missouri Coach Larry Smith said he was impressed with the

Please see MOMENTUM on 8



MATT MILLER/DN

SENIOR NORA SHEPHERD has risen as a high school stand-out from York to become captain of the women's cross country team. The Huskers next home meet is Sept. 20.

CC athlete knows adversity

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Staff Reporter

When it comes to facing adversity, senior women's cross country runner Nora Shepherd has had plenty of practice.

Shepherd fights a daily battle with asthma, and last year she had to overcome nagging injuries to now be in position for her final campaign at NU — one in which she will be the captain.

"Everything that happened to me last year gave me a lot of perspective on my career," Shepherd said. "I'm really excited to go into this season because I know what it feels like to run at the end of the back of the race."

Shepherd appeared to be headed toward her best season as a junior when she injured herself before the Big 12 Conference Meet, when she slipped on snow during practice and pulled her hamstring.

"It really was a crazy type of thing," said Jay Dirksen, Nebraska

cross country coach. "It was an early snowstorm and Nora had a little bit of bad luck, but it bothered her all the way through the season."

With the injury and asthma, Shepherd said her junior year turned out to be one of the hardest she has had to face.

"It got to be tough as the year went on because I had to deal with an injury that wouldn't go away," Shepherd said. "I'd have to finish races almost crawling over the finish line sometimes."

If the injury wasn't enough, Shepherd has to deal with asthma during practices and races.

Dirksen said it was harder for Shepherd at the beginning of the year, then at the end because of the lower pollen count.

The asthma can have a drastic effect on Shepherd during practices and races, she said. At times it caused her to lag far behind her teammates in practice.

"I'll be miles behind sometimes," she said, "but it's just something I have to deal with. I've had to learn to overcome it most of the

time, although I know it's always going to be around me."

Despite that stumbling block, Shepherd figures to lead her team to its best ranking ever.

"We've got a team that is really strong," she said. "On any given day, any of us can get up there in the top five runners on the team. We want to be in the top 10 in the nation."

A big part of the team's success this season will be attributable to Shepherd's leadership and experience, which Dirksen said is valuable to the younger runners.

"Many young runners come in, and they don't know what it means to have an injury," he said. "Nora has overcome so much adversity that she's going to be able to bring the team through problems."

Shepherd also said that experiences from the 1996 season will be important for her team as well.

"When they're dying out there, I'll know exactly how it feels," she said. "I can tell them not to worry and bear down, because I've been there."