

# Opener key in Big 12

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Staff writer

Big 12



Football coaches will say there is nothing more important than the first game of the season. The first game "sets the tone" for the whole year.

Many strategies are involved in scheduling the first game of the season. Some teams will schedule big names for national exposure. Other teams try to schedule teams that haven't been all that successful.

Blake  
What the coaches can't seem to agree upon is what is best for their teams.

Over the last two years in the Big 12 Conference, Baylor and Colorado have scheduled big-name opponents. Last year, both teams played Michigan, which won a share of the national championship. This year, Baylor has the opening week off. Colorado, on the other hand, starts with a game against Colorado State, which is ranked 17th in the Associated Press poll.

The game is on national television, which Colorado Coach Rick Neuheisel said helps the program stay profitable. "I like the pomp and circumstance that goes with those kind of games," Neuheisel said. "But we have to have the television revenue from those games to keep this thing afloat."

The opposite of that scheduling philosophy has been used for the last sever-

al years by Kansas State. Last year, KSU outscored Northern Illinois, Ohio University and Bowling Green 128-27. This year, the Wildcats' non-conference teams combined for an 8-26 record in 1997. That includes another game against Northern Illinois, which was 0-11 last year.

Oklahoma Coach John Blake said he doesn't like to play that kind of non-conference schedule, but he said it is important to have a good first game. This year, OU starts the season Sept. 5 against North Texas.

"We have to get off to a good start, especially if you have a young team," Blake said. "You like to start with a team you have a chance to win against in case there are some wrinkles."

Some coaches don't have a chance to have any input at all into their teams' schedules. That holds true for first- and second-year coaches. Texas, with new Coach Mack Brown, traditionally has not started with a big-name opponent.

This season, the Longhorns start with New Mexico State, but then play at UCLA and at Kansas State in back-to-back weeks. Brown said strength of schedule is important with the new Bowl Championship Series, which determines the national champion and participants in major bowl games.

"We don't want to overload the schedule since there are so many quality teams in the Big 12," Brown said. "But there has to be one national game out of conference since the new format is putting emphasis on strength of sched-

## First games for Big 12 Conference teams

Baylor at Oregon St.	Sept. 12
Colorado vs. Colorado St.	Sept. 5
Kansas vs. Oklahoma St.	Sept. 5
Kansas St. vs. Indiana St.	Sept. 5
Iowa St. vs. TCU	Sept. 5
Missouri vs. Bowling Green	Sept. 5
Nebraska vs. Louisiana Tech	Aug. 29
Oklahoma St. at Kansas	Sept. 5
Texas vs. New Mexico St.	Sept. 5
Texas A&M vs. Florida St.	Aug. 31
Texas Tech vs. Texas El-Paso	Sept. 5

■ at Denver, Colo.  
● at East Meadowlands, N.J.

ule." Another way to schedule is to start with a conference game. The first Big 12 game was a conference opener on Aug. 31, 1996. Kansas State and Texas Tech played then, and Kansas and Oklahoma State match up in their opening games this year.

Kansas Coach Terry Allen said the game can only help his young Jayhawk team.

"If we were further along with our program, we would obviously want to start with a non-conference opponent," Allen said. "With our problems with depth, we would like to take our best team into conference play."

Almost every coach in the conference seems to have an opinion on how he wants his team's schedule to look. The list doesn't include Texas Tech Coach Spike Dykes, who would rather let the athletic department handle it.

"I'm just a coach, and we just play whoever is scheduled," Dykes said. "There are a lot of ways to skin a cat, but you have to do what's best for your team."

# Meendering steps up

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impressed her teammates immediately.

"You haven't heard about her now, but you're pretty much going to be writing about her for the next couple of years," Nepo said of Meendering.

"She's just a stud. She hits the ball harder than anybody I've ever seen, and I've played with the national team. Our girl pretty much puts it down."

Nebraska Coach Terry Pettit said the Huskers need Meendering's power at the net to lessen the loss of Reitsma.

Pettit also wants Meendering to develop into the reliable back court player Reitsma was while at Nebraska. Meendering recorded 17 digs in limited back row action last season.

"The right side position at Nebraska has always been a go-to player," Pettit said. "It's always

been a dynamic attacker at that position.

"Nancy may be the most physical player we've ever had. She's a great jumper, she's real fast-twitch. She's 6-2, but she plays a couple inches taller than that. She just hits the daylights out of the ball."

Her strong arm, Meendering said, results from years of swimming competitively, which is about the only thing Meendering can think of that Reitsma didn't do before her.

But Meendering doesn't mind the comparisons to Reitsma. She hopes to add new ones to the already long list.

"I wasn't ever a prom queen like her," Meendering joked. "It is kind of weird. A lot of people tell me, 'everything she's done, you've done.' But I guess ever since my freshman year of high school, I've always wanted to be like her. To be able to be like her is an honor."

# Yankees now stand 94-34

NEW YORK (AP) — Garrett Anderson tied the score with a two-run homer in the seventh and Gary DiSarcina hit a go-ahead, two-run double later in the inning to lead the Anaheim Angels over the New York Yankees 7-3 Monday night.

AL West-leading Anaheim, which could play the Yankees in the first round of the playoffs, holds a 4-3 advantage over New York this year — the only team the Yankees don't lead in the season series.

Anderson's 13th homer tied it at 2 one out after Tim Salmon's lead-off double in the seventh against Andy Pettitte (14-8).

Troy Glaus singled, Phil Nevin doubled off the glove of third baseman Scott Brosius and DiSarcina's double put Anaheim ahead 4-2.

Jack McDowell (3-2) won his second straight start since coming off the disabled list, allowing two runs and six hits in seven innings.

# Buckhalter replaces Evans

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expecting him to make a speedy comeback.

"It was a slight tear," Solich said. "When they did close it up, apparently there was no bleeding, so that was a good sign. I talked to DeAngelo and he said he had no swelling in it, which would mean he should have a fairly quick recovery."

Evans was awarded a medical hardship last season after sitting out with a pelvic injury he suffered during the 1996 season.

Before his injury, the 5-9, 210-pounder ran for 791 yards on 148 carries as a true freshman.

Though Evans' injury this season presents a hole in the depth chart, NU received help at I-back Monday when Dan White joined the team.

White, who is recovering from surgery after an abdominal injury, was not one of the 105 players that reported to camp earlier. Monday was the first day more than 105 players could report.

"We are practicing him and hope that if he shows signs of executing the offense very well this week, he could be a guy that is involved in the game," Solich said.

Freshman I-back Dahrran Diedrick, who joined the Huskers last winter, will likely redshirt this season, Solich said. Of course, that depends on both White's and Evans' progress.

When Evans returns, he likely will be moved back into the starting spot, Gillespie said.

"Our philosophy has always been around here that if you're the starter when you get hurt, you're the starter when you come back," Gillespie said. "I would assume that's how we'll handle it."

For now, Buckhalter will start — a duty he said he is ready to assume.

"I don't think I'll be that nervous," Buckhalter said. "I feel that I'm going to go out there with a positive mind state and just go out there pumped up for the game."

Notes:  
Though Nebraska Coach Frank Solich said Monday that most of the freshmen still have a chance to see playing time this season, two players

stood out in his mind.

Solich said both cornerback Keyuo Craver and defensive lineman Jason Lohr will not redshirt this season.

The decision to play Craver came as no surprise to junior cornerback Ralph Brown.

"The first time I saw him on the field, I knew he was going to be great," Brown said. "I sat him down and told him, 'I'm going to help you, and you're going to play on this field this year.'"

Also in the secondary, junior Mike Brown will move to free safety to fill in for an injured Clint Finley.

Sophomore Joe Walker likely will start at rover in place of Mike Brown.

"We feel comfortable with Mike knowing our defense and being a guy that can direct people from the free safety spot," Solich said. "Certainly, we'll miss Clint, but Mike is the kind of player that can play a number of positions for you and play extremely well."

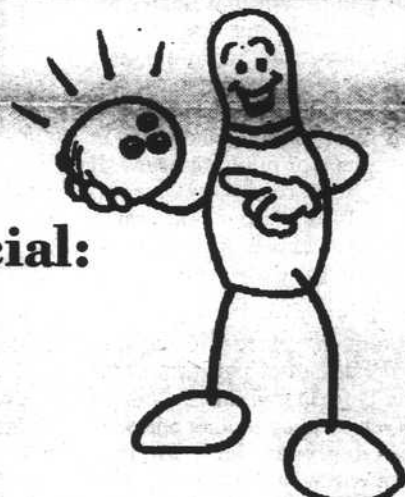
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