

Sports

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Big 12 Notebook

Throughout the three years of the Big 12 Conference, some have grumbled the four teams from the old Southwestern Conference have brought down the Big 12. Those critics may be silenced after this weekend.

The four SWC teams did a number on the former Big Eight teams they played Saturday. That number was 4-0. Texas, Baylor, Texas Tech and Texas A&M all beat their former Big Eight counterparts. Those victories were highlighted by Texas A&M's 28-21 upset of then-No. 2 Nebraska.

One of those former Big Eight teams that lost Saturday was Kansas. The Jayhawks gave up 17 unanswered points in the fourth quarter to Baylor in a 31-24 loss. KU is now 0-4 in the conference this season. In all four games, Kansas has been in position to win late in the game.

"It was a very frustrating loss for us on Saturday," Kansas Coach Terry Allen said. "In all four Big 12 games we have been in the game in the fourth quarter and have not been able to put the game away."

The Big 12 has more teams ranked in The Associated Press top 25 this week than any other conference. After a 6-0 start, Texas Tech became the sixth ranked team.

The conference with the second-most ranked teams is the Southeastern Conference with five.

"There is no question in my mind (the Big 12) is the best conference in college football," Iowa State Coach Dan McCarney said.

Junior Brandon Daniels was named the starting quarterback at Oklahoma at the beginning of the season. But at any given time this season, you won't see Daniels behind center. Five players have played quarterback in the Sooners' six games.

"Our quarterback situation is really tough right now," OU Coach John Blake said. "There has just been an inconsistency in execution."

Missouri is having a lot of offensive success so far this season. MU running back Devin West has rushed for 1,210 yards, and quarterback Corby Jones has been rushing and passing the ball effectively.

But Smith said the success can be attributed to the offensive line.

"The whole key to what we do is how those guys play," Smith said. "It is not two individuals in the backfield that are making the difference."

The No. 23 Baylor soccer team upset No. 18 Texas A&M 2-0 on Friday. The Aggies, who are the defending Big 12 champions, have now lost two straight conference games. The win was Baylor goalkeeper Dawn Greathouse's fifth shutout this season.

Big 12 Notebook compiled by staff writer Jay Saunders

NU returns to power rushing game



NEBRASKA I-BACK DeAngelo Evans looks for daylight on running plays this season. In the past two games, the Huskers have had trouble rushing the football, gaining only 71 and 141 yards against Oklahoma State and Texas A&M, respectively.

By SAM MCKEWN
Senior editor

These are not the salad days of the Nebraska running game.

In two consecutive weeks, the Cornhuskers' option attack, considered one of the finest rushing schemes in college football, has been ground to a near halt.

In a 24-17 win over Oklahoma State, NU rushed for 71 total yards. Texas A&M held the Huskers (5-1 overall and 1-1 in the Big 12 Conference) to 141 yards in winning 28-21 last Saturday. They had only 58 yards through three quarters.

Now, after six games, Nebraska averages 237.8 yards rushing. Not a bad number, to be sure — it still ranks No. 11 in the nation. But it's 154.6 yards below last year's 392.7-yard average last season and 51 yards less than the 287.9 average in 1993 — the lowest average in 20 years.

Kansas, a 2-4 team with a problem stopping the run, presents an opportunity for the Huskers to get the ground game back on track.

A little more blood, sweat and tears wouldn't hurt

the cause. "Looking back at it, we beat ourselves," offensive guard Ben Gessford said. "Texas A&M gave a better total effort over four quarters and for the whole ball game. We didn't give a total effort."

Beyond effort, both Husker players and coaches agree that the Huskers must return to their roots to be more successful rushing the football. A return to the roots means a return to the power rushing game.

After practice Monday, Head Coach Frank Solich said NU ran too many options against Texas A&M.

"We've got to get back the power game," Solich said. "We ran more options than we would have liked to against Texas A&M because we haven't been very productive in the power game. That's an area that has to improve a great deal."

The power game consists of the inside plays the Huskers have made a living off of in the past: isolations up the middle, fullback dives and other counter and trap plays. Sophomore I-back Correll Buckhalter said not only is Nebraska at its best running straight at teams, but it's the style he prefers to the option game.

"We've got to open that power game," Buckhalter said. "We're getting back to good old Nebraska football where we just line up and run straight at people."

"We have got to get back the power game. That's an area that has to improve a great deal."

FRANK SOLICH
Nebraska head football coach

Another problem Gessford said the Huskers had was a false sense of security concerning the offensive line. Much of it stemmed from a 55-7 win over then-No. 8 Washington, when NU rushed for 434 yards.

"That was a bad win for us," Gessford said. "We thought after that we could just show and we'd win."

For Buckhalter, motivation is not a concern for the offense Saturday when playing KU.

"I speak for the running backs and entire offense. I think, when I say we're going out there to run that ball," Buckhalter said. "We just want to move the ball."

Red Raiders emerge as Big 12 powerhouse

By SAM MCKEWN
Senior editor

Who in the heck is Texas Tech?

After a 24-17 victory over Oklahoma State Saturday, the Red Raiders are now 6-0 for the season and 3-0 in the Big 12 Conference. Hell, they've already qualified for a bowl game.



Dykes

teams in the Big 12 are starting to stand

up and take notice.

"I think they've done a great job down there," Oklahoma Coach John Blake said. "They've had some good breaks and they've just played hard."

At the beginning of the season, Texas Tech was picked to finish fourth in the Big 12 South Division. Tech Coach Spike Dykes said that pick is typical of what people think of the Red Raider program.

"We're usually picked fifth, so we're used to that," Dykes said. "We're still going to have work like crazy to finish fourth."

So far, Tech has won games in almost every which way this season. The Red Raiders shut down their first two opponents, holding North Texas and UTEP to three points combined.

Since then, the offense has come alive to score more than 24 points in the last four contests.

Against OSU, Tech got a blocked punt and fumble returned for a touchdown for the win.

The one consistent element for Texas Tech has been sophomore running back Ricky Williams. Williams, who trails only Texas' Ricky Williams for the nation's rushing lead, has 1,026 yards this season on 194 carries, scoring 10 touchdowns.

Williams had 97 yards against OSU, 26 more yards than Nebraska had in an entire game against the Cowboys.

Colorado Coach Rick Neuheisel, whose Buffaloes play Texas Tech Saturday, said Williams compares favorably to the nation's best backs.

"In the amount of time I have been watching him, he is an exceptional back," Neuheisel said. "He is certainly gifted with great balance and great vision."

Another element of the Red Raiders' success lies in the quarterback position, where Rob Peters returned to the starting role after back-up Matt Tittle led Texas Tech to four victories while Peters was injured.

Dykes said the Red Raiders have received solid play from the quarterbacks, although Peters has had some problems as the starter again.

"It was a lot harder for Rob to come in off the bench," Dykes said. "He had a good game last week and I think he kind of expected it to happen again."