

## BIG 12 NOTEBOOK

The Big 12 game of the week comes on Wednesday, when Iowa State plays at Missouri in a battle for first place in the league. Both teams are in a three-way tie with Oklahoma State which has a 7-1 record in conference play.

Missouri will be trying to avenge an earlier loss to the Cyclones in Ames. That loss, Mizzou's latest, came before the Tigers' seven-straight conference wins.

Looking to shake his team up after an out-of-conference loss to Iowa, Kansas Coach Roy Williams pulled a nearly unprecedented move

for himself and Jayhawks' basketball by starting three freshmen, Nick Collison, Drew Gooden and Kirk Hinrich in Kansas' 87-62 win against Texas Tech.

It was the first time Williams has ever made such a move at KU, and the last time it happened at Kansas was March 5, 1983 when Ted Owens was still coaching.

Oklahoma's Eduardo Najera nabbed Big 12 player of the week. His rugged post play had the center averaging 19 points and 16 boards in wins against Baylor and Texas. Najera got his 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> double doubles of

the season.

Mizzou freshman Kareem Rush got the Big 12 rookie of the week award, averaging 18 points on 60.9 percent shooting. His 21 points against Nebraska were season and career highs, and Rush helped keep the Tigers in the game while stars Keyon Dooling and Clarence Gilbert struggled.

With Texas' 68-57 win over Massachusetts on Saturday, the Big 12 completed its non-conference

schedule for this year.

The results come in with a respectable 106-40 overall win-loss record, but Big 12 teams went only 4-10 against non-conference opponents ranked in the top 25, which is barely a 29 percent clip, and a number that could weigh against the conference when NCAA tournament selection come up.

About the Big Dance ... six teams (Kansas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Iowa State, Texas and Missouri) are expected to get in right now, provided they don't beat up on each other too much in Big 12 play. However, many of these coaches have stated that they are trying not to look too far past potential spoilers

Colorado and Nebraska.

### Quotable:

Baylor Coach Dave Bliss on his team's 64.9 percent free-throw shooting: "We're working really hard on our free-throw shooting ... though it sure doesn't look like it."

On how to improve free-throw shooting in the Big 12, where only two teams shoot above 70 percent:

"We'll start shooting better when we start recruiting better shooters."

**Big 12 notebook compiled by staff writer Trevor Johnson**

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