

Big XII Notebook

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doesn't border on revenge," Snyder said. "We want to win the game for all the obvious reasons."

Iowa State and Texas Tech must now play the waiting game after closing out their regular seasons on Saturday. Both are bowl-eligible but most likely won't find out their destinations until after the conference championship on Dec. 2.

Texas Tech Coach Mike Leach said that while he is extremely pleased with going 7-5 in his first campaign and becoming bowl eligible, his team could have been better.

"We had some missed opportunities this year," said Leach, referring to close losses to Texas A&M, Texas, Kansas State and Oklahoma. "There are at least four games that we would like to have over."

Leach received a one-year contract extension last week for his efforts this season.

Baylor Coach Kevin Steele, who also received a recent contract extension, said being scared is one way to cure losing - something the Bears have done a lot of lately.

"Fear is good as long as it doesn't turn into panic," he said.

In other BU matters, Steele said, he would like to know the NCAA ruling on a medical red-shirt for quarterback Greg Cicero as soon as possible. Cicero, a junior college transfer, broke his collarbone against Minnesota in Baylor's second

game and the Bear offense struggled mightily without him. "We would like to know for recruiting," Steele said. "There is a big difference in having your quarterback for one or two years."

College football lovers will have plenty to be excited about besides leftover turkey and stuffing the day after Thanksgiving with two Big 12 rivalries back to back.

Nebraska and Colorado play at 11 a.m., and Texas and Texas A&M will kick off at 2:30 p.m. in a game that marks the first anniversary of the bonfire tragedy at A&M.

"It's Nebraska week," CU Coach Gary Barnett said. "That's all you have to say to get excited around here."

Oklahoma State quarterback Aso Pogi helped send Cowboy Coach Bob Simmons out a winner as OSU beat Baylor 50-22. Pogi was named the Big 12 Offensive Player of the Week for his efforts after rushing for four touchdowns and passing for another.

Kansas State swept the defensive and special teams conference awards this week with defensive end Chris Johnson and wide receiver Aaron Lockett getting the honors.

Johnson forced a crucial fumble and had four sacks in a four-point win at Mizzou, while Lockett had 59 yards total on two punt returns.

Compiled by Joshua Camenzind

Aggies, Longhorns battle for Texas pride

BY SAMUEL MCKEWIN

Texas A&M Coach R.C. Slocum and Texas Coach Mack Brown are in lockstep agreement on Friday's 2:30 p.m. Aggies-Longhorns clash, often a Thanksgiving tradition.

It's Lone Star-state big, and despite neither team representing Big 12 South Division in the Championship game this year, the enormity of the friendly rivalry has not diminished.

"It's a real show for the type of football we play here in Texas," said Brown, who has his UT squad back to No. 12 in The Associated Press polls.

Said a slogan-happy Slocum: "It doesn't get any better than this."

For fans on either side of the game, Slocum's right. UT-A&M doesn't contain the bubbling blood of the Texas-Oklahoma game, but a hard-hitting, pride-filled contest more about celebrating the game in the state. The previous two games were down-to-the-wire, won by the home underdogs and surprise-filled.

In 1998, running back Ricky Williams broke the all-time NCAA rushing record against A&M with a long touchdown run. Then, he made up for a late fumble by playing a key role on a game-winning drive in a 26-24 win.

For Slocum, the emotions of last year's game will be hard to match, as the Aggies overcame a week of tragedy for victory. Twelve A&M students had died earlier that week during the erection of the biannual bonfire for the UT game at home. The Aggies were then playing not only for the tradition of the school but for those that died in its wake.

"There was a feeling that we had to come away with a win," Slocum said. "I felt a tremendous obligation."

And despite having been pummeled by Nebraska and Oklahoma in recent weeks, A&M, behind a good day from Ja'Mar Toombs, pulled out a 20-16 win.

"It did have an uplifting effect to it," Slocum said. This matchup has no such implications, though the winner would be assured a better bowl spot. The Aggies could land in the Cotton Bowl with a victory, whereas a loss almost assures they drop to the Insight.com Bowl. UT is not expected to make a third consecutive trip to Dallas but has an outside shot at the BCS, and a 9-2 record would look good against a likely top five opponent Oregon State in the Holiday Bowl.

But the Longhorns have uncertainty at quarterback, as they have most of the season, while Major Applewhite practices with injury. The same process occurred last year, and while Chris Simms started that game, he was eventually replaced by Applewhite in the loss.

Brown said Applewhite may or may not play in the contest Saturday and that practices later in the week will figure heavily into the equation.

"We think it's real lucky to get through the season with one quarterback," Brown said. "That's why we've played two this season."

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Mack Brown
Texas coach

Truth told, media bears bad news

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standards as one week, the idea of football is simply too complicated for the basic sportswriter to comprehend. The next, say after the Kansas State loss, the sport has been boiled down by both Solich and his players to "a guessing game."

In Nebraska, this double talk is rarely jumped upon because it's akin to playing with fire. Here, because NU is the No. 1 game in the state, the old rules can still apply. A rip is a risk, unless the mistake has the name of Lawrence Phillips.

Many journalists and columnists even openly suggest it would be foolish to question NU outright. Ironically, I have nearly read at times, *Who are we to question them about a game they understand far better?*

Which is unfortunate because football, boiled down, is often the guessing game described above. It's about understandable concepts: blocking and tackling, passing and catching. It's about passion and motivation. If it were so hard to grasp, would it be so popular?

Everyday fans can understand the illogical reasoning behind Solich's decision to ask Eric Crouch to throw long passes downfield and hope for completions when he has a hurt shoulder. Or the hypocrisy that NU has a hard time running option football in bad weather when an entire Husker nation has been told for years that such an offense is supposed to thrive in it.

And yet, Solich was staunchly defended Sunday in a local paper for doing the job minimum: taking blame, winning nine games. A 29-7 record was cited as an affirmation of his ability. Now, really, who among those Husker coaches, and many of the best high school coaches in the state, could not have achieved the same?

That question above is the type of commentary that Smith claimed "buried" his regime at Missouri, the commentary that pointed out his woeful record against top 25 teams or his lack of class during the end of last season.

Smith is right about one thing: The bad stuff doesn't get reported by the in-house marketing staff. A check of Smith's press conference quotes on the MU Web site won't reveal any comments on the media. They must've been down the hall.

I dislike "the media is a watchdog" phrase because personal experience has taught me that sports media members bark at some things, not at others.

And we bang on cheap drums too long. And occasionally, out of fear of reproach, some drums aren't banged at all. As far as I have read, only the Daily Nebraskan has dared to speak an ill word on the Husker I-backs this season.

Still, the media is more reliable than a coach because our self-interest quotient is lower. The truth that Troy State stinks as an opening opponent next season doesn't serve Athletic Director Bill Byrne too well when he announces it.

Nor does the fact that NU must play a dog like that because it refuses to relinquish revenue for a home game sorely needed to feed the ever-growing mouths of indulgent smaller sports entirely dependent on the pigskin.

But it is the truth nonetheless. And it should be reported in some form. And often, the media lives up to its end of that bargain.

Smith's venom on the media showed up in every major Missouri newspaper the next day.

MU's own Web site decided not to print it. That, quite simply, is a textbook example of the First Amendment.

Larry Smith refuses to resign, fired by MU

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Larry Smith remained true to his word, choosing to be fired as Missouri's football coach rather than retire or resign. Athletic Director Mike Alden said Sunday that he gave Smith the option to resign after a 28-24 home loss to Kansas State on Saturday finishing a 3-8 season. It was Missouri's second straight losing season after two consecutive bowl appearances.

Smith, who had three years left on his contract, said after the game that he would not step down. He instead talked optimistically, saying he thought Missouri would have a "great team" next year and discussing recruiting priorities.

Alden met with Smith about 8 p.m. Saturday and informed him he planned to make a change.

In a statement released by the school, Smith said he was given no reasons for the dismissal.

"I am very proud of what our program has accomplished," Smith said. "It appears that what counts to this administration is only winning and losing."

Alden said he would move swiftly to find a new coach, hoping to fill the position in two to three weeks.

Speculation in Columbia has Florida State offensive coach Mark Richt, Texas Christian coach Dennis Franchione and South Florida coach Jim Leavitt at the top of Alden's list.

Smith was 33-46-1 in seven seasons at Missouri. His career record is 143-126-7 in 24 seasons, with previous stops at Tulane, Arizona and Southern California.

Alden listed four reasons why Smith was removed: a losing record, particularly the last two years (7-15); an uncompetitive showing during that period; deficiencies in the personal development of players; and poor recruiting after the two bowl seasons.

Missouri lost all five games it played this year against Top 25 teams. Smith was 1-27 against Top 25 teams while at Missouri.

In 1997, after 13 consecutive losing seasons at Missouri, Smith guided the Tigers to a 7-5 record and the Holiday Bowl, and was honored as Big 12 coach of the year by The Associated Press.

The next season, Missouri beat West Virginia in the Insight.com Bowl, the school's first bowl victory since 1981, and finished 8-4. The consecutive bowl trips were the first for the school since 1980-81, and Smith became one of only four coaches to take four different teams to a bowl.

Noles likely in title game

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Florida State jumped ahead of Miami into second place in the Bowl Championship Series standings, moving the Seminoles a giant step closer to playing in a national title game in the Orange Bowl.

The Seminoles (11-1), who completed their season with a 30-7 victory over then-No. 4 Florida on Saturday night, have a .51-point lead over Miami (9-1) but were well behind first-place Oklahoma in the standings released Monday.

The Hurricanes (9-1), who beat Florida State earlier this season, also won convincingly, defeating unranked Syracuse 26-0. But the eight computer rankings used in the standings to determine who plays in a title game were more impressed with the Seminoles' win.

"This is the way it is. I either make it or I don't," Florida State coach Bobby Bowden said.

For three weeks, Oklahoma, Miami, and Florida State have been ranked 1-2-3 in The Associated Press media poll and USA Today/ESPN coaches' poll.

If Miami fails to get into the BCS title game, the Hurricanes can still become national champions in the AP media poll, in which sports writers and broad-

casters vote independently of the BCS. The coaches' poll would automatically crown the winner of the Orange Bowl.

Though he'd be disappointed if the Hurricanes didn't play in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 3, Miami coach Butch Davis said, "We beat the No. 1 and No. 2 teams (at the time) and two or three others who are bowl eligible. If we end up going 11-1, we'll have beaten someone very good in a BCS game. And you never know how they (writers) can vote."

If Oklahoma (10-0) wins its final two games, against Oklahoma State on Saturday and Kansas State in the Big 12 title game on Dec. 2, Miami would have little chance to overtake Florida State in the final BCS standings Dec. 3.

Miami closes its season on Saturday against Boston College.

"On its own, it doesn't look like there's anything Miami can do to pass Florida State, maybe," said Jerry Palm of Chicago, who operates a Web site that closely monitors the BCS standings.

"Miami's best chance is to either have Oklahoma lose, or have Oklahoma do well enough to regain some No. 1's it lost to Florida State in the computer this week."

NU players say there's much to play for vs. CU

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team will be motivated - mostly by pride.

"This team doesn't want to be known as the team that laid down, but as the team that bounced back against Colorado and in the bowl game coming up," said Alexander, who had 180 yards rushing and three touchdowns against CU last season.

"You want to go out with a bang and make sure that you are remembered and not forgotten."

Walker and fullback Willie Miller expressed their desire to win and look good doing so.

"Everybody wants to go out a winner and go out the right way," Miller said. "That is done by having it not even be close."

Said Walker: "With us not having a good year, that will make us take out our anger on them."

Following NU's first loss of the season to Oklahoma, the Huskers

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Willie Miller
NU fullback

trounced Kansas 56-17 behind 493 yards rushing.

Nebraska's ground game struggled against the Sooners and did again two weeks later in its loss to Kansas State, although NU did move the ball late against the Wildcats. Alexander and Miller said to expect another renewed commitment to the rush.

"I could see that happening - going back to the good old bread and butter and take it to them," Miller said.

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