

BIG 12 SPRING FOOTBALL REVIEW

World-Herald Big 12 beat writer Lee Barfknecht wraps up the conference's spring practice season (in projected order of finish)

NORTH DIVISION



RETURNING STARTERS

17 Offense > 8
Defense > 7
Kickers > 2

COACH > **Mark Mangino**
Eighth year, 45-41

2008 RECORD > Overall: 8-5 > Big 12: 4-4 > North: 3rd

OVERVIEW

The Jayhawks are the trendy pick to win the North Division based on the strength of a veteran, explosive offense. QB **Todd Reesing** and WRs **Dezmon Briscoe**, **Kerry Meier** and **Johnathan Wilson** are premium players, plus TB **Jake Sharp** is a good complement.

WORTH WATCHING

Defensive development. KU lost all three starting LBs and two key DBs. SS **Darrell Stuckey** is first-team All-Big 12, and DT **Jamal Greene** played well late. But Mangino will have to mix and match to piece together a good unit. Even serviceable play, with this offense, can lead to success.

NOTEWORTHY

In the past 30 games, Kansas is 23-7. In the past 16 home games, KU has won 14. ... RT **Jeremiah Hatch** moved to C, while TB **Angus Quigley** moved to LB. ... **Bill Miller** of Louisville was hired as a co-defensive coordinator. ... KU has broken home attendance records four years in a row.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 5	Northern Colorado
Sept. 12	at UTEP
Sept. 19	Duke
Sept. 26	Southern Mississippi
Oct. 10	Iowa State
Oct. 17	at Colorado
Oct. 24	Oklahoma
Oct. 31	at Texas Tech
Nov. 7	at Kansas State
Nov. 14	Nebraska
Nov. 21	at Texas
Nov. 28	*Missouri

* — at Kansas City, Mo.



RETURNING STARTERS

12 Offense > 5
Defense > 6
Kickers > 1

COACH > **Bo Pelini**
Second year, 9-4

2008 RECORD > Overall: 9-4 > Big 12: 5-3 > North: 1st (t)

After the mess Pelini inherited, nine wins was an accomplishment. Yet work remains. The offense must continue to evolve with a new starting QB. Question marks defensively in the back seven weren't solved in the spring. But the physical and emotional progress in 17 months is huge.

The QB situation. Can **Zac Lee** pick up where **Joe Ganz** left off? Can **Latravis Washington** become consistent enough so **Cody Green** can redshirt? Or does the staff want Green to redshirt? Will **Kody Spano** (knee) heal quickly enough to play? Or will newcomer **Taylor Martinez** join the mix?

Alex Henery is the nation's most accurate field-goal kicker the past two seasons. ... The 2008 records of NU's 2009 nonconference foes: Florida Atlantic 7-6, Arkansas State 6-6, Virginia Tech 10-4, UL-Lafayette 6-6. ... NU's sellout streak will hit 300 on Sept. 26 against UL-Lafayette.

Sept. 5	Florida Atlantic
Sept. 12	Arkansas State
Sept. 19	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 26	Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 8	at Missouri
Oct. 17	Texas Tech
Oct. 24	Iowa State
Oct. 31	at Baylor
Nov. 7	Oklahoma
Nov. 14	at Kansas
Nov. 21	Kansas State
Nov. 27	at Colorado



RETURNING STARTERS

10 Offense > 5
Defense > 4
Kickers > 1

COACH > **Gary Pinkel**
Ninth year, 59-41

2008 RECORD > Overall: 10.4 > Big 12: 5-3 > North: 1st (t)

Since January, the Tigers lost both coordinators, their Heisman runner-up QB, two All-America receivers, their best kicker in decades, a DT who was a first-round NFL pick and an All-Big 12 safety. Does that jeopardize Missouri's four-year bowl streak, its longest since 1978 to 1981?

Like it or not, new QBs draw attention. The Tigers are casting their lot with sophomore **Blaine Gabbert**, who originally committed to Nebraska. Gabbert's work as a freshman understudy doesn't compare at all with **Chase Daniel's** at the same stage. So the jury is still out.

TB **Derrick Washington**, slowed the final month last season by a knee problem, had surgery and is back to full speed. ... Notre Dame transfer **Munir Prince** is in the mix at CB. ... The next big playmaker in Missouri's secondary might be sophomore FS **Kenji Jackson**.

Sept. 5	*Illinois
Sept. 12	Bowling Green
Sept. 19	Furman
Sept. 25	at Nevada
Oct. 8	Nebraska
Oct. 17	at Oklahoma State
Oct. 24	Texas
Oct. 31	at Colorado
Nov. 7	Baylor
Nov. 14	at Kansas State
Nov. 21	Iowa State
Nov. 28	#Kansas

* — at St. Louis # — at Kansas City, Mo.



RETURNING STARTERS

17 Offense > 10
Defense > 5
Kickers > 2

COACH > **Dan Hawkins**
Fourth year, 13-24

2008 RECORD > Overall: 5-7 > Big 12: 2-6 > North: 4th (t)

Hawkins told a booster group this spring that he expects 10 wins. How many seasons that takes to achieve is unknown. He hasn't had a winning record in three years, and still has marginal quarterbacking from son **Cody**, a junior, and sophomore **Tyler Hansen**, who broke his thumb in April.

The health of sophomore TBs **Darrell Scott** (knee, overweight) and **Speedy Stewart** (broken leg). If they are full speed, CU would have one of the best RB combos in the league. With a retooled OL, depth problems at WR and uncertain QB play, see if the Buffs try to keep it on the ground.

Offensive coordinator **Mark Helfrich** left at the end of spring ball for the same job at Oregon. Receivers coach **Eric Kiesau** was promoted to fill the opening. ... Senior **Jake Behrens** of Millard North is listed No. 1 at FB. ... CU plays two games on Thursday and two on Friday this season.

Sept. 5	Colorado State
Sept. 11	at Toledo
Sept. 19	Wyoming
Oct. 1	at West Virginia
Oct. 10	at Texas
Oct. 17	Kansas
Oct. 24	at Kansas State
Oct. 31	Missouri
Nov. 7	Texas A&M
Nov. 14	at Iowa State
Nov. 19	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 27	Nebraska



RETURNING STARTERS

17 Offense > 9
Defense > 6
Kickers > 2

COACH > **Paul Rhoads**
First year

2008 RECORD > Overall: 2-10 > Big 12: 0-8 > North: 6th

After going 5-19 with its hire of a hot national assistant (**Gene Chizik**), ISU returned to its roots with Rhoads, who was born 10 minutes from ISU. Rhoads reminds many of former coach-ambassador **Dan McCarney**, for whom he worked from 1995 to 1999. He'll need as much time as Mac.

Much has been made of ISU luring offensive coordinator **Tom Herman** from Rice to install the no-huddle spread. But the Cyclones won't get better soon unless the defense stiffens. Allowing 42 points a game in Big 12 play means all jobs are open.

Iowa State defensive coordinator **Wally Burnham** said he put in only one-fourth of his version of the "Tampa Two" defense this spring. ... Austen Arnaud is still No. 1 at QB, but redshirt freshman **Jerome Tiller** pulled closer. ... Coaches repeatedly cited concerns about team speed.

Sept. 3	North Dakota State
Sept. 12	Iowa
Sept. 19	at Kent State
Sept. 26	Army
Oct. 3	*Kansas State
Oct. 10	at Kansas
Oct. 17	Baylor
Oct. 24	at Nebraska
Oct. 31	at Texas A&M
Nov. 7	Oklahoma State
Nov. 14	Colorado
Nov. 21	at Missouri

* — at Kansas City, Mo.



RETURNING STARTERS

16 Offense > 7
Defense > 8
Kickers > 1

COACH > **Bill Snyder**
*18th year, 136-68-1

2008 RECORD > Overall: 5-7 > Big 12: 2-6 > North: 4th (t)

* — First year back at KSU after retiring for three seasons

This roster is woefully short on Big 12-caliber size, speed and depth. Snyder, who arrived at K-State 20 years ago to take over a messed-up program, said what he has inherited from **Ron Prince** has some similarities to 1989. That's a mouthful. And that means KSU is three or four classes away.

The energy level of Snyder and the patience of KSU fans. Snyder, who turns 70 in October, will need to pull years of his legendary 100-hour weeks to get this thing going again. Can he do it? And will the fans keep repeating "In Bill We Trust" while sinking toward the Big 12 North basement?

Snyder is up to his old scheduling tricks. Kansas State is trying to get out of future games with UCLA, Miami (Fla.), Oregon and Virginia Tech. ... Transfer QBs **Grant Gregory** (South Florida) and **Daniel Thomas** (junior college) are expected to challenge junior **Carson Coffman** in August.

Sept. 5	Massachusetts
Sept. 12	at Louisiana-Lafayette
Sept. 19	at UCLA
Sept. 26	Tennessee Tech
Oct. 3	*Iowa State
Oct. 10	at Texas Tech
Oct. 17	Texas A&M
Oct. 24	Colorado
Oct. 31	at Oklahoma
Nov. 7	Kansas
Nov. 14	Missouri
Nov. 21	at Nebraska

* — at Kansas City, Mo.

SOUTH DIVISION



RETURNING STARTERS

16 Offense > 8
Defense > 6
Kickers > 2

COACH > **Mack Brown**
12th year, 115-26

2008 RECORD > Overall: 12-1 > Big 12: 7-1 > South: 1st (t)

Texas is coming off a 12-1 season and a Fiesta Bowl win, yet is fighting mad. The Horns thought they should have played for the Big 12 and national titles. That unfinished business, in combination with a deep talent pool starting with QB **Colt McCoy**, makes UT a dangerous foe.

The offensive line. This is where Texas has a major edge over Oklahoma. The Longhorns have four quality returners with a combined 83 starts. Having such a strong safety net around McCoy will help reduce his punishment level, and allow the QB run game to continue.

Under first-year defensive coordinator **Will Muschamp**, Texas held all 13 opponents under their season scoring average. ... In 11 career games against Top 10 foes, McCoy has gone 8-3 while completing 71.1 percent of his passes and accounting for 23 TDs (18 passing, five rushing).

Sept. 5	Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 12	at Wyoming
Sept. 19	Texas Tech
Sept. 26	UTEP
Oct. 10	Colorado
Oct. 17	*Oklahoma
Oct. 24	at Missouri
Oct. 31	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 7	Central Florida
Nov. 14	at Baylor
Nov. 21	Kansas
Nov. 26	at Texas A&M

* — at Dallas



RETURNING STARTERS

15 Offense > 5
Defense > 9
Kickers > 1

COACH > **Bob Stoops**
11th year, 109-24

2008 RECORD > Overall: 12-2 > Big 12: 7-1 > South: 1st (t)

What's not to like when the Heisman Trophy winner (QB **Sam Bradford**), an All-America tight end (**Jermaine Gresham**), an All-America tackle (DT **Gerald McCoy**) and an All-Big 12 tackle (OT **Trent Williams**) snub the NFL to return to OU? You couldn't hand-carve better building blocks than these.

The offensive line. Four starters, all invited to the NFL combine, are gone. Highly touted recruit **Jason Hannan** quit after not winning the center job. Two junior college transfers are expected to get long looks, and even some incoming freshmen might have to play.

OU is 60-2 at home under Stoops. The losses were to Oklahoma State in 2001 and TCU in 2005. ... LB **Travis Lewis** broke Brian Bosworth's school record for tackles by a freshman. ... LBs **Ryan Reynolds** and **Austin Box**, who had surgeries, are expected to return.

Sept. 5	*BYU
Sept. 12	Idaho State
Sept. 19	Tulsa
Oct. 3	at Miami (Fla.)
Oct. 10	Baylor
Oct. 17	#Texas
Oct. 24	at Kansas
Oct. 31	Kansas State
Nov. 7	at Nebraska
Nov. 14	Texas A&M
Nov. 21	at Texas Tech
Nov. 28	Oklahoma State

* — at Arlington, Texas # — at Dallas



RETURNING STARTERS

15 Offense > 8
Defense > 6
Kickers > 1

COACH > **Mike Gundy**
Fifth year, 27-23

2008 RECORD > Overall: 9-4 > Big 12: 5-3 > South: 4th

There is a lot to like about OSU — the "Triplets" (QB **Zac Robinson**, TB **Kendall Hunter**, WR **Dez Bryant**); a retooled defense; a schedule with eight home games and leaving the state only three times; plus, completion of the remodeled Pickens Stadium, boosting capacity to 60,000.

The impact of new defensive coordinator **Bill Young**. The former Cowboy player and assistant, in his 100th year of coaching — OK, it's really his 42nd — is the veteran influence needed here. Nine of the top 12 tacklers return, including No. 1 and No. 2 (LBs **Andre Sexton** and **Orie Lemon**).

OSU's Big 12 record under Gundy has gone from 1-7 to 3-5 to 4-4 to 5-3. ... The Cowboys' No. 16 ranking in AP was their highest at season's end since the 1988 team was No. 11. ... Gundy said a Holiday Bowl loss to Oregon proved his team needs to become more physical and run the ball better.

Sept. 5	Georgia
Sept. 12	Houston
Sept. 19	Rice
Sept. 26	Grambling State
Oct. 10	at Texas A&M
Oct. 17	Missouri
Oct. 24	at Baylor
Oct. 31	Texas
Nov. 7	at Iowa State
Nov. 14	Texas Tech
Nov. 19	Colorado
Nov. 28	at Oklahoma



RETURNING STARTERS

20 Offense > 9
Defense > 9
Kickers > 2

COACH > **Art Briles**
second year, 4-8

2008 RECORD > Overall: 4-8 > Big 12: 2-6 > South: 5th

The Bears latched on quickly to Briles' style of football in 2008. Now, with 20 starters back — the most at BU since 1969 — even faster growth is imminent. QB **Robert Griffin**, a world-class hurdler who bypassed track to focus more on football, moves BU out of the cakewalk category.

DT **Phil Taylor**. The 6-foot-4, 355-pound transfer from Penn State might be the force up front that puts Baylor's defense into a new echelon. With first-team All-Big 12 picks MLB **Joe Pawelek** and FS **Jordan Lake** returning, this unit could be the key to Baylor ending its 14-year bowl drought.

Playing half the spring game, Griffin threw for 310 yards and three touchdowns and ran for 41 yards and one TD. ... Griffin, who played at 200 pounds last year, is at 210 now. ... In four of last season's eight losses, Baylor led or was tied in the second half.

Sept. 5	at Wake Forest
Sept. 19	Connecticut
Sept. 26	NW (La.) State
Oct. 3	Kent State
Oct. 10	at Oklahoma
Oct. 17	at Iowa State
Oct. 24	Oklahoma State
Oct. 31	Nebraska
Nov. 7	at Missouri
Nov. 14	Texas
Nov. 21	at Texas A&M
Nov. 28	*Texas Tech

* — at Dallas



RETURNING STARTERS

15 Offense > 6
Defense > 7
Kickers > 2

COACH > **Mike Leach**
10th year, 76-39

2008 RECORD > Overall: 11-2 > Big 12: 7-1 > South: 1st (t)

This is when we learn whether Texas Tech is a strong enough program to reload or whether it must rebuild. The Red Raiders lost a three-year starting QB (**Graham Harrell**), the nation's best WR (**Michael Crabtree**), three top linemen and their three best defensive playmakers.

Can the Red Raiders avoid a letdown? After starting 11-0 in 2008, Tech suffered two ugly losses. And the 2009 schedule isn't kind. All four Big 12 away games are iffy (Texas, Nebraska, OSU, Baylor), and Oklahoma could be a fifth loss. Tech last finished below .500 in the Big 12 in 2000.

The Texas game has been moved to Sept. 19 for ABC prime time. ... The new No. 1 quarterback is 6-foot-5 **Taylor Potts**. Leach normally waits until August to name a QB when he has no returning starter. ... DE **McKinner Dixon** (nine sacks) is suspended indefinitely.

Sept. 5	North Dakota
Sept. 12	Rice
Sept. 19	at Texas
Sept. 26	at Houston
Oct. 3	New Mexico
Oct. 10	Kansas State
Oct. 17	at Nebraska
Oct. 24	Texas A&M
Oct. 31	Kansas
Nov. 14	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 21	Oklahoma
Nov. 28	*Baylor

* — at Dallas



RETURNING STARTERS

16 Offense > 9
Defense > 7
Kickers > 0

COACH > **Mike Sherman**
Second year, 4-8

2008 RECORD > Overall: 4-8 > Big 12: 2-6 > South: 5th (t)

Much heavy lifting remains. Incoming freshmen have been told to report in shape because jobs are wide open in August. Nineteen other players are recovering from surgeries. Sherman said he has tweaked "everything" in the offseason. But is "tweaking" doing enough to get better?

Not much of anything the Aggies did last season bore watching. Especially gruesome was the work of both interior lines. Texas A&M allowed 39 sacks in 2008 and ran for 2.9 yards a carry. The defense produced only 16 sacks and eight interceptions.

The Aggies have just one home game in a 40-day stretch from Oct. 11 through Nov. 20. ... With QB **Jerrold Johnson** settled in, A&M plans to go all no-huddle, high-tempo on offense all season. ... The spring stars were 6-foot-4 WR **Jeff Fuller** and 214-pound **Von Miller** as a hybrid DE-LB.

Sept. 5	New Mexico
Sept. 19	Utah State
Sept. 26	UAB
Oct. 3	*Arkansas
Oct. 10	Oklahoma State
Oct. 17	at Kansas State
Oct. 24	at Texas Tech
Oct. 31	Iowa State
Nov. 7	at Colorado
Nov. 14	at Oklahoma
Nov. 21	Baylor
Nov. 26	Texas

* — at Dallas