

Kansas State: lone diamond in rough for Big 12 North

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

When the Big 12 formed in 1996, teams such as Colorado, Kansas State and Nebraska gave opponents scares as if they were free falling into the Grand Canyon. The North division was the big dog in the league.

How times have changed. Now, with the exception of the Waco pushover, the Big 12 South takes the cake. Teams such as Oklahoma and Texas are staples in the nation's top 5. Oklahoma State is rising rapidly. A new coaching staff at Texas A&M and a youthful abundance of talent are making the Aggies hard to gauge and unpredictable.

The North has a powerful Kansas State team, but behind it is a large drop-off.

Nebraska, Missouri and Colorado are in the second tier of the Big 12 North behind Kansas State.

| TROY MILLER'S BIG 12 PREDICTIONS NORTH | | |
|---|--------------|-----------|
| 1. | KANSAS STATE | 12-1, 7-1 |
| 2. | NEBRASKA | 8-4, 5-3 |
| 3. | COLORADO | 7-5, 5-3 |
| 4. | MISSOURI | 8-4, 4-4 |
| 5. | IOWA STATE | 5-7, 1-7 |
| 6. | KANSAS | 3-9, 1-7 |

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but his consistency throwing the ball leaves something to be desired. Running the option may be the only option this season with running back David Horne in the backfield and a strong offensive line.

Missouri

Missouri's team can be summed up with one name: Brad Smith. The sophomore quarterback earned rave reviews in his freshman campaign as he single-handedly revived Missouri Tiger football.

Columbia is buzzing about the Tigers' 2003 campaign, but the excitement may be a little premature.

Taking pressure off Smith is an offensive line that may be one of the best in the Big 12. The rest of the offense will fall to Smith, mainly because he lacks threats to distribute the ball to the skill positions. The defense is weak as well, forcing offensive production to be the key to Tiger victories.

Iowa State

The Cyclones lost quarterback Seneca Wallace to graduation, and with Wallace went their hopes of fielding a competitive football team in the Big 12.

The offense welcomes back five senior receivers and two senior running backs, but it is no secret that Wallace made this offense work in 2002. Junior Chris Love will have a tough road ahead trying to fill Wallace's shoes at quarterback.

Kansas

Second-year coach Mark Mangino knows he has something special in senior quarterback Bill Whittemore. Whittemore threw for 1,666 yards and ran for another 549 in 2002.

"(Whittemore) has looked fantastic," Mangino said. "I have never been around a quarterback who has dominated the preseason practices the way he does."

The rest of the Jayhawk team will face its biggest game of the year with Baylor because that is the one Big 12 game Kansas is favored to win.

AGGIE SPORTS IN BRIEF

Jones leads A&M volleyball team through tourney

Laura Jones was named Most Valuable Player as she led Texas A&M to a 30-26, 30-25, 30-23 victory over Duke in the Duke Invitational championship game at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

Jones posted her third consecutive double-double with match highs of 21 kills and 17 digs. She was joined on the all-tournament team by aggie teammates Melissa Munsch and Carol Price.

Munsch averaged 3.5 kills and 4.3 digs per game and Price led the Aggies with a .510 hitting efficiency for the tournament.

"It feels great to have swept the tournament and see the improvements with each match," said A&M volleyball coach Laurie Corbelli. "Laura was hands down the MVP with her backcourt play, her serving and passing and no one could stop her on her attack."

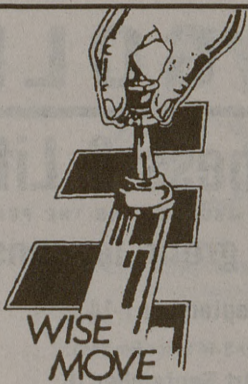
The Aggies opened the match by scoring the first five points and eventually built a game-high 11-point lead at 18-7.

A&M held a 23-15 advantage when Duke went on a 7-2 scoring run to get within four points.

But, Jones connected on back-to-back kills and Beth Skypala had a kill from the back row to put A&M ahead, 28-22.

No Duke player posted double figures in kills and A&M outhit Duke .302 to .209 on its way to the three-game sweep of the Blue Devils.

The Aggies go for their second consecutive tournament title next weekend in the Michigan Pepsi Challenge, Sept. 5-7 in Ann Arbor, Mich.



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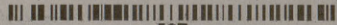
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Defense as OU

NORMAN Oklahoma's bit as good Oklahoma North Texa of offense threw three as the Soon son-openin Saturday ni The Soo Texas to three quart Green's o which bega ond-stringe the secon Texas had (29) than o and didn't just before The two-Belt chan showed ear Scott Hall sack in the the ball to guard Nick North Te overwhelm

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