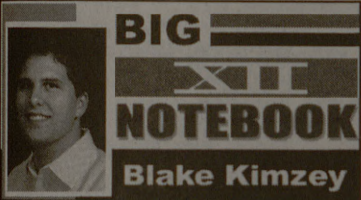


Eyes of Texas upon Brown, Benson



Blake Kimzey



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The University of Texas should be getting used to issuing excuse-laden press releases for its football team by now. Historically, and especially during the Chris Simms years, UT coach Mack Brown would answer questions for his players at press conferences to shield them from the probing eye of the press.

When his players break the law, however, as is becoming the norm, all Brown can do is hide behind a prepared statement the UT athletic department releases or decline to comment when newspapers come calling.

Little good this strategy has done. About all it has done is produce players who know their coach will pass the buck for them.

Brown could be one of the greatest recruiters of all time, but little has been said of his ability to discipline his players.

Known as a player-friendly coach, Brown may have to step up his persuasive tactics if he hopes to get his star running back to come back into the flock of law-abiding citizens in the latest episode of "As the Horn Turns."

Running back Cedric Benson was charged Tuesday with forcing his way into an apartment in search of a stolen television.

You can add vigilante law enforcer to Benson's resume of alleged lawlessness. After his freshman year, Benson had a marijuana possession charge dismissed for lack of evidence, and this, his second brush with the law, should be a wake-up call for Brown: More than pillow fights and ice cream socials are needed to keep his players in check.

"The only one who is talking is Brian Carney, Benson's attorney. 'Cedric is a big boy,'" Carney told The Associated Press. "We'll let the justice system take its course."

Speaking up for his program in a substantive manner is a lesson that would serve Brown well. Already on thin ice for losing four straight to Oklahoma in the Red River Shootout, one can only imagine what the message board will look like at www.firemackbrown.com after this, the latest black eye for a school that is in need of a stabilizing force.

Texas junior running back Cedric Benson makes a cut against LSU in last year's Cotton Bowl in Dallas. Benson was charged Tuesday with forcing his way into an apartment in search of a stolen television.

Sitting at the bottom of the Big 12 North standings, the Cyclones are the only team yet to stop the bleeding with a conference victory. ISU needs more than a tourniquet, and Nebraska certainly won't afford it the luxury of mercy this weekend under Pelini's watch.

To its credit, though, Iowa State will play its fifth ranked opponent in their last six games, and have the dubious distinction of playing the toughest schedule in NCAA Division I-A this year. With just two wins against Northern Iowa and Ohio, two teams EA Sports almost didn't include in their latest NCAA football title, the last man Iowa State wants to see on the sidelines is Pelini in a headset signaling to his hungry defense.

After forcing eight turnovers against the Aggies last week, Nebraska will be preparing for another banner day within the cozy confines of Memorial Stadium when the two square off this Saturday at 11:40 a.m.

phenomenon the Aggies could have projected as they were straining their necks watching countless Symons passes sail over their helmets while playing hide-and-seek, tag and marco-polo with their defense at Jones SBC Stadium in Lubbock.

Tech rarely runs the ball, so Missouri should be well informed about what to expect. To this point, Symons has thrown 32 touchdowns and racked up 3,506 yards. With his quarterback mentioned in Heisman talks for the second straight year, Tech head coach Mike Leach has had to worry little about his anemic running game.

While Brad Smith may not have the numbers Symons has accumulated, Smith will provide the Tech defense with a formidable question mark. He has passed for 1,064 yards and thrown for only eight touchdowns, but is just 15 yards behind his tailback for the team lead in rushing yards with 560 yards earned on the year. When the ball is snapped, the Red Raiders will have to guard against the run and the tested arm Smith possesses.

Averaging 47 points per game, in addition to facing a mediocre Missouri defense, Symons could return to Tech after this weekend even closer to the penning his own name in the record books. If Smith has anything to do with it, however, as he did when he willed his team to victory against Nebraska two weeks ago, this could be one of the most exciting offensive games in the Big 12 this year.

Fox Sports Net will broadcast the game at 11:30 a.m. Saturday.

Quarterback standoff

With 2,400 more passing yards than Brad Smith, Texas Tech quarterback B.J. Symons will march into Faurot Field Saturday in Columbia, Mo., on pace to set the NCAA record for passing yards and touchdown passes at his current pace. For a quarterback such as Smith, held in high esteem at only 19 years old, facing a brash first year starter such as the elder Symons will be an ego check.

Symons is projected to set an NCAA record this year with 6,400-plus yards and 54-plus touchdown passes. This is a phe-

Blackshirts Unite

In his first year on the job as defensive coordinator for the University of Nebraska, Bo Pelini has revived the hard-nosed tradition of Blackshirt defense that was floundering in limbo during a 7-7 season last year.

Under a Pelini-inspired defensive regime, Saturday could be another record setting defensive day for the No. 14 Cornhuskers, who sit atop the Big 12 North. In a bout of the Big 12 North bookends, Iowa State will try to survive its trip to Lincoln as any hope for securing its first Big 12 win should be put off for at least one more week.

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