

# Without Paris twins Big 12 changes, but still deep

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Two years ago the Big 12 Conference qualified eight teams for the women's NCAA tournament, and 2009-2010 could be another one of those seasons.

Eight league teams are currently ranked in either the Associated Press or coaches' top-25 polls, including seven in the AP. And every team but one racked up double-digit victories during the nonconference portion of the season.

It's a new landscape without Oklahoma twins Courtney and Ashley Paris, who dominated the conference the last few years. The buzz now surrounds Baylor and 6-foot-8 freshman phenom Brittney Griner.

But there are at least four other teams who will no doubt push the Bears for the league crown.

Below is a preview of 2010 Big 12 season in order of the current standings:

## Nebraska

**Preseason coaches poll:** Sixth.

**Non-conference record:** 13-0.

**Best win:** 77-63 at home over No. 11 LSU.

**Worst loss:** None.

**Big 12 opener:** at Iowa State, 6 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Jan. 9-17 (at ISU, vs. Texas, at Baylor).

**Who to watch:** Kelsey Griffin (F, 6-2, Sr., 19.2 ppg, 10.2 rpg), Cory Montgomery (F, 6-2, Sr., 12.8 ppg, 5.1 rpg).

**Coach Connie Yori says:** "I'm not an optimist. I'm not a pessimist, but I'm a realist. I'm real excited about our team."

## Baylor

**Preseason coaches poll:** First.

**Non-conference record:** 13-1.

**Best win:** 70-66 at home over Arizona State.

**Worst loss:** 74-65 at No. 4 Tennessee.

**Big 12 opener:** at Oklahoma State, 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Feb. 20-March 7 (vs. OSU, at Texas A&M, vs. Kansas, at Texas Tech, vs. Texas).

**Who to watch:** Brittney Griner (C, 6-8, Fr., 19.6 ppg, 9.0 rpg, 6.3 bpg), Morghan Medlock (F, 6-1, Sr., 12.7 ppg, 8.0 rpg), Melissa Jones (G, 5-10, Jr., 11.6 ppg, 6.6 rpg).

**Coach Kim Mulkey says:** "(Griner) is just someone that not many of us in our lifetime will ever have the opportunity to watch or, I know, coach ever again."

#### **Iowa State**

**Preseason coaches poll:** Seventh.

**Non-conference record:** 12-1.

**Best win:** 77-60 at Minnesota.

**Worst loss:** 78-75 at Drake.

**Big 12 opener:** Home against Nebraska, 6 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Jan. 20-27 (vs. Kansas, at Texas, vs. Oklahoma).

**Who to watch:** Alison Lacey (G, 6-0, Sr., 17.2 ppg, 7.3 apg), Kelsey Bolte (G, 6-1, Jr., 12.3 ppg, 5.8 rpg), Anna Prins (C, 6-7, Fr., 11.1 ppg, 4.4 rpg).

**Coach Bill Fennelly says:** "Thank God the Parises (OU twins Courtney and Ashley) are gone."

#### **Texas A&M**

**Preseason coaches poll:** Fourth.

**Non-conference record:** 12-1.

**Best win:** 95-77 at home over Duke.

**Worst loss:** 56-54 at TCU.

**Big 12 opener:** at Texas, 4 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Feb. 17-22 (at OSU, vs. Texas, vs. Baylor).

**Who to watch:** Tanisha Smith (G, 6-0, Sr., 17.1 ppg, 4.5 rpg), Danielle Adams (F, 6-1, Jr., 14.8 ppg, 4.4 rpg), Tyra White (G, 6-0, So., 11.0 ppg, 3.1 rpg).

**Coach Gary Blair says:** "I like the makeup of our team because we're reloading. I don't think we're rebuilding. The talent is there."

#### **Oklahoma State**

**Preseason coaches poll:** Ninth.

**Non-conference record:** 12-2.

**Best win:** 70-64 at home over No. 20 Georgia Tech.

**Worst loss:** 93-90 at home in OT against No. 19 Michigan State.

**Big 12 opener:** Home against Baylor, 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Feb. 17-24 (vs. Texas A&M, at Baylor, vs. Texas).

**Who to watch:** Andrea Riley (G, 5-5, Sr., 23.6 ppg, 8.1 apg), Tegan Cunningham (F, 6-1, Sr., 17.9 ppg, 7.6 rpg).

**Coach Kurt Budke says:** "I think this has a chance to be my longest, quickest, deepest team that I've had at Oklahoma State."

#### **Texas Tech**

**Preseason coaches poll:** 10th.

**Non-conference record:** 12-2.

**Best win:** 59-58 at UCLA.

**Worst loss:** 67-49 at Tulane.

**Big 12 opener:** at Oklahoma, 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Feb. 7-17 (at Texas, vs. Texas A&M, at OSU, at Baylor).

**Who to watch:** Kierra Mallard (F, 6-3, So., 14.4 ppg, 7.7 rpg), Ashlee Roberson (F, 5-11, Sr., 10.6 ppg, 9.4 rpg).

**Coach Kristy Curry says:** "It's like I tell them, age doesn't define beauty. Hopefully our experience level in this league won't define our beauty this year."

#### **Texas**

**Preseason coaches poll:** Tied for second.

**Non-conference record:** 11-3.

**Best win:** 70-67 vs. Rutgers.

**Worst loss:** 61-54 vs. USC.

**Big 12 opener:** Home against Texas A&M, 4 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Jan. 20-Feb. 3 (vs. OSU, vs. Iowa State, vs. Baylor, at Oklahoma).

**Who to watch:** Brittainey Raven (G, 6-0, Sr., 15.1 ppg, 5.1 rpg), Kathleen Nash (G, 6-2, Jr., 14.0 ppg, 7.4 rpg).

**Coach Gail Goesteniors says:** "I think the league has always had great parity, but I think this year, more than any year since I've been here, the parity in the league is amazing."

#### **Colorado**

**Preseason coaches poll:** 11th.

**Non-conference record:** 10-3.

**Best win:** 80-54 at home over Seton Hall.

**Worst loss:** 69-61 at Colorado State.

**Big 12 opener:** Home against Missouri, noon Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Jan. 30-Feb. 13 (vs. Nebraska, at Baylor, vs. Texas, at Oklahoma).

**Who to watch:** Brittany Spears (F, 6-1, Jr., 19.8 ppg, 8.7 rpg), Bianca Smith (G, 5-9, Sr., 14.4 ppg, 2.5 rpg), Chucky Jeffery (G, 5-10, Fr., 9.5 ppg, 5.5 rpg).

**Coach Kathy McConnell-Miller says:** "Feel like the Big 12 is different this year than it's ever been. Just the makeup of teams, the graduation of players and the addition of some great players is very exciting. We need to be deep in this conference."

## Kansas

**Preseason coaches poll:** Tied for second.

**Non-conference record:** 10-3.

**Best win:** 54-49 at home over UCLA.

**Worst loss:** 61-60 at New Mexico State.

**Big 12 opener:** at Kansas State, 10 a.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Feb. 28-March 6 (at Baylor, at Nebraska, vs. Texas A&M).

**Who to watch:** Danielle McCray (G, 5-11, Sr., 20.8 ppg, 7.0 rpg), Krysten Boogaard (C, 6-5, Jr., 12.7 ppg, 6.3 rpg), Aisha Sutherland (F, 6-2, So., 11.9 ppg, 7.9 rpg).

**Coach Bonnie Henrickson says:** "(The Big 12) presents a steep challenge every year and will be no different this year. But no one has higher expectations than I do."

## Missouri

**Preseason coaches poll:** 12th.

**Non-conference record:** 10-3.

**Best win:** 76-71 at Indiana.

**Worst loss:** 75-74 at home against Memphis.

**Big 12 opener:** at Colorado, noon Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Jan. 20-Jan. 30 (vs. Oklahoma, vs. Baylor, at OSU, vs. Kansas).

**Who to watch:** Jessra Johnson (F, 6-1, Sr., 13.1 ppg, 6.8 rpg), Amanda Hanneman (F, 5-11, Sr., 12.0 ppg, 4.0 rpg), Shakara Jones (F, 6-2, Jr., 10.7 ppg, 5.8 rpg).

**Coach Cindy Stein says:** "Honestly, we were very surprised where we were picked because we expected more. So, obviously, we did take that as an extreme insult."

## Oklahoma

**Preseason coaches poll:** Fifth.

**Non-conference record:** 10-3.

**Best win:** 74-70 at home over TCU.

**Worst loss:** 62-51 at Georgia.

**Big 12 opener:** Home vs. Texas Tech, 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Feb. 24-March 7 (vs. Nebraska, at Texas, at Texas A&M, vs. OSU).

**Who to watch:** Danielle Robinson (G, 5-9, Jr., 16.0 ppg, 5.7 apg), Nyeshia Stevenson (F, 5-10, Sr., 14.2 ppg, 3.8 rpg), Abi Olajuwon (C, 6-4, Sr., 12.5 ppg, 6.5 rpg).

**Coach Sherri Coale says:** "The most important thing about opportunity is to be ready when it comes. Abi (Olajuwon -- who backed up the Paris twins in previous years --) has had the foresight to be able to do that."

#### **Kansas State**

**Preseason coaches poll:** Eighth.

**Non-conference record:** 8-6.

**Best win:** 65-62 at BYU.

**Worst loss:** 80-79 at home vs. Arkansas State.

**Big 12 opener:** Home against Kansas, 10 a.m. Saturday.

**Key stretch:** Feb. 13-21 (at Texas A&M, at Texas, vs. Oklahoma).

**Who to watch:** Ashley Sweat (F, 6-2, Sr., 18.1 ppg, 6.1 rpg), Brittany Chambers (G, 5-8, Fr., 13.3 ppg, 4.4 rpg).

**Coach Deb Patterson says:** "I look at the picks in this league, and relative to what we're bringing back, I think we're a very fair pick, if not an aggressive pick at eighth in this league, to tell you the truth."

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