



Beebe: BCS isn't communism Q&A with Big 12's Beebe

By Chuck Carlton The Dallas Morning News
Friday, July 31, 2009

For the nearly two years that Dan Beebe has served as Big 12 commissioner, he's been as button-down as the shirt he wore for an interview last week.

That diplomatic demeanor changed when Beebe was asked about the Mountain West's playoff proposal, the one that led to BCS hearings in both houses of Congress.

"I was very disturbed about any of our conferences that are a part of the BCS coming out after we negotiated with television and then proposing drastic changes to the system....," Beebe said.

"I went to my board last December with the ESPN contract and got approval to sign it. Afterward, the Mountain West makes these proposals and acts like we're holding a gun to their head on the television contract."

Beebe readily admits that the BCS isn't perfect. He said that is part of its charm and contributes to a meaningful regular season.

The criticism has been harsh, even though the Mountain West eventually signed the BCS contract.

Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, compared the BCS to communism, a statement Beebe disputed.

"My memory of when I studied history and Karl Marx was that a major tenet of communism involved taking from each according to their ability and giving to each according to their need," Beebe said. "It's ironic we're being labeled as communists when what was actually being asked of us was to be more communistic, taking from those of us who produce more in the marketplace and giving to those who don't produce in the marketplace." In addition to the BCS, Beebe also talked about Big 12 issues ranging from the football tiebreaker to bowl alignments and a possible TV deal with negotiations scheduled for next spring:

Several preseason predictions are giving the Big 12 significant respect in football. Where do you think the conference ranks?

Going into this season, I think we're one of the top two conferences. I think we and the SEC are right there together. But I'm saying that with a lot of caution, because when you predict where you are in advance of playing the games, a lot of times it ends up the opposite.

The Big 12's three-way football tiebreaker remained unchanged for this season. Are you comfortable with the process should history repeat?

At this point, I am. The membership has looked at it. The coaches have looked at it. The athletics directors have looked at it. There may be some more consideration about variances and some of our institutions perhaps may propose that. ... It's not perfect, just like the system isn't perfect. The BCS isn't perfect. The NFL playoffs aren't perfect. Our tiebreaker is as good as we can predict it will turn out. The athletics directors' last vote was not to change it but to continue to look at possible recommendations. I think there will be some coming forward.

Figures from 2007-08 reveal some Big 12 athletic departments and football programs, led by Texas, have been very successful financially. Other conference members, less so. Is that disparity a concern?

From the commissioner's chair it is. You want your strongest teams to be able to compete nationally against other comparable institutions, but you also want all the membership to be strong. We need for institutions to be able to play for national championships, not just in football, but all sports.

Would you like to see a BCS bowl located within the conference footprint, and do you see that as a possibility in the next round of negotiations?

Certainly if there is expansion, that would be of interest. I don't know if I see expansion on the horizon, adding a fifth bowl. Then you're talking about the four bowls that are in existence, and I don't see any of them in jeopardy at this point. If there's any expansion to the BCS system, we're going to be very adamant about it needing to be in our neck of the woods.

Do you see the possibility of expansion or realignment from the current North and South divisions?

I don't think so. We really only have divisions in football. There's this outward perception from time to time about North-South. But alignments on issues hardly ever go on that basis in this conference.

You've talked about either forming your own network, like the Big Ten, or negotiating a blockbuster TV package, like the SEC. Where do things stand right now?

We're fully engaged in exploring our options. We're not in a place where we need to lean in a particular direction at this point, and we're not going to. We are certainly very active in continuing to find out how the landscape is changing and how we're positioning ourselves and what alliances to try to create to be in the best position to take advantage of the marketplace.



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Big 12 logjam: A team-by-team breakdown as season closes in

By Brent Foster, USA TODAY

A weekly summer update on the world of college football. This week's edition tackles the upcoming race in the Big 12.

The Big 12 heads into the 2009 season as one of the most respected leagues in college football. The South is once again expected to be dominate in league play. Will anyone from the North step up? A quick team-by-team breakdown:

•**Missouri:** Questions abound about whether the Tigers will be able to find replacements for quarterback [Chase Daniel](#), receiver Jeremy Maclin and tight end Chase Coffman. Sophomore Blaine Gabbert takes over at quarterback. He played sparingly in mop up work for Daniel last season. But maybe as important as finding new skill position players, is improving a defense that looked atrocious at times last season. The Tigers were No. 117 in pass defense a year ago giving up 286 yards a game. Having new offensive and defensive coordinators for the first time since Gary Pinkel arrived in 2001 might also leave Tiger fans feeling a little uneasy.

Key game — Oct. 8, [Nebraska](#): The Tigers have won the last three meetings against the Huskers in [Columbia](#). The conference opener for both squads puts the loser in an early season hole in the Big 12 North race.

•**Nebraska:** The Huskers finished last season strong behind senior quarterback Joe Ganz. One question surrounding Nebraska is whether it can build on its late-season surge and Gator Bowl victory. Junior Zac Lee is expected to be the starting quarterback entering the season. He put up solid numbers in the spring game, completing 15-of-18 passes for 214 yards. Another question is whether the defense can return to elite status. The defense struggled at times last season, giving up at least thirty points in six games, and finished last in the conference in turnover margin. If the Huskers want to win the North, they will probably have to win road games at Kansas and Missouri.

Key game — Nov. 14, at Kansas: The Huskers go to Lawrence for another key divisional battle.

•**Kansas:** Quarterback Todd Reesing and wide receiver Dezmon Briscoe headline eight starters returning on offense. The Jayhawks will try to make it three straight bowl games for the first time in school history. But just like 2008, Kansas bears the brunt of the Big 12 South by playing Oklahoma, Texas and Texas Tech. Last season the Jayhawks went 0-3 in these games, getting outscored 143-59. KU should expect to be more competitive in these games this season.

Key game — Nov. 28, Missouri (in Kansas City): Bowl positioning and the Big 12 North could be on the line in the Border Showdown.

•**Kansas State:** He's back. Bill Snyder returns to the sidelines of the stadium that now bears his name, and the university where he was the architect of the greatest turnaround in college football history. But things aren't as rosy at K-State as they were when Snyder led the Wildcats to two Big 12 title games a decade ago. The Wildcats finished No. 117 in total defense last season, allowing 479 yards a game. The Cats will also have to overcome the departure of quarterback Josh Freeman, who left after his junior season and is now with Tampa Bay in the [NFL](#). Junior Carson Coffman is expected to start. The schedule is to Snyder's liking as the Cats play UMass, Tennessee Tech and Louisiana Lafayette.

Key game — Oct. 17, Texas A&M: This might be the Wildcats' best chance at a conference victory.

•**Colorado:** The Buffaloes enter year three of the Dan Hawkins era with a sense of urgency. The Buffs seemed to have turned a corner last season by starting off the season 3-0, but went 2-7 the rest of the way floundering to a 5-7 finish. Junior Cody Hawkins returns for his third season under center, feeling pressure to improve an offense that ranked last in the Big 12 in points a game last season at just over 20. The Buffaloes win the prize for scheduling. The Buffaloes play their annual rivalry game against Colorado State and travel east to play West Virginia.

Key game — Nov. 27, Nebraska: The Buffaloes went into last year's game against the Huskers with a chance to be bowl eligible and lost. They might be in the same predicament this season.

•**Iowa State:** New coach Paul Rhoads arrives from Auburn to try and turn around a team that has lost nine straight conference games. Junior quarterback Austen Arnaud returns to lead the Cyclone offense. Last season he threw for nearly 2,800 yards and 15 touchdowns. If there is one consolation for the Cyclones, they have a favorable early schedule with games against Kent State, North Dakota State and Army, before hitting the Big 12 schedule.

Key game — Sept. 12, Iowa. Rhodes gets his first taste of the CyHawk game. The Cyclones have played the Hawkeyes tough the last several years, including an upset against Iowa in 2007.

•**Texas:** Don't think for a minute that Texas has forgotten about the Big 12 tiebreaking fiasco that kept them out of the Big 12 title game, and more than likely the national championship game. Colt McCoy is back and ready to challenge Sam Bradford for the Heisman. What could be the difference between the Longhorns and the Sooners this season is that Texas returns four starters on the offensive line. Texas will have to replace wide receiver Quan Cosby, but Jordan Shipley returns after being granted a sixth year of eligibility due to injuries. He caught 89 passes for 1060 yards and 11 touchdowns last season.

Key game — Oct. 17, Oklahoma (in Dallas): The Longhorns will be out for revenge in what will be one of the most anticipated battles between these two in years.

•**Oklahoma:** Sam Bradford chose to return to school to try for a national title and a second Heisman Trophy. Senior tight end [Jermaine Gresham](#)'s return to school helps the Sooners chances. But they won't have the same amount of protection up front like last season. The Sooners have to replace four starters on an offensive line that allowed just 13 sacks and seemingly gave Bradford all day to throw the football. The new look line will also have to block for senior Chris Brown and junior DeMarco Murray who combined for more than 2,200 rushing yards last season.

Key game — Oct. 17, Texas (in Dallas): The Sooners lost this game last year, but managed to win the Big 12. They shouldn't count on that again.

•**Oklahoma State:** Optimism has never been higher in Stillwater. The Cowboys come off last year's surprising 9-4 season expected to have their highest preseason rank ever when the polls are released in August. But if the Cowboys want to take the next step up the college football ladder they will have to beat the juggernauts of the south. The Cowboys went 0-3 against Texas, Texas Tech and Oklahoma, but were 5-0 against the rest of the league. Quarterback Zac Robinson, running back Kendall Hunter and wide receiver Dez Bryant return for another season as three of the league's most dynamic offensive players.

Key game — Nov. 28, at Oklahoma: While a victory against Georgia the first weekend of the season would get the team off to a blazing start, the Cowboys have to prove they can beat the big boys of the Big 12 South if they want to be taken seriously. No better time to start than Thanksgiving weekend at home against the hated Sooners.

•**Texas Tech:** Many people are already writing off the Red Raiders because of the loss of receiver Michael Crabtree and quarterback [Graham Harrell](#). While it might be tough to find a replacement for Crabtree, history is on the Red Raiders side to find a quarterback. Kliff Kingsbury threw 45 touchdowns in 2002. He was replaced by B.J. Symmons who tossed 52 touchdowns in 2003. Sony Crumblie was next and threw 32 touchdowns in 2004, followed by Cody Hodges who threw 31 touchdowns in 2005. Graham Harrill burst on to the scene in 2006 and averaged 43 touchdowns a season during his three years as a starter. The point is, Mike Leach seems to be pretty good at finding replacements at quarterback. This year's replacement is junior Taylor Potts. Texas Tech has been to nine straight bowls, the second longest streak in the Big 12. Key game- Nov. 14 at Oklahoma State: A possible battle for third in the south could have implications on the bowl pecking order.

•**Texas A&M:** The Aggies are a long way from the wrecking crew days of the 90's, and with the strength of the Big 12 South, it could be a long year in College Station. Texas A&M was bad on both sides of the ball last season, finishing 11th or 12th in the conference in twelve different categories. Junior quarterback Jerrod Johnson returns, but head coach Mike Sherman said that 2008 leading receiver, sophomore Ryan Tannehill, will get a chance to compete with Johnson for the starting job. The Aggies will try to build off a soft non-conference schedule that includes New Mexico, Utah State and UAB.

Key game — Nov. 21, Baylor: If the Aggies lose this game, they might be looking at the cellar of the south for the second straight season. Aggie fans may have a tough time swallowing this.

•**Baylor:** If there ever was a season for the Bears to break through and reach their first bowl since 1994, this might be the season. With the emergence of dual-threat quarterback [Robert Griffith](#), the Bears could see the 15 year drought end. Last season's 4-8 record is a little deceiving. Baylor lost three games by seven points or less, which included losses to bowl teams Missouri and Connecticut. The Bears return nine starters on offense, but must replace both starting tackles, including the void left by [Jason Smith](#), the No. 2 pick in this year's NFL draft.

Key game — Sept 19, Connecticut: The Bears open up with a tough road game against Wake Forest. An 0-2 start would be devastating to their bowl hopes. UConn could become a must win game in September.

Big 12 media poll:

The Big 12 released its preseason media poll last week:

North Division

1. Nebraska
2. Kansas
3. Missouri
4. Colorado
5. Kansas State
6. Iowa State

South Division

1. Texas
1. Oklahoma
3. Oklahoma State
4. Texas Tech
5. Baylor
6. Texas A&M

(Texas and Oklahoma each received the same number of votes. Texas received two more first place votes than Oklahoma).

Mark your calendar:

Oct. 3, Tulsa at Rice. The defending Conference USA champs travel to Houston and could get an early conference test against Rice. Last season the Owls averaged more than 40 points a game on their way to a 10-3 record.

Tebow insured:

Florida quarterback Tim Tebow said he has a \$2 million insurance policy guarding against injury. Tebow said he didn't even consider the insurance when the subject first came up.

"How many times does a guy really take advantage of that insurance?" Tebow said. "I have it but that's because he (Gators coach [Urban Meyer](#)) made me get it. I didn't even want to go up (get more) or anything with it."

Tebow would qualify for about \$6 million if he had bought from a private agency.

NCAA rules allow players to buy insurance policies, with premiums usually not due until after a player signs an NFL contract.

Pay to tailgate:

Auburn football fans wanting to make tailgating less stressful this fall are in luck. Auburn has partnered with a company called Tailgate Guys, which allows fans to park and take place in already furnished tailgates. Of course, it comes with a small fee. Prices for the tailgates range from \$300 to \$1,250 for individual games, and \$4,275 for the entire eight game schedule.

The packages include already set up tents, chairs and tables for the tailgaters, along with a guaranteed spot. The more expensive option includes catering and parking.

The area will have 70 tailgate sites, and Auburn officials say about half of them have already been sold.

Contributing: Florida Today, wire reports

Find this article at:

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For an Ex-Fullback, Big Plays in a New Game

By [JAMES BARRON](#)

He has learned the music but not the lingo. Keith Miller is perhaps the only [opera](#) singer who can talk about “running an aria” the way a fullback talks about running for daylight — as he used to do, before he called an audible on his football career.

Now he is heading toward the big leagues of opera with equal parts discipline and informality, quoting [Phil Jackson](#), the head coach of the [Los Angeles Lakers](#), and referring to [Luciano Pavarotti](#) as Pav. Mr. Miller, 35, will be the bass soloist in the final three performances of the [Metropolitan Opera](#)’s Summer Recital Series in New York parks on Friday and on Aug. 7 and 14. The soprano in all three performances will be his wife, Joyce El-Khoury.

Other tidbits from Mr. Miller’s athletic past came up in a conversation about his unusual career path. He carried the [Olympic torch](#) before the Atlanta games. That was in 1996, somewhere along the old Pony Express route, not far from Ovid, Colo., the tiny town where he grew up, so far northeast that it is almost on the Nebraska state line.

He had attended the [University of Colorado](#) and was a starting fullback on the football team. He played in the Fiesta Bowl in 1994 and the Cotton Bowl in 1995, after a season in which Colorado, then ranked seventh in the nation, had beaten fourth-ranked Michigan with a 64-yard touchdown pass on the final play.

Mr. Miller’s life-changing moment came a few weeks after that big game, when he and a girlfriend went to a performance of “The Phantom of the Opera.”

“I had that same feeling that I had during that game watching this goofy show,” he said. “It just blew me away. And you know, when you grow up in a town like Ovid, you always have an idea of what life would be like if you ever won the lotto. You could go to a big city. You could go to fancy restaurants. You could live with culture around you, art and music. That was the spark that kind of ignited inside.”

So he started watching DVDs, and singing along.

“I listened to all the musical theater I could: ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ ‘Oklahoma,’ ‘Kiss Me Kate,’ ‘King and I,’ ” he said. “Then I ran out of musical theater. So one day I rented ‘The Three Tenors,’ and I saw Pav sing ‘Nessun Dorma,’ and this look in his eye on the last note just galvanized everything for me. I was like, that is unbelievable, what he just did.

“I was still a jock at the time, and I thought, you can pick up chicks if you speak Italian.”

He taught himself “Turandot” by copying the piano-and-vocal score he had checked out of the college music library.

“The guy who was working the desk looked at me,” he said. “Here I come in with my letter jacket and everything, and he was like, ‘What are you doing here?’ It was kind of like ‘Where’s Waldo’ — a jock in the music library?”

Mr. Miller explained his newfound interest in opera, and the librarian gave him a recording of Jussi Bjoerling in “La Bohème” and, later, a recording of “Don Giovanni.”

He aimed for a football career after graduation, ending up not in the [N.F.L.](#) but in Finland, and later with teams in the Arena Football League. While learning plays, though, he was also learning opera.

Mr. Miller had signed on with a team in Fargo, N.D., and was hoping to make the [Denver Broncos](#) training camp when he saw a casting call for an opera production at Concordia College in nearby Moorhead, Minn. Fortunately for him, the audition piece was “Ho capito” from “Don Giovanni,” an aria he had long since committed to memory — he had not yet learned to read music. He got the part.

Later Mr. Miller studied with Bill Schuman at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. He made his Met debut in 2006, in “Madama Butterfly.” He also appeared on a recording that was nominated for a [Grammy Award](#) this year: the Met production of “Eugene Onegin” (Decca).

So what is on the program for the Summer Recital Series concerts? He answered by talking about who is on the program. “They asked if I would sing with Joyce,” he said. “The next thing I know, we’re doing these concerts.”

Remaining concerts in the Metropolitan Opera’s Summer Recital series are on Friday in East River Park, Manhattan; on Aug. 7 at Tappen Park, Staten Island; and on Aug. 14 in Coffey Park, Brooklyn.

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JUCOs to Watch in 2009

By Steven Lissan
Published: July 31st, 2009

Athlon Sports College Football Writer

When a team needs a quick fix and the answer isn't on the roster, they often turn to the junior college ranks for a replacement. However, it's hit or miss with JUCO transfers. Qualifying academically can be difficult and even though they are brought in to provide an immediate boost, the players often take a year to adjust to the FBS level.

Here's a look at some of the junior college players to watch in 2009 -

Quarterbacks

Robert Benjamin, Wyoming - One of the more intriguing quarterback battles to watch will be the one at Wyoming. New coach Dave Christensen, previously the offensive coordinator at Missouri, brings a high-scoring offense to Laramie and one many fantasy owners are familiar with. Benjamin was named the 2008 National Junior College Athletic Association Region I Offensive Player of the Year, while throwing for 2,391 yards and rushing for 468 more.

Terrance Cain, Utah - Corbin Louks heads into the fall as the starter, but don't count out Cain or even freshman Jordan Wynn. Cain completed 13 of 18 passes for 113 yards in the spring game and earned NJCAA Offensive Player of the Year honors at Blinn College. The winner of the Utes' quarterback battle is worth a look as a fantasy option this year.

Jon Eastman, Colorado State - With Billy Farris out of eligibility, the Rams will turn to Grant Stucker, Eastman or Klay Kubiak as the starter. Eastman missed nine games at Snow College last year due to a foot injury, but finished with 804 yards and eight touchdowns. Eastman has a chance to start this year and with a solid receiving corps, could be a nice fantasy spot starter in select weeks.

Jeff Fleming, New Mexico State - Chase Holbrook has expired his eligibility and J.J. McDermott transferred to SMU, leaving the Aggies with no proven passer on the FBS level. Fleming is regarded as having a good arm, but should go undrafted in all 120 formats.

Adam Froman, Louisville - Considering the all of the passers on the roster have never thrown a pass in a Louisville uniform, the race to replace Hunter Cantwell is wide open. Coach Steve Kragthorpe likes Froman's dual-threat ability and he should see the field right away this year.

Daniel Thomas, Kansas State - Thomas failed to qualify at Kansas State last year, but is believed to be on track to enter school this fall. He is an excellent athlete, but has some development to do as a passer.

Others to watch -

Jacob Laudenslayer, Marshall
Press Taylor, Marshall

Running Backs

Leonard Mason, Colorado State - With Gartrell Johnson gone, the Rams are missing 1,476 yards and 12 touchdowns from last season. Although John Mosure and Alex Square are ahead of him on the depth chart, don't be surprised if Mason makes a play for significant snaps in the fall.

Leilyon Myers, UTEP - The Miners know they have no issues in the passing department with quarterback Trevor Vittatoe returning. However, the Miners ranked 90th in rushing offense last year and hope Myers will provide a much-needed spark this year. He did not play at Palomar Junior College last year due to a shoulder injury, but rushed for 869 yards and 13 touchdowns on 150 carries in 2007.

Lamon Muldrow, San Jose State - Of the running backs entering FBS play from the junior college ranks this season, Muldrow could be the one with the most fantasy value. The 5-foot-9 back rushed for 3,260 yards and 44 touchdowns in two seasons at Sierra College. If you are in a deep 120 league, Muldrow is a nice gamble as a RB5 or RB6. Otherwise, keep a close watch on his progress early on.

Michael Smith, Utah State - Robert Turbin flashed potential last year and held onto the starting job in the spring. However, Smith made a statement with 57 rushing yards in the spring game and should see some carries this year.

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Wide Receivers

Leon Berry, Mississippi State - New coach Dan Mullen should significantly boost the passing attack and the Bulldogs lack proven weapons at receiver, opening the door for Berry to play right away. Berry led the team with eight receptions for 125 yards in the spring game and figures to be in the mix for a starting spot in the fall.

Rodney Bradley, Hawaii - Someone's going to catch passes from quarterback Greg Alexander this year and Bradley could be the top target. He caught three passes for 69 yards and one score in the spring game and is worth a late-round pick if he continues to work his way up the depth chart.

Hayo Carpenter, Minnesota - The Golden Gophers are set on one side with Eric Decker returning, but Carpenter should be the No. 2 the offense was missing last year. He has been clocked at 4.37 in the 40-yard dash and the Gophers could use him as an impact return man. Carpenter comes to Minnesota with a lot of hype and he's worth a look in the late rounds of all 120 formats this year.

Tyrece Gaines/Lavasier Tuinei, Oregon - With Jaison Williams and Terence Scott out of eligibility, the Ducks are losing 85 of their 204 receptions from last year. Don't be surprised to see Gaines and Tuinei contending for playing time in 2009.

Jamar Howard, Cincinnati - With Dominick Goodman out of eligibility, the Bearcats are searching for a new No. 2 option. D.J. Woods is a solid contributor, but the Bearcats are expecting big things from Howard in 2009.

Jamaal Jackson/Michael Outlaw, North Texas - Fantasy owners remember the back-to-back 100-catch seasons from Casey Fitzgerald and one of these players could emerge as the go-to guy for quarterback Riley Dodge. If you are willing to gamble on a receiver in the late rounds of your draft, take one of the North Texas' options.

Justin Jordan, Southern Mississippi - Although the Southern Miss coaching staff believes receiver DeAndre Brown will be 100 percent this year, Jordan is a good insurance policy. He caught 55 passes for 715 yards and seven touchdowns last year and earned first-team All-American honors by the NJCAA.

Cameron Kenney, Oklahoma - Juquin Iglesias and Manuel Johnson are gone, leaving the Sooners on a search for new weapons at receiver for quarterback Sam Bradford. Ryan Broyles is expected to be the top receiver, but Kenney and Brandon Caleb will compete for the No. 2 role. Kenney is worth a mid-to-late round gamble in all fantasy formats, especially since he could catch 40-60 passes this year.

Chris Matthews, Kentucky - Only one receiver caught more than 30 passes on the Kentucky roster last year and the receiving corps as a whole was inconsistent. Matthews is a big target at 6-foot-5, but unless quarterback Mike Hartline shows significant improvement, don't expect much fantasy value in 2009.

Andre Simmons, Colorado - With Josh Smith transferring, the Buffaloes are desperately seeking help in the receiving corps. At 6-foot-3, Simmons should be in contention for a starting spot and could be the big weapon for Cody Hawkins or Tyler Hansen, as they desperately need to get the passing game going.

Others to watch -

Marcus Allen/William Bullock, New Mexico State
Marquis Avery, San Jose State
Wayne Bonner, Marshall
Rico Joseph, UL Lafayette
Maurice Patterson, Nevada
Darius Reynolds, Iowa State
Edgard Theliam, Florida International

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