



Brian
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Baylor Bears picking up scent of bowl

If Baylor can win two of its last four, it would join Big 12's postseason eligibles

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Back in July, Baylor coach Guy Morriss was bursting with optimism and said he would label this season a disappointment if the Bears didn't reach a bowl.

After a 1-3 start marred by frustrating losses against Washington State and Army, it looked like the same ol' Bears.

Baylor has rallied in October and could be among a bunch of Big 12 teams going bowling. Four teams have already won at least six games, the minimum for bowl eligibility. Five teams need one or two more victories. The Big 12 has never placed more than eight teams in bowls.

Now that Baylor is 4-4, there's excitement building in Waco about a possible postseason trip. The Bears haven't played in a bowl since 1994.

"Yeah, people are excited," Morriss said Monday. "It's buzzing, as you say. The kids are hearing all this junk over on campus about how good they are."

Baylor must win two of its final four regular-season games to reach a bowl. The Bears' remaining games are home against Texas A&M, at Texas Tech, at Oklahoma State and home against Oklahoma.

If they become bowl eligible, the Bears will have finished conference play with at least a 5-3 record, easily their best Big 12 mark. Baylor has never finished better than 2-6 in the conference.

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Big 12 bowl lineup

PetroSun Independence: Dec. 28, Shreveport, La.

Pacific Life Holiday: Dec. 28, San Diego

Texas: Dec. 28, Houston

Brut Sun: Dec. 29, El Paso

Insight: Dec. 29, Tempe, Ariz.

Alamo: Dec. 30, San Antonio

AT&T Cotton: Jan. 1, Dallas

Toyota Gator: Jan. 1, Jacksonville, Fla.*

Tostitos Fiesta: Jan. 1, Glendale, Ariz.

*ACC vs. Big 12 or Big East or Notre Dame

Packing their bags

Texas (7-1): The Longhorns have a leg up in the Big 12 South race and could reach the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl by winning the conference title. UT is also in the national championship hunt but needs other teams to fall by the wayside to move up in the BCS standings.

Texas A&M (7-1): After a one-year hiatus, A&M is back in the bowl business. The Aggies have a chance at a BCS bowl. They would have to win their next four games, which means upsetting Texas in Austin, and win the Big 12 championship game in Kansas City.

Missouri (7-1): The Tigers became the first Big 12 team to clinch bowl eligibility by knocking off Texas Tech on Oct. 7. Mizzou has road games against Nebraska and Iowa State before thinking about the Big 12 North title.

Nebraska (6-2): The Huskers would like another shot at Texas in the conference title game. The winner goes on to the BCS; the loser probably lands in the AT&T Cotton Bowl.

More work remains

Oklahoma (5-2): Considering all that's happened this season, the Sooners would enjoy playing in any bowl. The Cotton, Holiday and Alamo bowls are possibilities.

Texas Tech (5-3): The Red Raiders have gone bowling everywhere except the BCS. Home games against Texas, Baylor and Oklahoma State give Tech a chance to improve its bowl stock.

Baylor (4-4): Since the Bears have no recent bowl record, any bowl would roll out the red carpet for a team excited to be there. Baylor has to take it one step at a time, though.

Okla. State (4-3): The Cowboys are wildly inconsistent, yet they're entertaining. Second-year coach Mike Gundy would earn points with fans by pushing OSU into a bowl.

Kansas St. (4-4): First-year coach Ron Prince benefited from a 3-0 start, but that advantage slowly melted away. Road games against Colorado and Kansas could get K-State to six wins.

Wishful thinking

Iowa State (3-5): The next three weeks give the Cyclones hope. Games against Kansas State, Kansas and Colorado are winnable before the regular-season finale against Missouri.

Kansas (3-5): KU would be closer to six wins if not for meltdowns against Toledo and Baylor. This week's game against Colorado should bolster the Jayhawks' confidence for the stretch run.

See you next year

Colorado (1-7): The Buffaloes' defense knows how to hit people. The offense just can't hit the scoreboard.

Four left for BU

Big 12 writer Brian Davis analyzes Baylor's remaining schedule on a scale of one to five with five being the best chance for a Bears win:

Saturday vs. Texas A&M: The Aggies have been pushed to the brink multiple times this season. But the Bears' run defense, last in the Big 12, has to find a way to stop the conference's best rushing attack (203.9 ypg). **4**

Nov. 4 at Texas Tech: The Bears haven't won in Lubbock since 1990. They haven't won a game in this series since '95. Can the Red Raiders handle someone who runs the same offense they do? **2**

Nov. 11 at Oklahoma State: Keep Baylor corner C.J. Wilson away from all microphones this week. OSU's Adarius Bowman ranks second nationally in receiving yards per game (113.0). It's put up or shut up time, C.J. **4**

Nov. 18 vs. Oklahoma: This could be a make-or-break game for Baylor's bowl eligibility. The Bears are 0-15 against the Sooners. Any Baylor fan that hasn't been to a game lately should get tickets for this one. **3**

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