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Baylor vs. Kansas: The Final Battle
Here's our take on No. 4 vs. No. 3 in a battle for Big 12 Supremacy **pg. B10**



NOT OVER JUST YET
Men's basketball still has much to accomplish before they celebrate **pg. B8**

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Penelope Shirey | Lariat Photographer

STARING INTO THE FACE OF ADVERSITY Lady Bears basketball head coach Kim Mulkey crouches on the sideline in a game against the Oklahoma Sooners on Jan. 29 in Waco. The Lady Bears won the game 92-58. This game was one of only six games to be nationally televised this season.

Lady Bears receive sparse coverage

NATHAN KEIL
Sports Writer

Seemingly every night from the end of November through March, if you want to watch some college hoops, all you have to do is turn on ESPN or any other station within its family of networks to get your basketball itch scratched.

However, if you are looking for women's college basketball, you might just have to look a little bit harder. Why is this?

According to Michael Graber, a sports cinematographer, the way that TV networks decide on which games to air ultimately comes down to money.

"In sports TV, the tail wags the dog. The money goes where the audience is," Graber said in Kelly Wallace's March 14 2016 article for CNN entitled "The Real March Madness: When

will women's teams get equal buzz?"

"Money will go to women's sports as soon as an audience wants to watch women, so the best way to support women athletes is by attending women's sports in the first place."

If fans in the stands and wins on the scoreboard equal television appearances, then why are the Baylor Lady Bears not on national television more?

Head coach Kim Mulkey and the Lady Bears are 24-2 overall, 13-1 in Big 12 play, and sit one game behind Texas for the conference lead. They have been ranked in the top 10 the entire season and have an average attendance of 6,088 at the Ferrell Center. The men average about 800 more people per contest, but, more people showed up to watch the Lady

Bears set an NCAA record for margin of victory with a 140-32 win over Winthrop on Dec. 15 than showed up when the men's team upset No. 4 Oregon on Nov. 15.

The Lady Bears also drew a larger crowd in their home opener against Houston Baptist University than the men did against Oral Roberts University.

And yet there is a great disparity between the number of women's games on TV compared to the number of men's games on TV.

The Lady Bears have played 10 games this season against ranked opponents. Only two of them, at Tennessee and a home game against Oklahoma, have been broadcast on the ESPN family of networks. Another three games, both games against West Virginia and a home game against

Texas, which saw both teams enter with a combined 37-game winning streak, made it on Fox Sports networks.

This unbalanced distribution of games did not sit well with Mulkey after her team had just knocked off No. 9 UCLA 84-70 and before her team was about to travel to take on No. 3 Connecticut, with neither being broadcast on ESPN.

"I think that it's really sad that ESPN did not pick up this game [UCLA], and for the most part it was a good game," Mulkey said. "Thursday is going to be on a New York Station. We are playing two good teams in top 10, and neither game was picked up by ESPN."

It wasn't just the Baylor games that weren't being picked up that upset Mulkey. It was other high quality

women's college basketball games as well.

"Ohio State just played South Carolina, and that game wasn't picked up either," Mulkey said. "But they did get Texas and Stanford on there."

Even the University of Connecticut, which just won its 100th consecutive game on Monday by beating No. 6 South Carolina 66-55, has only had eight games this season nationally broadcast on ESPN. Even though many of its games have been available to stream via the Watch ESPN app for smart phones, tablets and computers.

When the season is all said and done, Baylor will have had five women's basketball games air on ESPN this season. Comparatively, the men's team, which has also risen through the rankings and sits at No. 6 right now, will have

had 25 games, including all but one conference game, air on ESPN. The one conference game not airing will be the Bears' showdown with Kansas, as it will air at noon Saturday on CBS.

This does not take into account the Phillips 66 Big 12 championship for the men. The conference tournament for the women will air on the Fox Sports networks, but ESPN does own the rights to the Women's NCAA tournament.

The Lady Bears return to action at 5 p.m. Saturday against Oklahoma State in the Sic 'Em for the Cure game at the Ferrell Center.

Baylor will have its last ESPN televised game at 8 p.m. Monday when the Lady Bears travel to Austin for a rematch against Texas.

IS 2016-17 THE ACTUAL YEAR OF THE BEAR?

Baylor athletics' current rankings as of Feb. 17, 2017

Football: **No. 9**

Men's basketball: **No. 1**

Lady Bears basketball: **No. 2**

Men's golf: **No. 13**

Women's golf: **No. 23**

Equestrian: **No. 1**

Soccer: **No. 68 (out of 334)**

Men's tennis: **No. 13**

Women's cross country: **No. 23**

Softball: **No. 23**

Baylor Lariat Radio

Live from Baylor Ballpark all season long

Baylor Lariat Radio will be broadcasting live play-by-play commentary of Baylor Bears baseball this season from Baylor Ballpark.

While you are watching the game from the grandstands, be sure to listen to our live commentary from the game.

Ways to listen live:

1. Connect to a Wi-Fi system (Better safe than sorry, am I right?)
2. Use the "Mixlr" app (iPhone, Android) and search for "Baylor Lariat Radio"
3. Access www.mixlr.com/baylor-lariat-radio with your preferred web browser and search for "Baylor Lariat Radio"
4. Enjoy the ballgame in a whole new way

Sports Take: Men's basketball still has much to accomplish

JAKOB BRANDENBURG
Reporter

Baylor men's basketball is ranked No. 4 in the AP Poll and is off to the best start in program history. However, the Bears have lost three of their last five games. At a time like this, it is important to remember that this team hasn't accomplished anything yet.

The last time a Baylor men's basketball team won a conference championship of any kind was in 1950. For those of you younger than 67, that was in the old Southwest Conference and occurred 44 years before the Big 12 even existed.

Since that last Baylor title, every other school in the Big 12 has won at least six conference championships in basketball, either in the regular season or by winning the conference tournament.

However, if that is too wide of a scope of history for you, let's look just at what Baylor

basketball has done under coach Scott Drew.

In 2012 and 2014, the Bears played in the conference championship game. In 2010 and 2012, Baylor made it all the way to the Elite Eight of the NCAA tournament, losing to the eventual national champion both times.

Unless this year's team at least matches those feats, they will fall short of the expectations the program has created for itself.

What this Baylor team does in the postseason is critical, especially due to the embarrassing round of 64 losses the last two seasons.

In 2015, Baylor won 24 games and was awarded a No. 3 seed in the NCAA Tournament. They were upset in their opening game by 14-seed Georgia State. The next year, the Bears won 22 games and were given a five seed. That ended with another first-round loss, this time to 12-seed Yale.

The 2017 Bears have already

won 22 games and earlier this season rose to the No. 1 ranking for the first time in program history. Joe Lunardi's "Bracketology" projects the Bears will be a No. 1 seed in this year's NCAA Tournament. That all goes down the drain with another early exit during March Madness.

To this Baylor team's credit, they know they still have work to do. Led by the team's lone senior, Ish Wainright, the Bears have adopted the mantra "We Still Suck." It serves to remind the Bears that despite their success, they still haven't earned national respect and that their team goals, namely conference and national championships, are still ahead of them.

The Bears have five games left on their schedule. They are still in position to end Kansas' streak of 12 consecutive regular-season Big 12 Championships, and the Bears will have a big say in that when the Jayhawks visit Waco on Saturday.



Liesje Powers | Lariat Photo Editor

CHARGING IN Baylor sophomore guard King McLure drives the lane in a game against the TCU Horned Frogs on Feb. 11 in Waco. Baylor won the game 70-52.

The Bears have another chance to make their mark at the Big 12 Tournament from March 8-11 in Kansas City. Then the final and most

important test comes when the field of 68 teams is set to battle for the national championship.

This team has the potential to not only be the best that

Drew has coached, but the best the school has ever had. We'll see if they can live up to it, or if they'll just be another footnote in Baylor basketball history.

Baylor Bears basketball by the numbers

	Overall W-L	Big 12 W-L	Home W-L	Avg. Point diff.	Reb. per game	Assists per game
No. 4 BAYLOR	22-4	9-4	17-1	+11.8	37.7	16.0

Astros build team, complex for the future of baseball

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Getting to the Houston Astros' clubhouse at the new Ballpark of the Palm Beaches can be a spring workout in itself.

There are dirt roads to traverse, stray nuts and bolts to avoid and paper signs taped to ceilings telling interlopers which corridors they may not take.

Once there, though, it's easy to see why the Astros are so excited to have ended their 30-plus year stay in Kissimmee.

The half-full clubhouse was oddly quiet Wednesday for the first day of workouts for pitchers and catchers until a member of the construction crew walked with one of the Astros clubhouse managers to the audio/video control unit mounted on one of the walls.

Suddenly Queen's "Bicycle Race" blared from the ceiling-mounted speakers.

Check another item off the list.

"It's more than we need," catcher Brian McCann said. "It's first class in all sense of the word."

The clubhouse itself is at least the size of the Astros' locker room at Minute Maid Park, if not bigger. On Wednesday, all of the 10 large flat-screen televisions were either dark or displayed an internal setup menu.

Perhaps the most important upgrade? The three-hour Grapefruit League bus trips are now a rarity.

They share the complex with the Nationals, are a 20-minute drive from the site used by the Cardinals and Marlins, and are 45 minutes from the Mets.

The Astros' side of the \$150 million Ballpark of the Palm Beaches features six full practice fields, an additional turf infield, two batting structures with 10 cages each and a new video room, which may or may not be functional at the moment.

"We've got cameras



Associated Press

NEW BEGINNINGS For the first time since 1985, the Houston Astros will be somewhere other than Osceola County Stadium complex Kissimmee, Fla., for Spring training.

everywhere," Houston manager A.J. Hinch said before pausing. "Maybe not now. I'm not sure what's completely done. I ask for patience from our guys."

Hinch made the remarks while standing at home plate of the artificial turf infield, some of his words rendered almost unintelligible by the buzz saw being operated a few

dozen feet away.

That shouldn't pose much of a distraction considering they are accustomed to tens of thousands of boisterous fans once the season starts. When complete, the complex will allow the Astros to operate more efficiently, Hinch hopes, thereby helping them live up to the lofty expectations for this season.

"We're going to embrace them," Hinch said. "It's not being arrogant or cocky or not respecting the rest of the league. It's just an admittance that we have a pretty good group and we've played some pretty good baseball."

Dallas Keuchel and Lance McCullers, both of whom missed time last season, lead a talented pitching staff that under-performed last season. Both proclaimed their arms healthy.

"I wasn't the first manager to name the opening day starter — I'm very disappointed," Hinch joked. "I want to see them on the mound and I want to see them healthy. I think right now distinctions like that are very premature on our particular team."

Hinch plans to push Keuchel, McCullers and crew early in camp.

"We're not going to kill them, but we've got to get them sore," Hinch said. "We've got to get them tired. Their legs are going to be heavy. Same way

with the position players when they get here. This is a training six weeks. We're not going to tip-toe and be careful."

With the complex still technically a construction site, fans won't be allowed to watch the workouts in person until Saturday. The ballpark will host its first game when its two tenants take the field on Feb. 28.

Upon arrival, those unfamiliar with the area will have a tough time discerning that before hosting a spring training complex, the site was once a landfill.

"It smells of something a little funny coming in, but we can make due with that if that means a little bit nicer things," Keuchel cracked. "Not to say anything bad about Kissimmee, because Kissimmee was nice for 30-something years, but we're now in the 21st century with some of this nice stuff and a little bit better locker room and facility."

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Oakley thinks Dolan feud can't be resolved

JIM BAUMBACH
Tribune News Service

Charles Oakley doesn't expect his feud with Knicks owner James Dolan to ever end, saying "some things can't be solved."

And the former Knicks forward may have started a new feud of sorts with the NBA by saying commissioner Adam Silver's meeting with Oakley and Dolan on Monday at the league office was an effort "to make themselves look good."

Oakley's latest comments, from an interview with Sports Illustrated on Thursday, were

made three days after Silver summoned Oakley and Dolan together and then painted an optimistic picture of a future reconciliation at Madison Square Garden.

But on Thursday, Oakley criticized the league for giving the impression that a single meeting could resolve the issues that he said led to the Feb. 8 altercation with MSG security that resulted in his being dragged out, handcuffed and arrested.

"I told them I'd rather go to jail than them saying they did something for me," Oakley said, referring to the meeting with Silver, Dolan and Michael

Jordan, an Oakley friend, who was on a conference call. "That's how bad this is for me. I'd rather go to jail."

An NBA spokesman did not return messages seeking comment. A spokesman for Dolan declined to comment. Oakley also didn't respond to messages Thursday afternoon from Newsday.

Silver released a statement hours after Monday's meeting in which he said both Oakley and Dolan were "apologetic" and also that Dolan "expressed his hope that Mr. Oakley would return to MSG as his guest in the near future."

But Oakley made it clear

Thursday that he's not ready to move on. "My life is going to change a lot because it's just like getting a DUI sometime or going to jail for murder," he said. "It's something on my record. If you Google my name, it's going to come up. And that hurts."

And he was bothered that Silver gave the impression that reconciliation is near.

"I feel like I was pulled out of the meeting as I was pulled out of the Garden," Oakley said.

Oakley criticized his former teammates who have not yet spoken up on his behalf in the wake of the incident at

the Knicks-Clippers game. He also declined to say whether he will pursue a lawsuit against Dolan or MSG.

"I don't know," he said. "My team, we're not going to expose our hand because we don't have to expose our hand."

Oakley also continued on the offensive against Dolan, who _ in a radio interview two days after the altercation _ raised the possibility that Oakley has a drinking problem.

Oakley compared Dolan to disgraced former Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling, who was banned for life from the league and forced

to sell the team in 2014 after the revelation of his past racist comments.

"This man has been around for a long time," Oakley said of Dolan. "I ain't heard nothing good about him." He also called Dolan "a control freak."

Oakley acknowledged that his comments might bother some people at the league office, but he wasn't concerned about the ramifications of his comments.

"Yeah, I might hear from the NBA about this," he said. "But I ain't saying nothing bad."

Rangers, Napoli reunited for third stint

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SURPRISE, Ariz. — Mike Napoli has rejoined the Texas Rangers for the third time, calling it a great opportunity to be back with his first World Series team.

The Rangers re-introduced Napoli on Thursday morning. He got an \$8.5 million, one-year contract that includes a club option for 2018, with the expectation to be the primary first baseman and provide a needed big bat.

Napoli has played in the World Series for three different teams over the past six seasons. He went to the World Series with Texas in 2011, was part of a championship in Boston in 2013 and helped the Indians reach Game 7 last year in his only season with Cleveland.

"I've been fortunate enough in my career to be on a lot of winning ballclubs," Napoli said. "Coming back here is definitely something that I saw was a chance to do that."

Napoli will get a \$6 million salary this year from the team that has won the AL West title the past two seasons. The agreement includes an \$11 million club option for 2018 with a \$2.5 million buyout.

In his first season with Texas in 2011, Napoli hit .320 with 30 homers in 113 regular-season games and had 10 RBIs in the World Series. He was the starting catcher for the AL All-Star team in 2012, though he also played first base during that two-year span in Texas before going to the Red Sox as a free agent. He played some left field in 2015.

"No intro needed," Rangers general manager Jon Daniels said. "Obviously a guy that has been part of some big moments for the Rangers over the years here, and looking forward to some big moments with him again, and glad to have him back."

Manager Jeff Banister plans for Napoli to be the primary first baseman, with some games as the designated hitter.

Mitch Moreland won a Gold Glove as the Rangers' first baseman last season. He became a free agent and agreed to a \$5.5 million, one-year deal with Boston.

Despite only being around Napoli for the end of the 2015 season, Banister saw the slugger's relentless pursuit of wanting to win a World Series.

"It was an absolute joy to be around him," Banister said. "Another part of the glue that puts together, in my mind, when we start thinking about a championship run."

The 35-year-old Napoli, going into his 12th major league season, set career highs with 34 homers and 101 RBIs with Cleveland last year. He is a .252 career hitter with the Los Angeles Angels (2006-10), Texas (2011-12, 2015), Boston (2013-15) and Cleveland.

BAYLOR LARIAT RADIO

Jam-packed slate of action

February 17

Baylor Bears Baseball vs. Niagara University Purple Eagles

Coverage begins at 6:05 p.m.

February 18

#4 Baylor Basketball vs. #2 Kansas Jayhawks

Coverage begins at 12 p.m.

#4 Lady Bears Basketball vs. OK State Cowgirls

Coverage begins at 4:45 p.m.

February 19

Baylor Bears Baseball vs. Niagara University Purple Eagles

Coverage begins at 11:45 a.m.

February 20

Don't Feed the Bears- Week 21

Podcast begins at 5:15 p.m.

Baylor Bears Baseball vs. Nevada Wolf Pack

Coverage begins at 6:15 p.m.



WE'RE THERE WHEN YOU CAN'T BE

BIT.LY/LARIATRADIO

Sports Take: BU vs. KU, all or nothing

BEN EVERETT
Sports Writer

No. 4-ranked Baylor men's basketball hosts No. 3 Kansas this Saturday at the Ferrell Center in a matchup that is arguably the most important game in head coach Scott Drew's time in Waco.

When Drew arrived in 2003, the men's basketball program was mired in scandal. Nevertheless, he has taken the team to heights never before seen by Baylor basketball fans.

With an NCAA Tournament bid this season, which is a lock at this point, the Bears will have made the big dance four straight years, a feat that no Baylor men's basketball team has pulled off before.

However, with two Elite Eights and a Sweet Sixteen under his belt, Drew has seen deep tournament runs. What he hasn't seen is success against the Big 12's top dog.

Since 2009-10, around the time the Bears rose to national relevance, Drew has had just two wins over the Jayhawks in 15 tries. Additionally, Baylor has yet to win a Big 12 Championship, with Kansas winning the league every year since 2005.

This season started out promising for Baylor in terms of obtaining the Big 12 title. In the nonconference games, the Bears looked strong, knocking off multiple ranked teams and garnering media attention. To start conference play, they were able to remain undefeated and reach the No. 1 ranking before falling to West Virginia.

However, the race was still on, as the Jayhawks fell in Morgantown, W.Va. as well. The first meeting between Baylor and Kansas happened on Feb. 1 in Lawrence, Kan. Despite a history of losing by a large margin at Kansas, the Bears hung in and almost



Associated Press

IT'S A BLOCK PARTY Baylor sophomore guard Jake Linsey blocks a shot in a game against the Kansas Jayhawks on Feb. 1 in Lawrence, Kan. The Bears lost the game 73-68.

stole a win, losing by only five points.

The loss dropped Baylor back one spot in the Big 12 standings, and subsequent losses to Kansas State and Texas Tech have the Bears now two games back from the Jayhawks.

The only reasonable way

for Baylor to fight its way back into the conversation for best team in the conference is by beating the current best team in the conference.

Yet the motivation for downing the Jayhawks doesn't just come from a standpoint of conference championships, it comes from a recent history of

falling short.

Earlier this year, a five-point loss. In the 2016 season, the Bears fell by eight at the Ferrell Center. In 2015, that margin was just one.

That's why Saturday's showdown is such an important one.

The Bears won in Kansas

City, Mo., in 2012 and picked up a home win in 2013 despite being an inferior team. Since then, there have been no numbers in the win column against Kansas.

Currently sitting at 22-4, this might be Baylor men's basketball's best team ever, and they have a chance to prove it

Saturday on the hardwood.

The best team, record wise, in Baylor history went 30-8, knocked off the No. 3-ranked Kansas Jayhawks and made it all the way to the Elite Eight. That was five years ago. Let's see what this team can do.



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