

Baylor Lariat

WE'RE THERE WHEN YOU CAN'T BE

Monday, December 9, 2019

baylorlariat.com

OH SUGAR, SUGAR!

Bears to face Georgia in first Sugar Bowl since 1957



BOWL ISSUE 2019

BU defense focuses on growth, ‘next man up’ mentality

JESSIKA HARKAY
Sports Writer

The 2019 Baylor Bears’ defense has etched its name into the program’s history book. In head coach Matt Rhule’s third year, a name that isn’t mentioned often is his defensive coordinator’s, Phil Snow. Snow, who not only has spent the last three years developing the Bears’ defense we see today, but has also helped work hand-in-hand with the head coach for over seven years to foster successful football teams.

“I’ve been a head coach for seven years and . . . Phil Snow, Mike Siravo, we’ve all been together for seven years,” head coach Matt Rhule said before the championship matchup this weekend. “It’s our third championship game in seven years,”

Snow has over 36 years of collegiate coaching experience, and in his four seasons at Temple, he led a program that was ranked third nationally in total defense and 11th in scoring in 2016.

And just like he established a defensive front that was near impossible to move against, he’s creating the same foundation at Baylor.

“Our guys understand now that you’re not done with the game plan on Thursday. You’re done with the game plan when the clock hits zero,” Rhule said in early November. “You’re learning through the game. Phil Snow was saying that to the team in 2017. It just took until now for the guys to understand that we’ve got to learn through the game. We’ve got to adjust to the things that happen in-game if we want to get better and better and better. That’s where I think the maturity of our team is showing.”

Snow knew the type of team he wanted to establish as the Bears set two important goals prior to the season — to understand the importance of turnovers and generate sacks; two things that Baylor excelled to help clinch their 11-2 season.

“We lost our two starting corners last year,” Rhule said. “Grayland [Arnold] makes the move from corner to safety. It’s a lot of the same guys, but they have really grown and matured. This season is about, to me, what Phil Snow has done as much as anyone else. I stand up here and people say good things about me when we win, but this year has been about Phil. It’s been about Evan Cooper, Mike Siravo, Frank [Okam], the job they have done on defense, transforming what we do on defense.”

The Bears secondary had 17 interceptions in 2019, including at least one takeaway in 15 straight

games and 30 overall in 2019. It doesn’t just stop there. Defenses under Rhule have forced two or more turnovers in 37 of 88 career games coached, including 33 takeaways in 15 games at Baylor.

So, goal one: complete.

On the defensive line, the Bears have 43 sacks in 13 games this year after just 25 last season. Led by James Lynch with 12.5 in 2019, Lynch not only set the school’s sack record by himself, but helped the team set its own program mak for the most in a season.

Turnovers and sacks aren’t the only success the defense had. The most important part was shutting down opponents’ offensive momentum. The defensive unit only allowed six points in 13 opening drives. Along with forcing opening punts, the Bears have held their opponents to only 64 first half points.

Senior linebacker Jordan Williams said leaving open gaps for the opposing offense to exploit led to big plays against the Baylor defense.

“So we all took it upon ourselves just to do our job a little better,” Williams. “If you win your gap, they can’t run the ball in that gap. If you do your job and make the plays that are supposed to be there, then you have a good defense.”

It wasn’t something that happened overnight or was a steady incline. Off a 7-6 season in 2018, the Bears had to adapt to losing players, players moving positions and finding what worked right for their team before becoming a dominating force.

“We didn’t want to play with only 11 guys, we wanted to play with 20 or 30 guys that can rotate,” senior linebacker Ross Maticsik said. “Coach Snow kind of preached that ‘I want to have a lot of the guys get into the game and play.’ With that said, he coached the twos like he coaches the ones.”

It paid off. After the loss of key senior linebacker Clay Johnston and sophomore Terrel Bernard having to step up, the Baylor defense has focused on growth and a “next man up” mentality.

“The players on defense have really grown and become good players,” Rhule said prior to Baylor’s 61-6 win at Kansas. “There’s a lot of veterans in the secondary. You have some younger guys. We played all man on third down this past game (talking about their first Oklahoma loss). We’ve never really done that and we said you know what, we are going to try to evolve and be a better man to man team.”

The Baylor defense will have some time to grow before their next matchup. Heading to the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans on Jan 1. to face the Georgia Bulldogs, the Bears will have nearly a month to prepare to continue their defensive dominance.



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

SACK ATTACK Sophomore linebacker Terrel Bernard embraces junior defensive tackle James Lynch after his first sack of Texas quarterback Sam Ehlinger during Baylor’s 24-10 win over the Longhorns on Nov. 23 at McLane Stadium. Lynch holds the all-time career sacks record (20) and the single-season record with 12.5.



Kristen DeHaven | Multimedia Journalist

OH CAPTAIN, OUR CAPTAIN Senior linebacker Clay Johnston takes down Texas tech quarterback Jett Duffey in Baylor’s 33-30 overtime win on Oct. 12 at McLane Stadium.

Clay Johnston: Leading from the sidelines, in practice

JESSIKA HARKAY
Sports Writer

You have to be a different kind of leader when you serve as a captain in the Big 12 Championship and you haven’t played since October. You have to be another type of leader when you inspire from a sideline more than on the field. You also have to be a special leader when your presence alone can influence all those around you.

Despite losing his senior year to a knee injury against Texas Tech in early October, linebacker Clay Johnston has been one of the biggest defensive pieces that contributed to Baylor’s 11-2 season. Prior to his injury, the Abilene native led the team with 58 tackles, averaging 9.2 per game, in just six games.

With 237 career tackles (147 solo) and 26.5 tackles for a loss under his belt, the linebacker was on the road to surpassing career and school records, and even received second team All-Big 12 honors despite not completing the season. But Johnston’s presence wasn’t just dominant on the field; his leadership became bigger than being a defensive captain.

“I think the great thing about Clay is: Clay will still be able to lead,” head coach Matt Rhule said after the season-ending injury. “He’ll still be able to coach, he’ll still be around. All he keeps saying to me is ‘I don’t want to be a distraction.’ What kind of distraction can you be?”

A distraction is the last thing Johnston became as his teammates could account for his influence on the sideline and as a mentor.

“You have to know who Clay is,” senior long snapper and linebacker Ross Maticsik said. “He’s a

goofy kind of guy. He lightens the mood a lot. He’s a great football player who knows the game inside and out. Having him help you on and off the field is important.”

The loss of the senior forced Baylor’s defensive unit to work as a team and make up for his absence. Sophomore linebacker Terrel Bernard stepped up as a starter in Johnston’s place. Since his Oct. 19 start against Oklahoma State, the sophomore tallied 77 tackles, four sacks and a forced fumble. But Rhule said Bernard’s job was not to replace Johnston — it was up to the entire unit to make up for his loss.

“The biggest thing is that Clay was going sideline to sideline and making up for a lot of other guys’ mistakes,” Rhule said. “So as I told the team: let’s not add. Terrel [Bernard]’s not going to go out there and try to replace Clay. Everyone replace Clay. You know, everyone do your job a little bit better.”

The Baylor defensive unit held their ground without their leader on the field.

Throughout the 13 games of the 2019 season, the Bears held opponents to just 129 points in the first three quarters (an average of 9.9 points.) In the Big 12 championship matchup, Baylor’s defense was able to limit Oklahoma to a season-low 433 offensive yards and Sooners’ quarterback Jalen Hurts to a season-low 38 rushing yards on 23 carries.

Johnston’s presence in the Big 12 end-of-season showdown was known too, as he was able to lead with the captains during the coin toss.

“That was huge and something we talked about all week,” Bernard said. “Clay obviously is one of our leaders. I feel so sorry for him that he couldn’t play in this game, but having him out there as a captain shows what kind of leader he is and what kind of person.”



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

REDEMPTIVE SIC ‘EM The Baylor sideline, featuring head coach Matt Rhule, celebrates with plenty of sic’ems as the Bears push the Big 12 Championship game versus Oklahoma into overtime.

Will the season have a sweet ending? Bears prepare to take on Georgia in Sugar Bowl

MATTHEW SODERBERG
Sports Writer

After selection Sunday, No. 7 Baylor football is set to take on No. 5 Georgia in the Sugar Bowl on New Years’ Day. The Bears are seeking their first win against the Bulldogs, having lost the previous four.

With both the SEC and Big 12 champions heading to the College Football Playoff, the second-place finishers take their automatic bids into the New Years Six bowl. It’s Baylor’s first trip to the Sugar Bowl since 1957, a loss to Tennessee.

The final game of the season is also Baylor’s third BCS/New Years Six bowl in program history, after losing the Fiesta Bowl to UCF in 2013 and the Cotton Bowl to Michigan State in 2014. The 11-2 Bears are also in search of their first 12-win season in program history.

While Baylor has been the insurgent into the national conversation this year, Georgia has been at the top of the polls for years. The Bulldogs also played for the chance to make the playoff this week as the No. 4 team, but instead, they lost to No. 2 LSU and fell out of the playoff picture.

Georgia plays a southern brand of smashmouth football, with a hard-nosed offensive line and strong play in the backfield. RB D’Andre Smith leads the team with 1,216 rushing yards on average 6.2 yards per carry.

The offensive line has also only given up 12 sacks this season. Georgia head coach Kirby Smart said in his press conference after the LSU game that they define their team by the guys they have.

“You have an offense that’s built around the players you have,” Smart said. “So you take the players you have, and you use your strengths. With the players we have, we have certain strengths. We usually have good pass protection. We have a good offensive line. We’ve got good backs.”

In the SEC Championship game, the Bulldogs managed to gain just 286 yards, nearly 200 less than the Tigers gained. Georgia was also held to just 61 rushing yards and a 2.4 yards average on the ground. Smart said it wasn’t the fault of the scheme that lost the game Saturday.

“Our ability to run the ball has not been consistent this year ... It’s not a matter of what is your offensive philosophy. It is what is the best way to win the game. I honestly think that’s what we’re trying to do.”

Last year, Georgia played in the Sugar bowl against Texas, and the Longhorns went to New Orleans and stole the game from a higher-rated Bulldogs squad that had also just missed the playoff. Many speculated Georgia may have been less focused going into the game, and Baylor head coach Matt Rhule said during a teleconference today there wouldn’t be that issue with his team.

“Where we came from in the past three years ago to where we are now, I know our guys are going to play their best game and give our best effort.

After going 1-11 just two years ago, the Bears on the verge of their best season in the history of the program. Rhule said despite the loss to Oklahoma, the team can still make a lasting mark this season.

“Whatever bowl people ask us to play, let’s go play one more game together, let’s finish as a top-10 team, and let’s get to 12 wins, which has never been done,” Rhule said. “And more importantly, we’ll be back.”

What to do in New Orleans:

Parade!
Time: 2:30-5 p.m. on Dec. 31
Where: Elvisian Fields Ave. and Decatur Streets, proceeds through French Quarter, past Allstate Fanfest, ends at Canal Street
Cost: FREE!

Zoo Year’s Eve
Time: 10:30-12:30 a.m.
Where: Audubon Zoo
Cost: Free w/zoo admission

Dick Clark’s New Year’s Rockin’ Eve
Time: 9-12 a.m.
Where: Jax Brewery, 620 Decatur Street
Cost: FREE to gather outside

2019 Season Recap: Year of the Bear 2.0



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

1-0

Baylor vs UTSA
Sept. 7, 2019
W, 63-14

Play of the game: Denzel Mims runs a post route to bring in a 26-yard pass for Baylor's third TD against the Roadrunners.



2-0

Baylor vs Stephen F. Austin
Aug. 31, 2019
W, 56-17

Play of the game: Tresten Ebner reverse fields to score a 21-yard rushing TD early in the second quarter, bringing the score to 21-7.



3-0

Baylor vs Iowa State
Sept. 28, 2019
W, 23-21

Play of the game: With 21 seconds left in the game, John Mayers kicks the game-winning field goal.



4-0

Baylor vs Kansas State
Oct. 5, 2019
W, 31-12

Note of the game: Baylor wins its first road game since 2017 and only the third win in Manhattan.



5-0

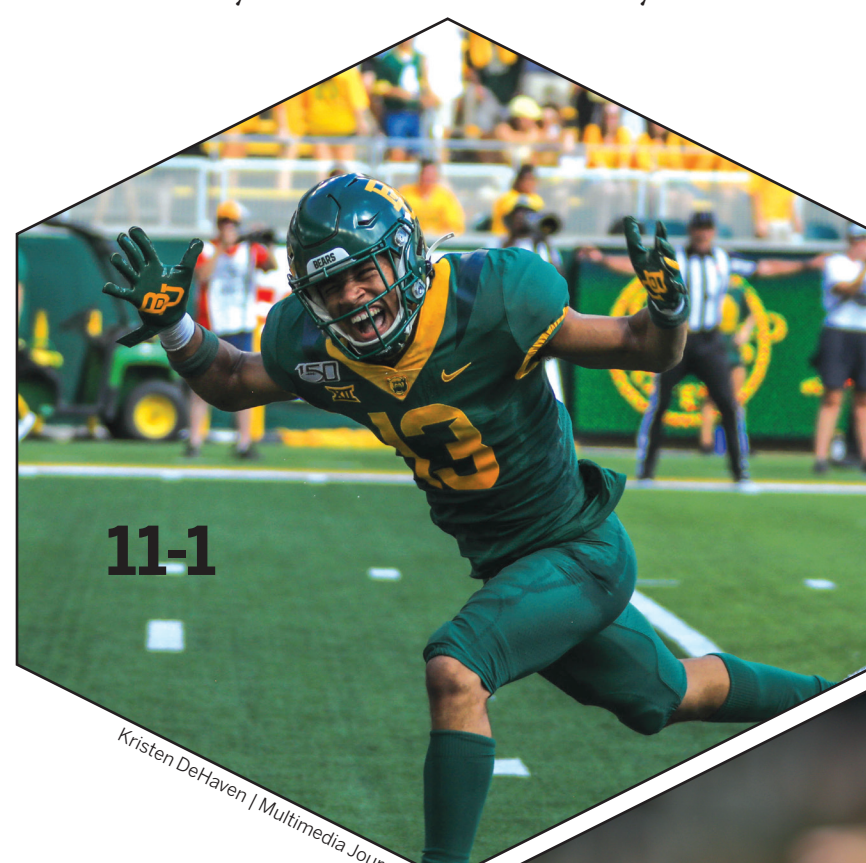
2019 Dr Pepper Big 12 Championship
Baylor vs Oklahoma
Dec. 7, 2019
L, 30-23 (OT)



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

11-2

The Bears made it really tough for Oklahoma to win its fifth straight Big 12 title. Baylor was one play short of breaking the Sooners' championship streak. Without their starting quarterback, the Bears threw in redshirt freshman Gerry Bohanon to put Baylor ahead 13-10 at half-time. But Bohanon had been banged up all week and had to be taken out as well. Enter third-string true freshman Jacob Zeno. Zeno launched an 81-yard pass to junior running back Tresten Ebner to cut OU's 10-point lead down to three. Then he followed it up with a 78-yard pass to senior wide receiver Chris Platt to set up a game-tying field goal, which led to Baylor's third overtime of the year.



11-1

Kristen DeHaven | Multimedia Journalist

Baylor vs Kansas
Nov. 30, 2019
W, 61-6

Note of the game: With this victory, Baylor made history, becoming the first Power Five program to go from 1-11 to 11-1 in two years.



6-0

Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

Baylor vs Texas Tech
Oct. 12, 2019
W, 33-30 (OT)

Play of the game: Charlie Brewer ties the game in an 81-yard scoring drive with 1:30 left in regulation for Matt Rhule's first-ever OT game, the first of three this season.

Baylor vs Texas
Nov. 23, 2019
W, 24-10

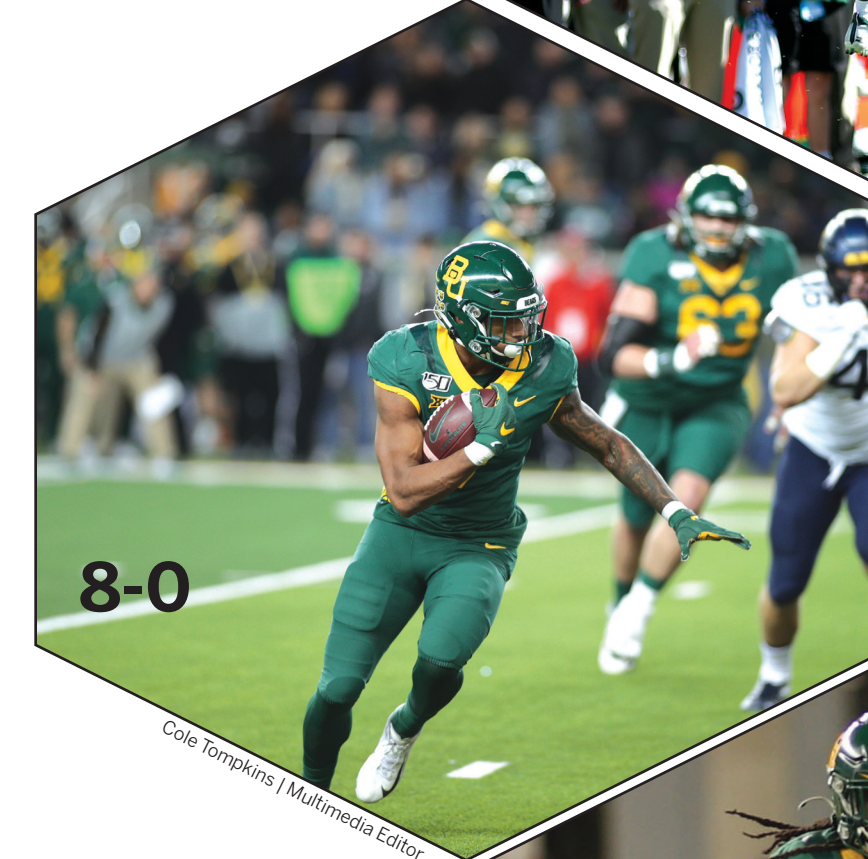
Stat of the game: James Lynch breaks the all-time career sacks record after taking down Texas QB Sam Ehlinger twice.



9-1

Baylor vs TCU
Nov. 9, 2019
W, 29-23 (OT)

Play of the game: John Mayers hits a 51-yard field goal to send Baylor into its second overtime game of the year.



8-0

Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

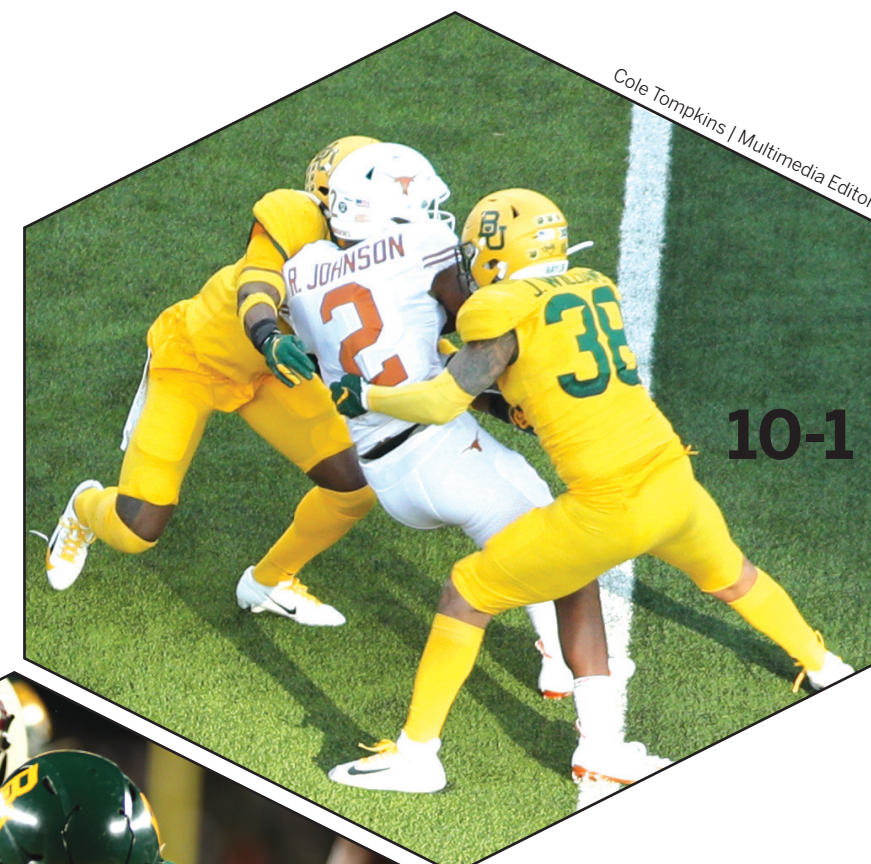
Baylor vs Oklahoma State
Oct. 19, 2019
W, 45-27

Stat of the game: JaMycal Hasty rushed for 139 yards and two TDs, including one a 73-yard catch and run.



7-0

Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor



10-1

Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

Baylor vs Oklahoma
Nov. 16, 2019
L, 34-31

Note of the game: College GameDay returned to Waco for a primetime matchup to McLane's largest crowd ever (50, 223).



9-0

Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

Baylor vs West Virginia
Oct. 31, 2019
W, 17-14

Note of the game: The Bears snapped a three-game losing streak to WVU with a super close Halloween win.

BIG XII CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

OU 30 | 23 BU
Final/OT



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

NOT SHORT IN SPIRIT The Bears suffered their second lost of the season to OU by falling short in overtime, however, Baylor’s spirit at AT&T Stadium was in full supply.



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

FINALLY INTO THE END ZONE Sophomore wide receiver Tyquan Thornton reels in a 33-yd pass from redshirt freshman quarterback Gerry Bohannon for the Bears first touchdown of the day.



Kristen DeHaven | Multimedia Journalist

WISH YOU WERE HERE 65,191 football fans filled AT&T Stadium to cheer on their team during the Big 12 Championship game.



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

NOT OVER YET The Bears end their first-ever Big 12 Championship game appearance with an overtime loss, however, head coach Matt Rhule said in press, “We’ll be back.”



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

MAKING MOVES Graduate wide receiver Chris Platt hauled in a 78-yd pass from freshman quarterback Jacob Zeno to put the Bears in field goal range in the fourth quarter.



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

A SOONER STREAK With Saturday’s fifth straight Big 12 win, Oklahoma becomes the first college football team to win 10 conference championship games all-time.



Kristen DeHaven | Multimedia Journalist

BEAR-LY THERE Junior quarterback Charlie Brewer left the game in the second quarter to be evaluated and didn’t return to the game.



Kristen DeHaven | Multimedia Journalist

BACK IN A FLASH Junior runningback Trestan Ebner cuts into the Oklahoma lead with an 81-yd touchdown from freshman quarterback Jacob Zeno in the fourth quarter. Ebner’s teammates celebrate with him in the end zone after the major score.



Kristen DeHaven | Multimedia Journalist

CATCHING PRAYERS Sophomore wide receiver Tyquan Thornton comes back to the ball to make a catch in front of a waiting Sooner defender just before halftime.



Cole Tompkins | Multimedia Editor

A CASE TO BE MADE Baylor head coach Matt Rhule was frustrated by what he believed to be a missed pass interference call.

SPORTS TAKE

Sporterberg’s final rankings

MATTHEW SODERBERG
Sports Writer

The regular season is over, and all across the map, not a creature was stirring, not even a wildcat. Not a Bear, either. After the loss to Oklahoma, Baylor has been relegated to the Sugar Bowl to face No. 5 Georgia.

Everyone speculated for a week about what would have to happen for Baylor to get in the College Football Playoff, or for what kind of chaos would have to ensue to make the weekend fun. Neither happened, as the weekend was just about as predictable as college football could be.

No. 1 Ohio State beat No. 8 Wisconsin. No. 2 LSU beat No. 4 Georgia. No. 3 Clemson beat No. 23 Virginia for their first ranked win of the season. No. 6 Oklahoma beat No. 7 Baylor. The only upset was Oregon over Utah, but most people thought there was a healthy chance of that happening.

The only question for the committee was what school to put No. 1, and at 11 a.m. Sunday, it was announced they'd go with the Bayou Bengals. I have fully endorsed LSU for the No. 1 spot for most of the season. They four top-13 wins, including a win at Alabama while Tua Tagovailoa was healthy.

The Buckeyes had an argument: they've

stomped every team by at least 10 points this season. They were, however, tested Saturday night. Down 21-7 at the half, the college football world wondered whether their run was a fluke.

Ohio State handled Wisconsin in the second half of that game, but it proved the team wasn't infallible, opening the hole for the Tigers to sneak through.

The other Tigers, Clemson, are now on a 28-game win streak that features a national title and another berth in the Final Four. Trevor Lawrence and his squad will take on the Buckeyes in Arizona for the chance to move onto the championship game.

Jalen Hurts and Oklahoma also climbed their way into the playoff, and now have the chance to knock off LSU from their undefeated perch. It won't happen. They almost lost twice to Baylor.

So I assume LSU and Ohio State will play in the championship game. It will come down to whether the Buckeyes' vaunted defensive backs can defend LSU's high-powered passing attack. Give me the Tigers for their third national championship this century.

For Baylor and Georgia, it's reminiscent of Texas' game against the Bulldogs in last year's Sugar Bowl. If Georgia decides to show up, the Bears will get killed. If they don't, Baylor can stand up to them and take home the win like the Longhorns did last year when they declared themselves "back." Give me Baylor by a field goal.

Award Predictions:

Coach of the Year:
Matt Rhule, Baylor

Heisman:
Joe Burrow, Sr QB
LSU

Doak Walker:
Jonathan Taylor, Jr RB
Wisconsin

Biletnikoff:
CeeDee Lamb, Jr WR
Oklahoma

Bednarik:
Chase Young, Jr DE
Ohio St

Jim Thorpe:
Grant Delpit, Jr S
LSU

Broyles:
Joe Brady
LSU

SPORTS TAKE

A Letter From The Sports Editor

Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for keeping up with us this semester. For picking up the Lariat every Tuesday and Friday and skipping straight to the sports section. For opening your Morning Buzz emails and clicking through our stories first (*wink*).

This season of Baylor sports has been incredible to cover. To have four ranked teams this fall, as well as the rest of our programs competing at such a high level is amazing. The sports crew here at the Lariat is truly fortunate to get to witness and write about it.

Although I am a baseball person, today I sit here at my sports desk, surrounded by stat sheets, old copies of previous Lariat bowl issues and Christmas decorations, to talk about football.

When I was a freshman, Baylor football had one victory and it wasn't even a home win. Then jumping to a bowl appearance last year, expectations grew for the program and for the reporters that covered the Bears.

When I took this job in May, I set a high standard for myself and for the people that were going to be working with me because I knew the level of excellence that Baylor had set for itself was high. I experienced it covering spring sports earlier this year and I realized pretty quickly that this year was going to require so much more from the Lariat Sports team.

But I don't think anyone could have predicted this season (except maybe Drake Toll who's going to drag out his Aug. 28 column until the end of time.)

In September, Baylor football wasn't even ranked even though they were undefeated. Now the Bears are heading to the Sugar Bowl after competing in their first Big 12 Championship game and completing the quickest turnaround of any power five conference team in history.

That's the stuff that legends are made of, and as all of us that have watched "The Sandlot" religiously know, "Heroes get remembered, but legends never die"

Matt Rhule, a very nice man by the way, asked Baylor Nation to trust the process. Well the process was trusted, and the future is bright. Coach Rhule gave Baylor fans something to put their faith in again. Everyone loves an underdog and everyone loves a comeback. Baylor delivered both this season.

My favorite part of all of this is that it's just the beginning. With Coach Rhule signing an extension and the way recruiting has worked out for the program, Baylor football could be this successful for a long time.

That still rings true after the conference championship game. The fact that we played two freshman backup quarterbacks, and were only a play away from winning in regulation is crazy. It makes me excited for the future. With the amount of freshmen and sophomores that got playing time on defense and O-line, the 2020 squad is going to have a lot of experience.

So to wrap this up, I want to thank Coach Rhule and Mack Rhoades as well as everyone at Baylor Athletic Communications for cooperating with us throughout the season, not just with football but in our coverage of all Baylor sports. Thank you to the coaches and athletes that gave us their time and input and allowing us to tell their stories.

Most especially thank you to my fellow Lariat staff members for all the work and dedication they've put in this semester. I know it was hard. There was a lot of crying and not a lot of sleeping, but we pulled through.

The journey isn't over yet, Bears. We'll see y'all in New Orleans!

Have a happy holiday and thank you for the bottom of my heart.

DJ Ramirez
Sports Editor of the Baylor Lariat



SPORTS TAKE REVISITED

Baylor football could accidentally win Big 12

DRAKE TOLL
BROADCAST REPORTER

*column originally published on August 28, 2019

The Baylor Bear football team could accidentally go 11-1 this regular season. Obviously winning games is no accident, yet I find no better word in a year where the Big 12 could see more parity than the infamous 2007 season in which Kansas (yes, Kansas) finished 12-1 and defeated No. 3 Virginia Tech in its only BCS bowl victory in school history.

While the conference as a whole may be more dramatic than the most recent installment of “The Bachelorette,” this year’s Baylor squad differs greatly from the 2007 team that was quarterbacked by Blake Szymanski, who threw a Big XII -leading 18 interceptions and guided the Bears to a 3-9 record that assisted a 14 year stretch without more than five wins in a single season.

This season’s group is not just exponentially better than the 2007 squad, but the Bears have the potential to ride a deadly passing attack and experienced defense all the way to the Big 12 championship game — just hear me out.

Breaking down the 2019 schedule, Charlie Brewer and company are obviously heavy favorites against the likes of Stephen F. Austin, UTSA, Rice, West Virginia and Kansas. At this point, Baylor has an 82% chance or better of winning each of those contests individually, according to ESPN.

Yet parity is found in the remaining seven games on the docket that take place against Iowa State, Kansas State, Texas Tech, Oklahoma State, TCU, Oklahoma and Texas. We can start with analyzing the top three teams from this group.

Baylor, coming off last year’s bowl win in coach Matt

Rhule’s second season, has arguably the easiest conference schedule makeup in a round-robin league like the Big 12. The evidence of this lies in McLane Stadium playing host to the only three conference teams ranked in the preseason top 25, No. 4 Oklahoma, No. 10 Texas and No. 21 Iowa State. We’ll say, as the optimistic Bear supporters that we are, Baylor is able to pull off an upset win in two of these three thanks to a few rowdy nights on the Brazos. That, coupled with the five wins in games that Baylor is heavily favored, puts the green and gold at a record of 7-1 in those eight contests.

The remaining four games that we are missing need a bit more breakdown considering they, like most of the schedule, are highly volatile.

Let’s start the detailed analysis with the fifth Saturday of Baylor football that sees the Bears travel to Kansas State coming off of an upset win against #21 Iowa State in Waco. Baylor will march in at 4-0 against a Wildcat squad that should come into the game at a record of 2-2 in Chris Klieman’s first year in Manhattan. Most analysts will give Baylor the nod in its first true road test that boosts the Bears to 5-0.

The next toss-up game comes the following week against Texas Tech in Waco. This game is borderline a guaranteed win, as ESPN gives Baylor a 73% chance of victory.

I project that the Red Raiders limp into McLane coming off two straight losses under first year head coach Matt Wells only to be blown out by a 5-0 Bears team that is cracking into top 25 polls. Baylor will be an undefeated 6-0 in the first half of the year, and if you’re keeping up with the maze of analysis, this puts coach Rhule and the Bears at 9-1 in the games that have been broken down with two tough games left to settle.

The first of these tossups comes immediately after trouncing Texas Tech. Baylor will take a 6-0 record into Stillwater to face an Oklahoma State team that will likely be sitting at 5-1. At this point, both programs will be in the top 25 polls and this will make for a high stakes battle between two ranked teams.

Why on earth would Baylor get the edge in a road game against

a top 25 opponent? The Cowboys don’t have a quarterback. Mike Gundy is still a man, but he’s far removed from being 40 and has so much uncertainty in the QB position that he has yet to even name a starter. Brewer puts on a show, and the Bears go into their second bye week at 7-0.

After a blowout win over West Virginia on Halloween night, we have just one more game to dissect as Rhule and his bruins boldly charge into the Holy War at 8-0 to face a likely 6-2 Horned Frog army.

Can the Bears sneak a victory? I don’t know about you, but I like their chances.

TCU, like Oklahoma State, has little certainty at quarterback. By this time, Brewer will be in the Heisman discussion and fry up the Frogs to propel Baylor to 9-0 for the second time in school history. Subsequently, Baylor will likely host ESPN’s College Gameday in Waco the following week for a showdown with Oklahoma. Even if you count this as a loss, I tab the Bears with winning out against Texas at home and Kansas on the road.



There you have it. While unlikely, it is very possible to see the Baylor football team finish with 11 wins and one loss come December. This feat will surely punch their ticket into the top 10 national rankings and land them with a spot in the Big 12 championship game.

Honestly, as long as we’re talking hypothetically, Baylor could even win the conference championship game and land a spot in the four-team playoff. If you think about it long enough, a national title win isn’t even too far out of reach at this point. Maybe I’m just an optimistic Bear fan, or maybe there’s a realistic method to my madness.

*Please appreciate the intentional pun placed here.

Considering the rivalry between the Horned Frogs of TCU and Bears of Baylor is called the Holy War, I not only reference TCU as an army to play on the term war, but a group of frogs is also classified as an army. Don’t worry about patting me on the back for this, I’ve already taken care of it.

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“We’ll be back.” -Baylor head coach Matt Rhule, in press.

3:09 PM · Dec 7, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

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MON-FRI: 9 AM-6 PM SAT: 10 AM-4 PM SUN: 2 PM-4 PM