

MIDSEASON REVIEW

The good, the bad of the No. 2 Bears in 2015
pg. D2



#CaglesCorner

Tyler Cagle names his top four in the playoff race.
pg. D6

“ I expect Coleman to move up to No. 3 next week. – Joshua Davis

#HeismanWatch shortlist **pg. D5**

PODCAST >> Don't Feed the Bears: Special homecoming episode as we talk Bennett BaylorLariat.com



Trey Honeycutt | Lariat Photographer

ALL SMILES, ALMOST Baylor fans cheer on the Baylor football team during a game between Baylor and Lamar University on Sept. 12 at McLane Stadium. The game against Lamar was Baylor's home opener for the 2015 season. Baylor won 66-31.

In the shadow

Phil Bennett defends record

SHEHAN JEYARAJAH
City Editor

It's 2 p.m., and defensive coordinator Phil Bennett is preparing for Wednesday practice in his office overlooking Baylor's outdoor facility.

From the second you walk into his office, Bennett oozes intensity and fire. As we begin speaking, he opens letters and answers questions with the same voracity he exhibits on the sideline at McLane Stadium.

He knows the criticism his defense has gotten since he's been at Baylor. He knows Baylor is perceived as an "offensive" school that can't stop anyone. He knows head coach Art Briles is beloved while he at times is maligned. He knows the days of a No. 1 overall defense may be behind him with the way the game is shifting.

But from the moment he begins speaking, it is clear: Phil Bennett could not care less what anyone else thinks. And he'll let you know it.

"I know what we do here and I know that it works," Bennett said. "Anyone who wants to b-- about two Big 12 championships can go jump in a lake."

In many ways, Briles and Bennett are perfect complements. Both were born on the same day: Dec. 3, 1955. Briles has roots in West Texas. Briles is an offensive guru who has led seven top-10 offenses. Bennett is a defensive

BENNETT >> Page D3

Incomparable

Homecoming and McLane make unbeatable pair

JOSHUA DAVIS
Sports Writer

The No. 2 Baylor Bears take on Iowa State for Homecoming this Saturday, where they are the best team in the country at winning at home.

Under head coach Art Briles, the team has won 19-straight home games in Waco, the longest active FBS winning streak.

"It's impressive and I think it says a lot about who we are as a fan base, how we play as a team and how we protect our turf," Briles said. "That's all good, but I think that just shows you how hard it is to consistently win."

Baylor's premier win streak started nearly three years ago on Homecoming against the Kansas Jayhawks.

Since that time, it's been nothing but home cooking for the Bears as they've rattled off win after win.

The Bears have won their last five homecoming matchups. The past three

games have been especially advantageous for Baylor as it has won those by an average margin of 45.3 points.

"We have a point to prove every time we step out on that field," said junior wide receiver Corey Coleman. "We can't tolerate anything, so we have to put our foot down and just be at our best. We have great fans, and we don't want to let anyone down."

Sophomore linebacker Taylor Young said he always looks forward to the excitement of homecoming and playing for a large crowd.

"It's always a big deal at home," Young said. "Seeing everybody in that green and gold, and other people that haven't been able to come to the games is exciting. It's a big deal to celebrate homecoming."

Homecoming just has a different feel, senior left tackle Spencer Drango said.

"At homecoming, there's a lot more people around Baylor, which is a really cool atmosphere to be around," Drango said. "It's electric, not just at the game, but the campus is electric. It's a really fun environment to

[take part in]."

Baylor was one of the first five schools to ever celebrate Homecoming and Drango recognized the significance.

"I think we have [one of] the longest Homecoming traditions in the United States, so it's a big game for Baylor and the University as a whole," Drango said.

"We have a lot of alumni coming back, but for us it's just another game on the schedule."

Junior quarterback Seth Russell admitted that the 92nd playing of the homecoming game represents a lot for the fans and alumni coming back to support the team, but agreed with Drango, saying it's just like any other game.

The Bears will take on the Cyclones at McLane Stadium at 11 a.m. Saturday. The game will be televised on ESPN.

Baylor notified fans planning to attend Saturday's game at McLane Stadium to participate in the annual #StripeMcLane game.

SIDE-BY-SIDE

HEAD COACHES

Briles vs ISU (4-2)
Rhoads vs BU (2-3)

TEAM RECORDS

Baylor – 6-0, 3-0
Iowa State – 2-4, 1-2

OFFENSE

Baylor – 719.7 ypg
Iowa State – 487.3 ypg

DEFENSE

Baylor – 381.5 ypg
Iowa State – 461.8 ypg

No. 2 Bears host Iowa State

TYLER CAGLE
Sports Writer

For the Baylor Bears, homecoming is a special time of the year. Families get together and celebrate their Baylor pride, reuniting for Pigskin Revue and football game during the weekend.

This year's homecoming game will see the second ranked Baylor Bears host the Iowa State Cyclones.

However, the pageantry of the homecoming season isn't affecting the Baylor football team as much as the normal student body.

"I think we have the longest homecoming tradition in the United States, so it's a big game for Baylor and the university as a whole," said senior tackle Spencer Drango. "We have a lot of alumni coming back, but for us it's just another game on the schedule."

While the game may be just another game on the schedule for the Bears, it begins

one of the toughest six game stretches in America to round out the season.

Although perennial cupcake Iowa State enters the game with just a 2-4 record, the Cyclones have played tough games against strong opposition.

"They're good; they're a good football team," said head coach Art Briles. "You can ask Toledo; they went to double OT in Toledo and Toledo is the number 19 or 20 team in America. TCU is the No. 3 or No. 4 team in America, and it was 24-21 TCU at half."

The Cyclones would eventually lose both of those referenced games yet their play has been noticeably improved in 2015.

Offensively, the Bears are playing their same old song and dance, torching the nation yet again.

The Bears rank sixth in passing yards per game and second in rushing, the only

Soccer faces TCU and UT

MEGHAN MITCHELL
Reporter

Baylor soccer is back on the road after beating Oklahoma and tying with the No. 17-ranked Texas Tech team at home last weekend.

"It was a really physical weekend for sure," said head coach Paul Jobson. "We got a little banged up."

"Two game weekends are tough, but the reality is, that's normal. That's what we are usually doing," Jobson said. "I think the physicality of the two games were probably tougher than the fact that we are playing two games. It's something most of these girls are used to. We were fortunate to have a few weeks where we didn't have that, and I think it has helped us to be healthy this far into the season."

The Bears (8-5-2, 3-1-1) will first head to Fort Worth in a Friday match-up against the strong TCU (8-7-0, 2-3-0 Big 12) team.

The Bears defense is going to have to shut down junior forward Michelle Prokof, who has scored nine goals this season.

"She's a really good player, but we're great defensively," Jobson said. "We are one of the best

SOCCER >> Page D6

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FOOTBALL >> Page D7

Better Than Ever

Baylor reaches new heights halfway through season

TYLER CAGLE
Sports Writer

At the midway point in the season, Baylor has shown it is one of the best programs in the nation.

After going 6-0, securing bowl eligibility and soaring to the No. 2 ranking in the polls, spirits are high for the Bears.

Offensively, the Bears are the nation's top offense in both points scored per game and yards per game.

A major factor of that success is the play of the offensive line, led by 2014 All-American left tackle Spencer Drango.

"As an offensive line, we've reached one of our goals - six wins after six games. We're bowl eligible, which is great, but we know we still have a lot of work to go," Drango said.

For Drango individually, his season has been terrific up to this point. A preseason candidate for the Outland Trophy and Wuerffel Trophy, Drango has not disappointed on or off the field.

Earlier this week, the Outland Trophy announced their top 25 rankings and Drango led the pack with a score almost 18 points higher than second place.

Individual accomplishments have come across the board for Baylor players this season. One huge standout for the Bears is junior wide receiver Corey Coleman.

Coleman has already broken the school record for touchdown catches in a single season, previously set by Kendall Wright. It took Coleman only 6 games to catch 16 touchdowns, an astounding feat.

"[The record] means a lot. Like I've said time and time again, [Kendall] is a great football player, arguably one of the best receivers that came through Baylor. It's exciting to be mentioned with his name," Coleman said.

With his play this season, Coleman has received high praise from numerous coaches and analysts, most recently West Virginia's Dana Holgorsen. Holgorsen called Coleman the best player in the country.

"Let's talk after 12 games," head coach Art Briles said. "We knew he's a special player. It's



Sarah Pyo | Lariat Photographer

MASTERMIND Head coach Art Briles walks to the sideline after a timeout discussion with his team during the game between West Virginia and Baylor on Saturday at McLane Stadium.

not earth-shattering news to us. We've been around him for four years, so we know what he brings to the table."

It's only been six games and people have been talking an awful lot. While Coleman gets a ton of praise for his performances, junior quarterback Seth Russell has also performed at an extremely high level.

After initially looking a bit rusty against SMU and Lamar, Russell has settled into his own, leading the nation in passer efficiency.

The dual-threat Garland native recently had a record setting performance of his own.

Against West Virginia last weekend, Russell became only the second Baylor quarterback to throw for 300 yards and run for 100 yards.

Russell torched the Mountaineers for 380

yards and five touchdowns through the air while also running for a team high 160 yards and another score. Russell's performance earned him numerous player of the week awards, but Russell's mindset is clear.

"It's nothing really right now," Russell said. "It's not until we get the national championship, and then we can look back and reminisce.

We have that focus and we have that goal, and that's win another Big 12 championship, and then have an opportunity to hopefully play for a national championship," Russell said.

Defensive linemen Shawn Oakman and Andrew Billings were billed as top NFL draft prospects coming into the season, and they have not disappointed so far.

Oakman, who became an Internet sensation

for his imposing stature, has recorded 17 tackles, 7.5 of which are for a loss. He has also recorded 3 sacks on the season, bringing his career total to 16, which is the most in Baylor school history.

In the interior, Billings has been as equally dominant, recording 21 tackles and eight tackles for loss, including a sack.

Billings has been the victim of numerous double and triple-teams but that has not stopped the junior defensive tackle.

"You can't double-team me all the time, you have to worry about what he's [Billings] doing. He's just as capable of making plays in the backfield as I am. If he does things the right way, it makes it 10 times easier," Oakman said. of Billings' ability.

The duo was the Big 12's best statistical defensive line tandem last season, and that success has continued on to 2015.

The Bears have earned their No. 2 rank in the nation with no doubt and dominant play across the board.

With the second place rank a school high, continue to watch the Bears this season. With their game against Iowa State, the Bears start one of the toughest remaining schedules in the nation.

The Bears will begin by traveling to Manhattan, Kan., to face the Kansas State Wildcats.

They then will host No. 17 Oklahoma Sooners before heading on a two game road streak, facing No. 14 Oklahoma State in Stillwater, Okla.

After their game against the Cowboys, the Bears will play the game everyone has been waiting for: the long awaited game against No. 4 TCU.

The Horned Frogs have had to endure an entire year of 61-58 chants after the Bears pulled off an improbable comeback last season.

The Bears will then end the season against Texas at McLane Stadium.

If the Bears can come out of that stretch unscathed, they should not only have secured a playoff spot but also the No. 1 seed in the playoffs.

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BENNETT from Page D1

mastermind who has led seven top-10 defenses.

The two played against each other in 1976, with Briles' Houston squad beating Bennett's Texas A&M powerhouse. The two went at it again in the mid-2000s while Bennett was coaching at SMU and Briles was coaching at the University of Houston in Conference USA.

"We had some great games. Great games," Bennett said. "I thought we played them pretty well, but I said to myself, this was the best offensive playcaller and offensive guy I have ever coached against. He didn't care whether he ran or passed, he would find a way to take advantage. That's the kind of guy I wanted to be around."

Eventually, Briles took the head-coaching job at Baylor in 2008, while Bennett was let go after a disappointing 1-11 record in 2007.

After only two years at the helm, Briles led a revitalized Baylor squad to its first bowl game in 16 years. The Bears played at Reliant Stadium in the Texas Bowl.

Among those in the crowd? Phil Bennett.

Bennett's stepdaughter, Katie White, is a Baylor alumna and former varsity soccer player. At the time, Bennett was the interim head coach at Pitt and would coach the Panthers to a BBVA Compass Bowl win less than two weeks later.

During his time off, Bennett sat in the end zone and watched the Bears give up 38 points and 533 yards of offense in a 38-14 upset loss to Illinois.

Bennett traveled back to Pittsburgh, Penn., after the game, and received a phone call when he got back. Art Briles was on the other end.

Briles told Bennett that he was thinking about making a change at defensive coordinator and Bennett was at the top of his list.

"It was like destiny," Bennett said. "He said 'with my offense and your defense, we'd win this thing.' I'm sure at the time, not many people believed him, but I believed him."

Briles did not get technical about why he decided to bring Bennett in.

"He's a dang good defensive coordinator, one of the best in the country," Briles said. "If Baylor's one of the best programs in the country, why not have the best coaches?"

From top to bottom, Baylor defensive goals are perfectly set out.

Force turnovers. Limit red zone opportunities. Force three-and-outs. Don't allow points. Limit big plays.

"You have to have a system and you can't just change it from week to week," Baylor linebacker coach and defensive recruiting coordinator Jim Gush said. "You can make tweaks, but you have to stick with your system. When you show



Trey Honeycutt | Lariat Photographer

UNSETTLED Defensive Coordinator Phil Bennett looks onto the field during the Baylor vs. Lamar game on Sept. 12. Baylor defeated Lamar 66-31.

players that you have a system and you want to do the same thing every week."

These are easier said than done, especially against some of the most high-powered offenses in college football playing in the Big 12.

The first season Bennett arrived in Waco, things began to change. Robert Griffin III swooped in and won the Heisman Trophy during Bennett's first season, and the entire tenor of the program began to change.

While the effect was there, the defense statistically was worse than it was under former defensive coordinator Brian Norwood.

"Art never lied, he never told me he was going to change his offense," Bennett said. "Right from the very beginning, it was about finding someone who could compromise and

succeed."

Under Norwood, Baylor's defense held opponents to 412 yards per game and 29 points per game. Bennett's defense allowed 493.4 yards and 37.2 points per game during his first two seasons in Waco.

The struggles came to a head during the first half of the 2012 season. Coming off a 10-win season, the Bears limped out to 3-4 start, with bad losses against TCU and Iowa State.

At that point, Baylor was on pace for the worst defense in the history of college football.

"We struggled, it shakes your confidence at times," Gush said. "But we never lost faith in what we were doing."

The results finally began to show themselves over the next few weeks.

Baylor lost to Oklahoma in their next game, but finally showed a spark on defense. The next week against No. 1 Kansas State, Baylor dominated from the opening whistle and made a huge turn.

Over the last five games of the season, Baylor held its opponents to 462.2 yards per game, nearly 100 yards less than the previous seven games. The Bears played four ranked opponents over that stretch, going 3-1.

"I still very much believe defense wins championships," Gush said. "And we have consistently gotten better since Coach Bennett has gotten here."

The real difference has come since the beginning of the 2013 season. Bennett's defenses have held opponents to 373 yards per game and 24.6 points. The Bears have outgained opponents by 250 yards per game and outscored teams by four touchdowns.

Most importantly, Baylor football has posted a 28-4 record with two Big 12 championships over that three-year stretch.

"Some people like to do what they do, they really struggle with change. Phil has embraced it," Gush said. "I've only been anything but a defensive coordinator under Phil Bennett. I think he's the best defensive coordinator in America."

Baylor football brought back 18 of 22 starters this season, including nine on the defensive side of the ball. The Bears came into the year ranked No. 4 in both polls.

The Bears might have the best team in college football, but expectations are as high as they have ever been in Waco.

Bennett acknowledged that at times, the start to this season has been difficult. The Bears allowed a combined 52 points to one-win SMU and FCS Lamar the first two weeks of the season.

"I mean think about it, we lose Shawn [Oakman] and Orion [Stewart] right before the first game. Then the first throw, the first play of our season, we allowed a 46-yard touchdown," Bennett said.

Since then, the Bears have found their stride. Baylor is holding teams to only 3.1 yards per rush and helping the Bears beat teams by an average margin of 41 points per game.

Even with the success, Bennett isn't bothered.

"I didn't have to come to Baylor to prove myself as a defensive coordinator," Bennett said. "A lot of people who come here forget where they've been. I've had No. 1 defenses before. With the way we play, I'll probably never have one again."

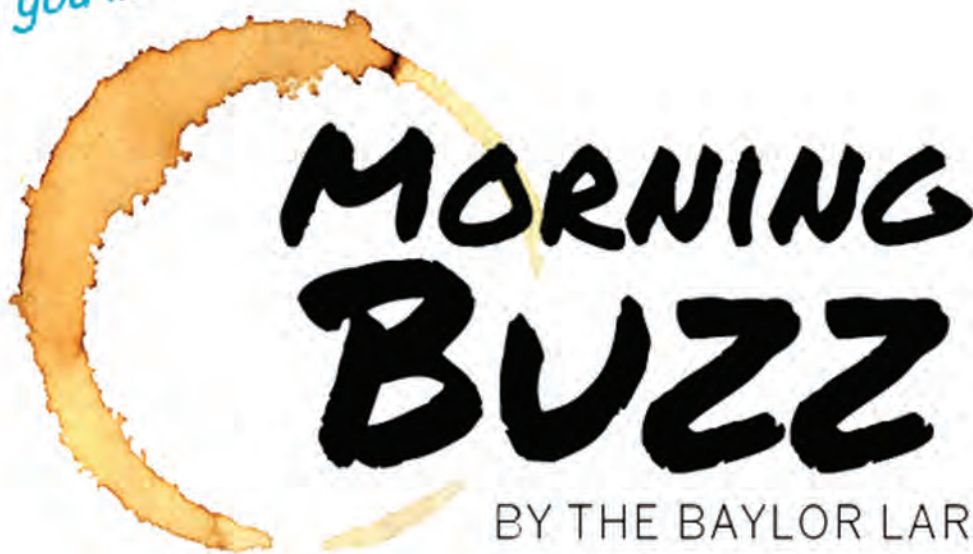
"But here, I might get the ultimate goal, that team prize. That's what it's all about."

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Men's basketball looks to build on success

JOSHUA DAVIS
Sports Writer

Baylor men's basketball was ranked No. 21 in the 2015-16 USA Today Preseason Coaches' Poll, marking the ninth straight year the Bears have been ranked to start the season and the fourth time BU has been listed in the preseason coaches' poll.

The No. 21 selection in the coaches' poll is the fourth-best in program history.

Last year, Baylor tied for fourth in the Big 12 and earned a No. 3 seed in the NCAA Tournament for a second consecutive season, giving the program its first-ever back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances.

Head coach Scott Drew is hopeful that the team can get back to the NCAA Tournament after a heartbreaking loss in the opening round last season.

With nine returning players, including All-Big 12 first-team selection, senior Rico Gathers, and Big 12 Sixth Man Award winner, senior Taurean Prince, the Bears look primed to reach March Madness.

"I think coaches remember those losses for a lifetime," Drew said Tuesday at the Big 12 Men's Basketball Media Day. "When I'm 80 and 90 years old, I'll probably still remember that game and other big losses because they just stick with you ... I think coaches remember those things. But when the players have that burning desire and they're the ones that have that experience, that's even more beneficial. Hopefully, at the end of this year, that's something that will have helped us."

Both returning forwards were named to the Malone Award Watch List, which recognizes the top power forwards in Division I men's basketball.

While the two seniors were selected onto the same preseason watch list, their play styles couldn't be more different.

Gathers, a native of Laplace, LA, has been described by many as a bruiser.

His overpowering 6-foot-8, 275-pound frame allowed him to lead the Big 12 Conference and break Baylor's single-season rebounding record with 394 boards.

He was the only Power-5 conference player to average more than 11 points and 11 rebounds per game.

Following his impressive 2014-2015 campaign, Gathers was named as a second-team All-American for his energetic playstyle.

Even with the noteworthy statistics last season, Gathers has made a point to make improvements at the free throw line, knowing that he will get there a lot, Drew said.



Roundup File Photo

COME ON AND JAM Senior center Rico Gathers slams dunks the ball during an NCAA tournament basketball game between Baylor and Wisconsin on March 27, 2014, in Anaheim, Calif. The Bears lost 52-69.

"First and foremost, if he can become a 75 to 80 percent free throw shooter, his production is going to go way up," Drew said. "Second thing, because we have a lot of length in practice, him finishing over length every day is something that will help. His jump shot has improved; it's a lot softer, a lot better rotation."

Prince, on the other hand, relied on his quick first step and three-point accuracy (.395 last season) to average 13.9 points in just 26.3 minutes per game.

His efficiency on the court gave him a second-team All-Big 12 honoree selection.

The 6-foot-7, 220 pound senior raised his level of play whenever it mattered most last season.

He ranked third in the Big 12 with 15.6

points per game in conference play. Following the season, his production at Baylor earned him a spot on Team USA for the 2015 Pan American Games, where he started every game and helped the team win a bronze medal.

"I think this summer really took his game to another level," Drew said. "Having an opportunity to be one of eight college players on the USA/Pan Am team, and just the confidence he was able to gain from that [was huge]. The way he's approaching each and every day at practice, it's great to see."

This will be the 13th season for Baylor's all-time wins leader, Scott Drew, but the first season with a 30 second shot clock.

Drew said he believes the new timer will have its challenges, but ultimately, it will make

the game quicker and more exciting.

"I think a quicker clock will help with that," Drew said. "Officials are going to call it closer this year, which will give more freedom of movement, which will help with the scoring as well. Our football team scores a lot of points, and it's fun to watch."

I know our basketball players like to score, so hopefully the tweaks this year will help."

Baylor will look to get its season started on a positive note when it opens the 2015-16 season on Nov. 13 against Stephen F. Austin at the Ferrell Center.

That game will tip off at 8:30 p.m. and be televised on FOX Sports Southwest-Plus.



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#HeismanWatch: Week 7

Top 5 improve stock after dominant weekend

JOSHUA DAVIS
Sports Writer

We're getting to the point in the college football season that Heisman contenders are finding it difficult to move up in the rankings.

After a week of botched punts and heartbreaking losses for teams that appeared to be on the rise, none of my Heisman standings changed.

Every contender turned in a solid performance to retain their previous ranking.

As conference play continues, I expect at least one player from the second tier to break through and challenge for the No. 1 spot. Here's a look at my Week 7 rankings:

1. RB LEONARD FOURNETTE (LSU)

For the fifth week in a row, Fournette is on top of my Heisman standings. He has proved to be unstoppable and absolutely embarrassed a touted defensive team in the Florida Gators (No. 18 against the run).

The running back from New Orleans churned up yards all game to help the No. 5 LSU Tigers remain undefeated.

At the rate he's going, Fournette looks powerful enough to lead LSU to a national title game, while also claiming Heisman honors.

His 180 yards and two touchdowns against Florida last week give him 1,202 yards and 14 touchdowns through six games this season. His 14 touchdowns are the second-most in the country behind Baylor's Corey Coleman.

The 6-foot-1, 230 pound RB will face an easier opponent this week in Western Kentucky before heading into a bye week to get ready for the Alabama Crimson Tide.

That game will be a true test of Fournette's greatness. If he can run the Tigers to victory in Tuscaloosa in a couple weeks, we may as well hand him the Heisman Trophy.

2. QB TREVONE BOYKIN (TCU)

Boykin continues to be right on the outside of the No. 1 spot. As I mentioned before, I believe the Heisman to be a two-horse race at this point, and Boykin is gaining momentum. The Horned Frogs' quarterback has put up some astounding



Associated Press

UP AND OVER Ohio State running back Ezekiel Elliott hurdles Penn State defender Trace McSorley during an NCAA college football game on Oct. 17, 2015, in Columbus, Ohio.

numbers through his first seven games.

He currently ranks second in the nation in total offense per game (425.6) and touchdown passes (25), and fifth in the nation in passing yards per game (362.7).

Despite the early struggles for TCU in the game last weekend versus Iowa State, Boykin was nearly perfect from start to finish. The Dallas native collected 510 yards of total offense and five touchdowns, while completing 84 percent of his passes.

Next up for the Horned Frogs is a bye week before a home game against West Virginia. At this point, the TCU quarterback just needs to keep up his level of play and hope Fournette slips up.

As long as Boykin keeps TCU fighting for a playoff spot, he'll remain at the top of this list.

3. RB EZEKIEL ELLIOTT (OHIO STATE)

Elliott ran his streak of 100-yard rushing games up to 12 after last weekend – an impressive feat. However, his dominance is muted due to the lack of flashy numbers.

Sure, Elliott continues to pile up yards, but not in the way that some other running backs have been putting up colossal stats. The junior's rushing totals in the last two games combined don't equal Elliott's breakout 274-yard output against Indiana on Oct. 3.

The problem for Elliott is that if he wants to move up the Heisman standings, he's going to have to put up those mind-blowing numbers. Otherwise, he will remain a consistent No. 3 or No. 4 on this list all season.

This week, Ohio State plays Rutgers (who ranks No. 30 in the nation against the run). This would be a good time for the 6-foot-1, 225 pound RB to make a statement and up his stock in the Heisman race.

Otherwise, he will drop a spot behind

Baylor's Corey Coleman.

4. WR COREY COLEMAN (BAYLOR)

Despite Coleman just now making an appearance on many national Heisman Watch lists, he's been on mine for weeks.

The Baylor receiver is undoubtedly the best best wide out in the nation. After last week's performance (10 catches, 199 yards and three touchdowns), West Virginia head coach Dana Holgorsen called Coleman the best player in college football.

Elliott may have edged out the 5-foot-11, 190-pound receiver this week, but I expect Coleman to move up to No. 3 next week.

His Heisman status has continued to rise and he's got the most momentum out of the contenders on this list. In four of his six games, Coleman has caught three or more touchdowns.

Additionally, the junior wideout has gone over the century mark in yards, all six games. On the season, Coleman has 877 yards and 16 touchdowns (an FBS best).

Next up for the Bears is a home game against Iowa State. The Cyclones secondary has been suspect all season, and I expect Coleman to take full advantage. If he puts up another three-touchdown effort, it would give him 19 on the season, making the NCAA record very reachable (27 receiving touchdowns).

5. RB DALVIN COOK (FLORIDA STATE)

After suffering a hamstring injury against Louisville, Cook fought to display his dominance and carry the Seminoles in the second half.

The efficiency of Florida State is night-and-day difference when the sophomore running back is on the field.

Last week, Cook's effort helped solidify his claim to the No. 5 spot by totaling 223 yards and two touchdowns. The Miami native has 955 yards rushing and 10 touchdowns through six games. His most impressive stat is his yards per carry (8.7).

This week, Florida State travels to take on Georgia Tech in an ACC matchup. Last season, Cook amassed 177 yards and one touchdown against Georgia Tech. I'd say it's a safe bet to predict a big game from Cook.

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DETAILS ON THE CONFERENCE AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT Baylor.edu/IFL/Sports

THE SPIRIT OF SPORTS

Cagle's Corner: Rankings

Baylor tops the list after seven weeks of college football

TYLER CAGLE
Sports Writer

While the college football playoff committee will not release their official rankings until after the ninth week of the season, hypotheticals are always fun.

As a college football fan, you build your own rankings week after week, hoping that the committee will get a clue and know what you know.

After the midway point in the 2015 season, I'd say it's about time for some rankings.

Here are my top four if the season ended right now:

4. LSU TIGERS

LSU is 6-0 and they have the best player in the nation in running back Leonard Fournette.

They have won close games against Mississippi State and Florida and the magic of Les Miles is rolling in full force.

The aforementioned Fournette, who is reigning supreme on just about everyone's Heisman ballots, leads the Tigers' offensive force.

The man is simply unstoppable right now and his rare combination of speed, power, and agility has helped him gain a nation-leading 1202 rushing yards along with 14 touchdowns.

Fournette may be the best SEC back since Darren McFadden (yes, better than all of Bama's legends) and he could run this team to an SEC championship.

LSU has played well on defense so far, ranking 15th in the nation in terms of yards allowed per game.

If they can continue that play and Fournette can continue to stay healthy with his workload, the Tigers will win a playoff spot.

3. OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

This pick might take a lot of heat but the rankings are all about who is the best team that week and while the Buckeyes are undefeated, they have not been consistent.

When the season began, we all wondered how Urban Meyer would work with having three potential Heisman quarterbacks.



Associated Press

UNDER THE RADAR Utah quarterback Chase Hansen looks to throw during a scrimmage at Rice-Eccles Stadium on April 11, 2015, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Since then, Braxton Miller has been explosive at the hybrid H-back position with Cardale Jones and J.T. Barrett struggling as quarterbacks.

Jones was the season starter and has not played even remotely close to what he showed off during last season's playoff run.

Meanwhile, Barrett has received limited time but has also struggled. Barrett has been announced as the new starter for the Buckeyes due to his better efficiency through the air (barely) and his mobility.

While the Buckeyes have remained unbeaten this far, the meat of their schedule is coming fast with games against Michigan State and Michigan looming at the end of the season.

2. UTAH UTES

With the rest of the PAC-12 in shambles, Utah has risen up and played tremendously in 2015.

The Utes have four wins against quality opponents in Michigan, Oregon, Cal, and Arizona State.

While the Ducks and the Sun Devils have been relatively disappointing this season, they are still loaded with talent and the Utes have shut them down.

Utah, traditionally known as a power school that doesn't look to outscore opponents, has been incredibly finesse in its attack this season on offense.

Running back Devontae Booker and quarterback Travis Wilson form an incredible tandem in the backfield, with Booker emerging as a true Heisman dark horse.

Defensively, the same Utah spirit of power

and strength reside in Salt Lake City. While the Utes rank just 49th in terms of total defense, they are 26th in allowing only 19 points per game and rank 13th in rushing yards allowed per game.

Utah is a grindhouse, the Memphis Grizzlies of college football and if you don't come to play, you will be beaten down.

With a remaining schedule that does not feature a single ranked opponent, Utah's physical and consistent play could carry them all the way to the playoff.ing fast with games against Michigan State and Michigan looming at the end of the season.

For now they hold a top four spot simply out of respect and potential but eventually, the miscues could get them knocked out.

1. BAYLOR BEARS

Now you're probably thinking of course Baylor is at the top, this is Baylor's newspaper after all.

But the fact of the matter is that the Bears have been the most dominating team in the nation and it's not even close.

The Bears lead the nation in scoring offense by almost 14 points and they are the only team in the nation to rank in the top ten in both passing and rushing (6th passing, 2nd rushing).

Quarterback Seth Russell is a legit Heisman candidate and his number one target Corey Coleman is as well.

Russell leads the nation in passer efficiency and yards per attempt while Coleman is third in receiving yards and first in touchdown catches.

This could be the best offense college football has seen since Oklahoma in 2008, with the Bears already besting that Sooners squad on the ground.

While the Achilles Heel for Baylor will be the inconsistent play of its defense, the Bears have improved with each game so far in the season, ranking 62nd in the nation in terms of average yards allowed.

Baylor also has one of the toughest remaining schedule in the nation, with three games against ranked opponents.

With the Big 12 gauntlet looming for the Bears, if they can weather the storm and win out, they should top the rankings.

SOCCER from D1

defensive teams in the conference. I know our girls are up for any challenge, but she's a very good player."

The only edge the Horned Frogs have is being fresh, Jobson said.

"Talk about being beat up and fresh. They haven't played a game in two weeks," Jobson said. "They had this last weekend off, so they should be pretty fresh and probably antsy to play. Where as our girls are recovering after a tough weekend, but I think it will be a great match up."

With just a day of rest, the Bears will travel to Austin on Sunday, where they play the No. 2 ranked team in the Big 12, Texas (7-3-4, 4-1-1 Big 12).

The Longhorns have a very strong defense, Jobson said.

"They have a great defense and part of it is their goalkeeper. She's one of the best in the country," Jobson said. "Abby is a great player."

"For us, if we play a great defensive team or not, we've been able to create opportunities. Not any discredit to them, but I just think

we are good enough to create opportunities. It will just be a matter of being able to get one behind her because she is a really good goalkeeper."

The main thing that the Bears have being focusing on in training is being prepared physically for the tough matches the team will face in conference play, Jobson said.

"Our main thing this week has been recovery," Jobson said. "Trying to get our bodies back where they need to be. We went over little details."

"For us, it's always been about what we are able to do, and right now being fresh and being recovered is going to be the main thing for us to give us the best chance in the two games this weekend."

"Kind of where everybody is in this conference, there's a lot on the line. Everybody wants the championship."

The Bears play 7 p.m. Friday at the Garvey-Rosenthal Soccer Stadium in Forth Worth and 4 p.m. Sunday at the Mike A. Myers Stadium and Soccer Field in Austin.

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Trey Honeycutt | Lariat Photographer

FUTURE BEARS Two Baylor fans cheer on the Bears with pom-poms during a football game between Baylor and Lamar on Sept. 12 at McLane Stadium. The Bears won 66-31.



Trey Honeycutt | Lariat Photographer

START 'EM YOUNG A young Baylor fan holds up his hand to do a "Sic 'em" during a football game between Baylor and SMU on Sept. 4 at Gerald J. Ford Stadium in Dallas.

FOOTBALL from Page D1

team in America to hold top ten ranks in both.

A huge part of that offensive firepower last week was junior quarterback Seth Russell's dual-threat ability.

Russell torched the West Virginia Mountaineers last weekend for 380 yards passing and 160 yards rushing, earning numerous player of the week awards.

"Nervous wouldn't be the correct way to describe my feelings," Briles said. "I think we just try to be intelligent with him. We realize it's a position that if you want to see grandma while she's knitting get up and scream, it's usually when they're tackling the quarterback."

Protecting Russell is the first key in Baylor's gameplan as the junior quarterback is first in the nation in passer efficiency.

Along with Russell, junior wide receiver Corey Coleman has gained a huge following this season.

The Richardson native has caught a school record 16 touchdown passes, which is also top in the nation. Following a 10 catch, 199-yard and three-touchdown explosion against West Virginia, Mountaineers' head coach Dana Holgorsen called Coleman the best player in the nation.

"I 100 percent agree," Russell said. "What has he done not to prove that? He's proven it every day he steps on the field."

While Coleman and Russell hold all the hype in the passing game, junior running back Shock Linwood has also developed into a top running back in the country. Linwood has gained 803 yards on just 94 carries, averaging an astounding 8.5 yards per carry.

"Shock is one of those backs who's always going to be there," Drango said. "He's very consistent and he's always improving. One guy is almost never going to take him down. He'll

bounce off guys or spin off guys or jump over guys. He's almost always going to get positive yards, so he's a great back for us."

While the Bears are scary good on offense, sometimes their defense is just plain scary. The Bears have been suspect to blown coverages and missed tackles all season, especially in the first half.

However, the Bears have played noticeably better as of late, forcing turnovers and punts even after the offense gives them short rest. While the Bears returned nine starters on defense this year, linebacker Bryce Hager's departure left an obvious hole.

Senior linebacker Grant Campbell has filled the hole so far this season very well, playing consistent throughout games.

"He's been a really good leader, makes all the calls defensively, gets the guys in the right spots, makes the right plays, and has done a really

steady job. I think he's exactly what Coach [Phil] Bennett is looking for on that side of the ball at that position," said Briles.

Campbell's leadership and instinct on the defensive side of the ball will be key against a solid Iowa State offense led by freshman running back Mike Warren.

Warren has played very well for a freshman this season, rushing 93 times for 652 yards and three scores.

With a homecoming crowd expected to fill McLane Stadium to capacity and the Iowa State defense allowing almost 462 yards of offense, expect the Bears to do just as they please.

Don't expect grandma to get up and scream while she's knitting anytime soon this weekend; the Bears should take of business just fine. Kickoff is scheduled for 11:00 a.m. Saturday and television coverage will be provided by ESPN.

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WEATHER UPDATE

HOMECOMING WEEKEND PLAY BY PLAY

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For a full list of Homecoming gatherings and news about other weather-related changes, visit www.baylor.edu/homecoming

HOMECOMING MAIN EVENTS

FRIDAY, OCT. 23

ROSENBALM FOUNTAIN DEDICATION

4 p.m. Fountain Mall. Join members of the Baylor family as we celebrate the legacy of the Rosenbalm family and a beautiful fountain. (Inclement weather: McMullen-Connally Faculty Center)

EXTRAVAGANZA, PEP RALLY & FRIDAY NIGHT FLASHBACK

7-11 p.m. Enjoy a variety of family-friendly activities, see the new eternal flame, gather with friends and cheer on the Baylor Bears. Pep Rally begins 9 p.m. New location: Waco Convention Center

SINGSPIRATION

7 p.m. Seventh and James Baptist Church. Join in fellowship, worship and praise with the Baylor family, featuring the alumni choir.

SATURDAY, OCT. 24

PARADE The parade has been cancelled due to inclement weather. Watch for information on parade float displays in the coming weeks.

FOOTBALL

11 a.m. Iowa State vs. Baylor

PIGSKIN REVUE

7 p.m. Waco Hall. Enjoy the final performance of Pigskin.

HONOR CLASS REUNIONS

FRIDAY, OCT. 23

50th REUNION FOR HONOR CLASS OF 1965

4-7 p.m. Barfield Drawing Room, Bill Daniel Student Center

HERITAGE REUNION DINNER

5-7 p.m. Baylor Club, McLane Stadium for the classes of 1940, 1945, 1950, 1955 and 1960

HOMECOMING REUNION BUFFET

5-7 p.m. Baylor Club, McLane Stadium for the classes of 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010

SATURDAY, OCT. 24

REUNION PICNIC

8 a.m. All Honor Classes will enjoy a come-and-go picnic at the stadium (located in the Baylor Alumni Network Tailgate tent).

CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE RECIPIENTS OF THE 2015-16 BAYLOR UNIVERSITY MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Baylor alumni around the globe reflect the very best of Baylor University. The recipients of the 2015-2016 Baylor Meritorious Achievement Awards are:

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- Victor Boutros** Young Alumnus of the Year
- Billy and Dawn Ray** Pro Ecclesia Medal of Service
- Sue Mayborn** Pro Texana Medal of Service
- Dr. Michael Attas** Contributions to the Professions in Medicine & Healthcare
- Dr. Harry "Fred" Tibbals III** Contributions to the Professions in Research
- Grant and Donell Teaff** Legendary Mentor Award
- George and Martha Chandler** Baylor Legacy Award
- David and Shirley Lake** Baylor Legacy Award
- Matt and Dot Miller** Baylor Legacy Award
- Winston Wolfe** Baylor Legacy Award
- Louise Herrington Ornelas** Baylor Founders Medal

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