

Cyclones soaring, face struggling Wildcats who hope to stop two game losing streak

MANHATTAN (AP) — A few intriguing answers to some interesting questions may be provided at Kansas State on Saturday.

Does Iowa State deserve an attractive bowl? Or are these resurgent Cyclones merely a mirage?

Is Kansas State in a three-game slump? Or did its creampuff non-conference schedule simply cause the Wildcats to be wildly overrated?

Enjoying their finest season in more than a decade, the Cyclones will do battle with a Kansas State team that has lost two of three and fallen from No. 2 in The Associated Press poll to No. 19. The Cyclones are 6-2 overall for just the sixth time since 1915 and assured

of their first winning season since 1989. Already bowl eligible, they've got the Big 12's top rusher in Ennis Haywood, the No. 2 pass-catcher in J.J. Moses and a quarterback, Sage Rosenfels, who ranks 22nd in the nation in total offense.

"I'm very proud of my staff and team," said head coach Dan McCarney. "For the first time since I've been here we've got something to play for going into the last three games."

Kansas State (7-2, 3-2 Big 12) was unbeaten and taking aim at big things



when then-No. 9 Oklahoma ambushed the Wildcats in Manhattan by 10 points. The next week the Wildcats struggled to beat Texas Tech. Then, last week, Texas A&M took a big early lead and triumphed 26-10.

It was the first time since 1993 Kansas State had lost to an unranked opponent in a regular-season game and it made a decided dent in Kansas State's confidence.

"We're just not executing like we did early in the season," said quarterback Jonathan Beasley. "That's the bottom line. We're making silly mistakes and things like that we didn't do earlier in the season."

Against Oklahoma, the Wildcats tackled poorly and were unable to stop the passing of Josh Heupel. At Texas A&M, they fell behind early and were never able to get untracked.

"It's been different things for different reasons," said Beasley. "It's been things we can correct. If we can correct them then we wouldn't be worried about them. We know we can correct them, so it's something we need to work on this week"

One thing is for sure — the Wildcats are not taking the Cyclones lightly.

"We know Iowa State is a very good team. And we're coming off a loss, so this is another week for us to get back on track," said wide receiver Aaron Lockett.

"Our practices are surprisingly not bad. But you could always do well in practice. We just have to get back on track on the field. In the games, we've found ourselves down early. And then

we have 15-yard penalties and dropped passes. It really sets us back."

Losing to Texas A&M is one thing the Cyclones and Wildcats have in common. The Aggies beat Iowa State in Ames 30-7.

"We've got a major, major challenge," said McCarney. "Kansas State's one of the top programs and top teams in all the country."

In Rosenfels, the Wildcats will confront a passer who is almost as hot as Heupel. Rosenfels leads the Big 12 with almost 242 yards of total offense per game. His 3,617 career yards passing are fourth in school history. Tailback Haywood had 214 yards rushing last week against Missouri and leads the league with 133 yards per game.

"It's another major hurdle," McCarney said. "It's part of the legacy this senior class is leaving. These kids have always been winners. At least mathematically they can wear the label of winner because they'll at least have more wins than losses. But we know we have a lot of room for improvement and have three huge challenges ahead."

Since he came to Iowa State, McCarney is 0-5 against the Wildcats. A year ago, the Cyclones led 28-7 at halftime only to come up on the short end of a 35-28 score. The year before in Manhattan, it was a 52-7 blowout.

"It should give us a lot of hope and confidence that we can line up and play with Kansas State. The last time we were down there it was a joke," McCarney said.

"It was a college football team against a junior high team. That's how ugly it was. At least last year we came back and it was a good college football game."

Davis is finally healthy, ready to start for Broncos

DENVER (AP) — Terrell Davis appreciates the irony, and insists there's no apprehension.

Davis blew out his right knee against the New York Jets on Oct. 3, 1999. After 13 months of rehabilitation and subsequent frustration from dealing with another injury, Davis returns to the lineup Sunday against the same Jets.

"I don't care about that, no," he said when reminded of the opposition. "To me it's football. You just go play football against the Jets. It happened against them, but it's irrelevant."

Davis, the league's MVP in 1998 when he rushed for 2,008 yards, has been a non-factor for the Broncos so far this year.

He severely sprained his left foot and ankle in the season opener Sept. 4 and has needed two months to recover. He missed two games, played sparingly in the next two and then missed the last three. He hasn't played at all since Oct. 1, and he has rushed for only 99 yards on 24 carries this season.

Thanks to his monthlong layoff that included last week's bye, Davis finally appears healthy.

"It feels great," he said Wednesday. "No pain. It feels like a normal ankle, which is what I was looking for. It's slowly but surely kind of came back. The bye week helped, without a doubt."

"I completed some tests I set for myself as far as running and jumping and doing drills. Once I got on the field, it felt normal."

Davis rejoined workouts last week, participating in a rare full-contact practice last Wednesday that was the Broncos' lone workout of their bye week. Following the Broncos' 31-21 loss to previously winless Cincinnati that saw Corey Dillon rush for an NFL-record 278 yards,

coach Mike Shanahan ordered his team to practice in pads instead of their usual light practice regimen.

Thursday's practice was the team's fourth straight in pads, and Davis approved.

"I picked a great time to come back because now we're throwing pads on," he said. "I feel comfortable with that. I don't have to wait until Sunday to put the pads on and see if they fit correctly and make adjustments to them. I can make those adjustments now. When game day comes, I'll just put them on and play."

He acknowledged it might take some time for him to get back in the flow.

"It could take a quarter, it could take an entire game, it could take a couple of games," he said. "I know right now I'm not as sharp as I should be. I'm just going to go in there and play as hard as I can and do the things I can do, and I think that it will come with time."

Asked if he had a goal for the number of carries he hoped to get in Sunday's game, Davis said, "Man, I'm just trying to complete a game. I just want to walk off the field and be able to say, 'You know what, I'm healthy.' If I can do that, I've done something. If I can stay healthy, I know good things are going to happen."

"I can't give you a number. The game is going to dictate that. I like to be a person that holds himself accountable for making plays, and I want the ball. I'm not going to shy away from anything. If we have to run the ball 40 to 50 times, let's do it."

The Broncos have a disappointing 4-4 record, and Davis said "It's going to be a big difference leaving New York at 5-4 or 4-5. I think our team is ready to make that move. It's an excellent team we're playing, and it's a chance to get our respect back."

Bufs, Tigers playing for team respect

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Ten years ago, Colorado needed five downs to beat Missouri on its way to a national title in a game that became lore in two states.

This year, if the Buffalos again need five downs to score a game-winning touchdown as time expires, who's to say anyone would notice?

"They haven't forgotten any of it," Colorado coach Gary Barnett said of the Tigers this week. "If this game were a bigger game they would be boasting all over the place."

But as it is, the only thing Colorado (2-6, 2-3 Big 12) can hope for Saturday is to avoid falling into the basement of the conference's northern division.

The Tigers (2-6, 1-4) can't even hope for that. Already the worst team in the Big 12 North, a win against Colorado only engineers a tie for last place.

A season that started in Columbia with talk of returning to a bowl game after a one-year absence has devolved into an ugly mess that's left coach Larry Smith defending his job.

Huskers host the Jayhawks

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Last season, Nebraska lost for the first time and came out sulking the following week against Kansas.

It nearly cost the Cornhuskers their 30-game winning streak against the Jayhawks. They had to rally from a 9-0 halftime deficit to eventually win 24-17.

No. 5 Nebraska (7-1, 4-1 Big 12) doesn't want to come close to repeating history Saturday when the Jayhawks (4-4, 2-3) visit Lincoln, although the Huskers don't have a choice in at least one category.

They lost 31-14 last week to Oklahoma, a team from the Big 12 South Division, which they could very well

end up facing again in the league title game — but only if they beat Kansas.

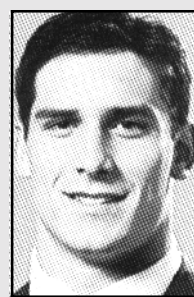
This is the third straight season the Jayhawks get to play Nebraska the week after a Cornhusker loss, and the first two didn't quite go in Kansas' favor. The Jayhawks lost 41-0 in their last visit to Lincoln in 1998.

But Kansas is focusing more on what it accomplished against Nebraska last year, coach Terry Allen said.

"You recall last year, one thing we tried to instill in our players was that in order to beat Nebraska, you have to think you can," Allen said. "With them coming off a loss and last year's success against them, it should benefit our football team Saturday."

Orlando Rage draft Keck

By Dana Sulsberger
The Goodland Daily News
A former Goodland High School football star has been called to try-out for the new Extreme Football League, which will kick off in February.



Tinker Keck

Tinker Keck, a 1995 Goodland graduate, was asked on Monday to try-out for a defensive position with the Orlando Rage, said Jane Reitz, Keck's mother.

Training begins in January for the new league, she said, with teams narrowing 70 try-outs down to 38 players. If he makes it on to the team, Reitz said, Keck will be the opportunity to play as a safety and punt returner.

"He never would have gotten the chance to be a punt returner in the National Football League," said Reitz.

Keck was signed on as a free agent for the New York Giants this summer after graduating from the University of Cincinnati, but didn't make the team. He was called in September for the Carolina Panthers, but wasn't able to practice with the team.

"He's decided to give it a try and see if he can't play for this league," said Reitz.

If Keck is picked for the team, she said, he will have the chance to be drafted by the National Football

League again next year. The Extreme Football League is a new league trying to find a niche to fill 10-weeks after the regular football season ends. It's the brainchild of Vince McMahon Jr., of the World Wrestling Federation.

The 10-week season will begin the weekend after the National Football League's Super Bowl Sunday in January, and the plan is to build the league on players who can't make it into the National Football League and are willing to make less money.

After the regular season and two weeks of playoffs, the league championship team will divide \$1 million among themselves.

In addition to the Orlando team which drafted Keck, teams have been formed in Los Angeles, Birmingham, Memphis, Orlando, Las Vegas, San Francisco, New York and Chicago.

Three of the four games played each weekend will be broadcast on national television.

The difference is the extreme league will place cameras in the locker rooms and on the sidelines so viewers can see more off-field interaction between players and coaches.

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