

# Cowboys and Cowgirls face first game of the season

## Coaches are confident in teams' abilities

By Dana Sulsberger

The Goodland Daily News

The Cowboys and Cowgirls are gearing up for the first basketball game of the season Friday at Max Jones Fieldhouse and coaches think they are ready to face tough Imperial teams.

Last year, both the girls and boys lost to Imperial in their season opener, an away match. The Cowgirls lost after holding a two-point lead with a minute left in the game. Imperial capitalized on a couple of last-minute free throws to defeat the Cowgirls 47-43.

Imperial got off to a strong start against the Cowboys last year and the Goodland boys were never able to get their feet back under them. They ended up losing 70-40.

The Cowboys played their soap scrimmage on Tuesday, said Coach Jon McLean, and were able to do a lot of good things in the practice game, giving him a lot of confidence going into their first real game.

He said he was concerned about defense and stopping the other team for Friday's game, but he is always concerned about going into the first game,



as well as fouls.

"Once the players get into a real game with actual officials," McLean said, "they are more likely to make some fouls."

He said he was also worried about turning the ball over, as this is something they have had difficulty with so far.

"I am really excited about the game,"

he said. "Imperial is a really good ball team."

The Cowboys really need a game, McLean said. After practicing for three weeks, they are ready to play.

"I just want to get the season off to a good start," he said.

Goodland's strength may lie in three strong points, the coach said: speed and quickness, depth and the number of kids they have to play.

Connie Livengood, the girl's coach, said she is confident that the girls have a chance to win on Friday.

When the Cowgirls faced Imperial last year, she said, only 15 percent of the shots were from within the free-throw line, and this hurt them.

"I think we have a good shot of beating them on our home court," she said.

The varsity girls will play at 5:30 p.m. in the Max Jones Fieldhouse while the junior varsity boys will play in the Grant Junior High Gym at the same time.

At 7 p.m., the varsity boys will play in Max Jones and the junior varsity girls will be in the junior high gym.

# Kansas State gets rematch wish

MANHATTAN, Kan. (AP) — Oklahoma more than beat Kansas State.

With a 41-31 victory last month, the Sooners cast doubt on whether the Wildcats with their pillowy-soft schedule even deserved a place among the college football elite.

Ben Leber, still perspiring, gave voice to what Kansas State fans everywhere must have been wishing on that chilly night in the Flint Hills.

"I hope we'll see them again this year in Kansas City," said the senior linebacker. "Things might be different then."

And so the Wildcats have their wish. As Saturday night's Big 12 title game against No. 1 Oklahoma drew near, they were working hard to learn their plays, absorb the game plan and keep their feelings in check.

"If we come out and play with too much emotion we'll lose focus," Leber said. "There's obviously that burning desire to get revenge. But you have to take it as a game and keep it on the lines. We know what's at stake here."

Kansas State (10-2) was ranked No. 2 and hoping for a shot at the national championship when Josh Heupel and his eighth-ranked Sooners came to Manhattan and manhandled them.

The sting of the loss was even greater because it seemed to validate critics who had said for years that Kansas State was merely a pretender, building a reputation by routing an unending parade of pushovers.

Everyone knew, including the Wildcats, that Oklahoma was the first team of ability they had met all year.

"The last couple of weeks has been all about business," said quarterback Jonathan Beasley, who was plainly outplayed by Heupel in their first game.

"They beat us earlier in the year so we know what we need to do."

The Wildcats have taken a cue from defensive coordinator Phil Bennett.

"We decided to start over after that loss," said defensive back Jon McGraw. "Coach Bennett has a saying that people in football remember November. So that's what we're going to try to do."

At the same time Oklahoma knocked Kansas State out of the national championship picture, the Sooners jumped into contention themselves. In their next game, they beat No. 1 Nebraska and assumed the ranking they'll be out to protect Saturday night in Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium.

At stake for Oklahoma is a ticket to the Orange Bowl to battle Florida State for the Sooners' first national championship since 1985. On the line for the Wildcats is a big dose of revenge, a possible Fiesta Bowl bid and vindication that they are indeed a member of the game's elite.

"I think we've got some scores to settle with them from October," said running back Josh Scobey. "It's really good to get a second chance. We believe that we've got everything to gain and everything to lose. We feel like we have a lot riding on this ball game."

The Wildcats would love nothing more than to spoil Oklahoma's party.

"As far as the revenge factor, if you've got a competitive bone in your body, you kind of want to play a team that's beat you, and we feel very fortunate to get that chance again," McGraw said. "We've got some competitors on this team. It will be a fun game."

Even coach Bill Snyder admits a victory over Oklahoma would go a long way toward validating his program in the eyes of the critics.

"It would mean the first time that we won an out-and-out league title," he said. "That would be a positive step."

# Quarterback recovers, returns to practice

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Elvis Grbac returned to practice with the Kansas City Chiefs on Wednesday, for the first time since injuring his right index finger on Nov. 19.

Coach Gunther Cunningham said he hasn't decided who will start on Monday at New England, but Grbac — whose finger was back in a splint after Wednesday's practice — said he felt good after the workout.

"I pushed it pretty good today," said Grbac, who banged the finger on an opponent's helmet in a 21-17 loss to Buffalo — the third of four straight losses that have dropped Kansas City to 5-7. "I was surprised how good it felt, but we'll have to see how it feels in a couple of hours."

Cunningham was also waiting to see the effects of the workout on Grbac's throwing hand, although his first inclination would be to list Grbac as his

starter.

"I can't tell you how many plays he ran, because I was concentrating on the defense, but he threw the ball really well."

"We'll just see what tomorrow brings," Cunningham said. "He could get sore again."

If Grbac can't play against the Patriots, that leaves Cunningham with a choice between 44-year-old Warren Moon, who played in Sunday's 17-16 loss to previously winless San Diego, and Todd Collins.

Moon's start was his first, and only his third appearance, since he joined the Chiefs before the 1999 season. Collins hasn't played since the last game of the 1997 season, when he was with Buffalo.

"I don't know what he's (Cunningham) planning," said Moon, who completed just 12-of-31 passes for 130

yards with one interception against the Chargers. "We haven't talked about that."

No offense to Moon, the Chiefs receivers said, but they're anxiously awaiting Grbac's return to game action.



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# Rockies hope to lure shortstop

DENVER (AP) — With altitude on their side, the Colorado Rockies courted free agent Alex Rodriguez on Wednesday in hopes of luring the All-Star shortstop to baseball's most hitter-friendly park.

General manager Dan O'Dowd and Colorado's ownership team met with Rodriguez and agent Scott Boras for several hours at Coors Field, which has been home to an NL batting champion or home run leader in each of its six seasons. He did not meet with any players.

The Rockies would like to add Rodriguez to the list, but his minimum asking price of \$20 million annually for 10 years could be too steep. Colorado is seeking a salary in the range of \$15 million per year. Boras remained confident that the market would bear Rodriguez's request.

"It's a funny thing. Every city says it's not going to happen. It's going to happen to one city," Boras said. "I don't know which one."

Rodriguez, 25, arrived at Coors Field before noon but did not speak with reporters after the meeting.

O'Dowd, who had dinner with

Rodriguez at a downtown steakhouse after the meeting, said he did not discuss contract terms.

"We just had an opportunity to talk about the state of Colorado and the city of Denver and what we're all about," O'Dowd said.

The courtship began in earnest Tuesday night when the Rockies treated Rodriguez to an upscale dinner with John Elway and Colorado State football coach Sonny Lubick, who knew Rodriguez when the two lived in Miami.

Rockies owners Jerry McMorris, Dick Monfort and Charlie Monfort also joined the group.

The visit was the third stop for Rodriguez, a three-time All-Star, as he tries to decide whether to re-sign with the Seattle Mariners or leave the Pacific Northwest. He also met with the Atlanta Braves and Texas Rangers, who are believed to be on a short list of about seven teams.

"We came here for a reason, and that was information and a personal understanding of Alex's goals and the team's goals," Boras said. "I don't know what Alex Rodriguez is going to do, but I do

know that he was here and he was here for a reason. I think the Rockies did a very good job."

Rodriguez, who has 189 career home runs in five full seasons, would provide Colorado with a power-hitting right-handed hitter to complement lefties Larry Walker and Todd Helton.

Though he is the most coveted, Rodriguez is just one of several free agents Colorado is recruiting this winter. The Rockies met with left-hander Mike Hampton in Houston on Tuesday and planned meetings with left-hander Denny Neagle and right-hander Darren Dreifort.

"We're going to keep marching down our path and hopefully get something done," O'Dowd said.

Acquiring a topflight pitcher could prove difficult. While Coors Field is a hitter's haven, it has been a pitcher's nemesis. Those who have floundered in a Colorado uniform include Andy Ashby, Bret Saberhagen, Bill Swift and, most recently, Darryl Kile.

Kile, who won 21 games in two seasons with the Rockies, won 20 games in 2000 after being traded to the St. Louis Cardinals.

# Player vindicated with discovery of injury

offs.

Dr. Ted Schlegel said a stress reaction is an inflammation of the lining of the bone, which could develop into a more serious stress fracture if left untreated.

Davis missed most of the first eight games of the season with a severely

sprained left ankle and foot, sustained in the season opener. He came back to play in games on Nov. 5 and 13, then missed the last two games with mysterious pain above his ankle.

MRIs did not detect any structural damage, neurological damage or blood clots.

## student of the week



**Name:** Brad Larson  
**Parents:** Kyle and Ellen Larson  
**Grade:** Senior  
**Age:** 17  
**We've nominated this student because:** Brad is an excellent math student. He placed 2nd in Informal Geometry in the 12th grade division at the Fort Hays Math Relays.

**Student Comment:** My favorite aspect of school life is

the computers. While Goodland doesn't have the best computer setup, we are pretty well off. Some schools in Kansas don't even have internet access!

**Activities involved in at school:** NHS, Scholars Bowl, Jazz Band, Band and Tennis.

**My choice of movies, books, and games:** I like action and strategy computer games, mystery books, and action movies. My current game of choice is Age of Empires.

**After I leave Goodland High School I intend to...:** Go to college and study Computer Programming.

**And 10 years from now, I think I'll be...:** Programming for a large company and a larger city.

**Favorite Quote:** "In politics stupidity is not a handicap." Napoleon

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