

MANHATTAN (AP) — How good is Kansas State?

Until late Saturday night when the 25th-ranked Wildcats have finished playing No. 11 USC, there's no way to tell.

The Wildcats, known for loading up with powderpuffs in the pre-conference season, outdid themselves this year by bringing lambs Western Kentucky, Louisiana-Monroe and Eastern Illinois into town for what evolved into a collective 179-16 slaughter.

At no time and in no way was Bill Snyder's team challenged. In most individual matchups, Kansas State's starters would probably have been better tested merely scrimmaging against their own backups.

But all that changes now.

For the first time since Snyder arrived in 1989 and turned the long-woeful Wildcats into winners, they're playing a home game against a ranked opponent that's not in their own conference.

All of a sudden, they'll find themselves standing on the field at KSU Stadium with athletes who run as fast, hit as hard and block and tackle with skill equal to theirs.

Or, in some cases, maybe faster, harder and with greater skill.

So accustomed to pushovers, will the Wildcats (3-0) be suddenly gripped by an identity crisis? Will they know how to react?

It's a question that rankles players,

coaches and fans alike. K-Staters are very sensitive about their reputation as schoolyard bullies who don't like to pick on people their own size.

"I think our players have a good mindset about who they are, where they are, who they've played, and who they're going to play," said Snyder. "They understand that."

The Wildcats defeated the Trojans at USC 10-6 last year. But they went on to a 6-6 record, their worst since 1992, and the Trojans (2-0) are now in their second season under head coach Pete Carroll. They'll throw a passing attack at the Wildcats led by Carson Palmer, one of the most accomplished quarterbacks in the school's storied history.

"I have been waiting for this since

last year," said defensive back Terence Newman, a Big 12 sprint champion who's already scored on a punt return and an interception return.

"We got badmouthed a little bit by different people. We all have something to prove. And we are ready to prove it against USC."

USC safety Troy Polamalu, whose brutal hit on now-graduated kick returner Aaron Lockett last year still has the Wildcats steaming, doesn't think the Wildcats need to apologize for their schedule.

"Football's football. They've all got scholarships," he said. "They've played great three games in a row."

If the Trojans' name and tradition hadn't caught Kansas State's eye, their

shocking 40-3 victory over Big 12 power Colorado last week should have. Colorado, which now has two losses, was the choice of many experts as the favorite in the Big 12 North.

"It gives us the confidence to go into another difficult situation in Manhattan this week and feel like we have a chance to play good football on the road," said Carroll.

"It's difficult to play on the road twice but this is a challenge that we looked at in the offseason and hopefully we prepared ourselves well for the challenge."

One thing's for sure — nobody in a Kansas State uniform is taking the Trojans lightly.

"I think this is a set-up game," said

defensive back Rashad Washington.

"Like last year, when we lost to Oklahoma, it really hurt us in the long run because we were kind of down the next weeks after that. If we come out with a victory this game, it will set up the rest of the season."

Among the many subplots will be a matchup of one of the nation's most accurate passers and one of the nation's finest defensive backs. Palmer, who has completed more than 72 percent of his passes and thrown for more than 8,000 yards in his career, may not see a quicker cornerback all year than Newman.

"We have been in this situation before where we have played against great return players," Carroll said.

baseball scoreboard

By the Associated Press

NATIONAL LEAGUE				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
x-Atlanta	96	55	.636	—
Montreal	77	76	.503	20
Philadelphia	75	78	.490	22
New York	73	79	.480	23 1/2
Florida	73	80	.477	24
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
St. Louis	89	63	.586	—
Houston	81	72	.529	8 1/2
Cincinnati	75	78	.490	14 1/2
Pittsburgh	67	86	.438	22 1/2
Chicago	64	89	.418	25 1/2
Milwaukee	54	98	.355	35
West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Arizona	94	58	.618	—
San Francisco	87	66	.569	7 1/2
Los Angeles	86	67	.562	8 1/2
Colorado	69	84	.451	25 1/2
San Diego	64	89	.418	30 1/2
x-clinched division				
Thursday's Games				
Milwaukee 5, Houston 4				
St. Louis 12, Colorado 6				
Arizona 3, San Diego 1				
Montreal 6, Florida 5				
Cincinnati 5, Pittsburgh 4				
N.Y. Mets 3, Chicago Cubs 2, 12 innings				
Atlanta 6, Philadelphia 0				
Los Angeles 6, San Francisco 3				
Today's Games				
Chicago Cubs (C.Zambrano 4-7) at Pittsburgh (Torres 1-1), 5:05 p.m.				
Montreal (Armas Jr. 10-12) at N.Y. Mets (Thomson 9-12), 5:10 p.m.				

Philadelphia (Wolf 11-8) at Cincinnati (Graves 6-3), 5:10 p.m.	Florida (Wayne 1-2) at Atlanta (Moss 11-5), 5:35 p.m.
San Francisco (Jensen 11-8) at Milwaukee (Neugebauer 1-6), 6:05 p.m.	Houston (Munro 5-4) at St. Louis (W. Williams 9-4), 6:10 p.m.
Arizona (Schilling 23-5) at Colorado (Flores 0-1), 7:05 p.m.	Los Angeles (Ashby 9-12) at San Diego (Tomko 9-10), 8:05 p.m.
Saturday's Games	
Florida (Penny 7-6) at Atlanta (Millwood 17-7), 11:25 a.m.	
Arizona (B.Anderson 6-11) at Colorado (Neagle 8-10), 1:05 p.m.	Houston (Miller 14-3) at St. Louis (Morris 16-8), 2:10 p.m.
Los Angeles (Nomo 15-6) at San Diego (Peavy 6-7), 3 p.m.	Chicago Cubs (Mahomes 1-0) at Pittsburgh (K.Wells 12-14), 5:05 p.m.
San Francisco (Schmidt 11-8) at Milwaukee (Diggins 0-2), 5:05 p.m.	Montreal (Vazquez 10-13) at N.Y. Mets (Astacio 12-10), 5:10 p.m.
Philadelphia (Mercado 2-1) at Cincinnati (Dessens 7-8), 5:10 p.m.	
Sunday's Games	
Florida at Atlanta, 11:05 a.m.	
Montreal at N.Y. Mets, 11:10 a.m.	
Chicago Cubs at Pittsburgh, 11:35 a.m.	
San Francisco at Milwaukee, 12:05 p.m.	
Houston at St. Louis, 12:10 p.m.	
Arizona at Colorado, 1:05 p.m.	
Philadelphia at Cincinnati, 1:10 p.m.	
Los Angeles at San Diego, 3:05 p.m.	
AMERICAN LEAGUE	

East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	95	57	.625	—
Boston	86	66	.566	9
Toronto	71	82	.464	24 1/2
Baltimore	67	85	.441	28
Tampa Bay	51	101	.336	44
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
x-Minnesota	89	63	.586	—
Chicago	76	77	.497	13 1/2
Cleveland	68	85	.444	21 1/2
Kansas City	59	94	.386	30 1/2
Detroit	54	98	.355	35
West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Oakland	96	57	.627	—
Anaheim	95	58	.621	1
Seattle	88	65	.575	8
Texas	70	83	.458	26
x-clinched division				
Thursday's Games				
Oakland 5, Anaheim 3				
Minnesota at Detroit, ppd., rain				
Toronto 9, Baltimore 3				
Tampa Bay 3, N.Y. Yankees 2, 10 innings				
Kansas City 2, Chicago White Sox 1				
Texas 12, Seattle 7, 10 innings				
Today's Games				
Boston (Lowe 20-7) at Baltimore (Hentgen 0-2), 5:05 p.m.				

N.Y. Yankees (Clemens 12-6) at Detroit (Van Hekken 1-1), 5:05 p.m.	Toronto (Loaiza 8-9) at Tampa Bay (Sturtz 3-17), 5:15 p.m.
Minnesota (Reed 15-7) at Chicago White Sox (D.Wright 12-12), 6:05 p.m.	Cleveland (Davis 0-0) at Kansas City (Ro.Hernandez 4-4), 6:05 p.m.
Anaheim (Ortiz 14-9) at Seattle (Pineiro 14-6), 8:05 p.m.	Texas (Rogers 13-9) at Oakland (Lilly 4-7), 8:05 p.m.
Saturday's Games	
N.Y. Yankees (Pettitte 11-5) at Detroit (Beverlin 0-1), 11:25 a.m.	
Anaheim (Lackey 8-3) at Seattle (Garcia 14-10), 2:05 p.m.	
Texas at Oakland, 2:05 p.m.	
Minnesota at Chicago White Sox, 2:05 p.m.	
Toronto at Tampa Bay, 4:15 p.m.	
Boston at Baltimore, 5:05 p.m.	
Cleveland (Lee 0-1) at Kansas City (May 4-10), 5:05 p.m.	
Sunday's Games	
Toronto at Tampa Bay, 11:15 a.m.	
Boston at Baltimore, 11:35 a.m.	
N.Y. Yankees at Detroit, 12:05 p.m.	
Cleveland at Kansas City, 12:05 p.m.	
Texas at Oakland, 2:05 p.m.	
Anaheim at Seattle, 2:35 p.m.	
Minnesota at Chicago White Sox, 6:05 p.m.	

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Former Olympic star dies at age 58

ACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — “Bullet” Bob Hayes, gold-medal sprinter and Dallas Cowboys star once considered the world’s fastest man, died at age 59 of kidney failure. As a Cowboys receiver, Hayes forced the NFL to change the way pass defense was played, but he was never enshrined in the Hall of Fame. At the 1964 Olympics, he won the 100 meters gold medal, tying the then-world record of 10.05 seconds.



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