

BIG 12 CONFERENCE

COLLEGE FOOTBALL: 2025 Preview



5 GAMES TO WATCH



IOWA STATE VS. KANSAS STATE

AUG. 21: If the league championship game is the most important game of the year, the opener will have the world watching. The matchup in Dublin, Ireland, features two of the league's top contenders.



AUBURN AT BAYLOR

AUG. 29: The Big 12 is looking to prove itself to be equal of the SEC and the Big Ten in this early season opportunity. Auburn comes to Waco to face the Bears, expected to be a rising team in the Big 12. After a slow start last year, the Bears won six straight games before losing, 44-31, to LSU of, yes, the SEC in the Texas Bowl.



PITTSBURGH AT WEST VIRGINIA

SEPT. 13: While this game is not a matchup of ranked teams, it draws great interest as Rich Rodriguez tries to avenge a defeat in his last game at WVU 17 years ago, losing a Backyard Brawl in which his team was favored by 28.5 points and needed a win to play for the national title.



TEXAS TECH AT ARIZONA STATE

OCT. 18: Two of the top contenders for the conference title match up in the desert. Arizona State looks to avenge last season's 30-22 loss in its Big 12 debut. The Sun Devils, picked to finish last in 2024, rebounded from the defeat, won the Big 12 and went on to the College Football Playoffs.



KANSAS STATE AT UTAH

NOV. 22: This will be the first meeting ever between these two teams. Both could be in the thick of the chase for the Big 12 title. The Utes look to bounce back from a difficult first year in the Big 12 while K-State is among the championship contenders.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

West Virginia running back Jahiem White (1) stiff arms Iowa State defensive back Beau Freyler (17) and rushes in for a touchdown during the first half of a Big 12 game on Oct. 12, 2024, in Morgantown, W.Va.

LOOKING FOR EQUALITY

Big 12 powers aim to reach level of SEC, Big 10

BY BOB HERTZEL, CNHI SPORTS

A year ago, in the wake of having lost Oklahoma and Texas to the SEC and having added the four corner teams of Arizona, Arizona State, Utah and BYU, the Big 12 was looking for an identity. This year, the conference is looking for equality with the SEC and the Big Ten, as college football goes about restructuring its College Football Playoffs.

As the Big 12 shoots for the stars, it plans on doing not through star power but through parity, with its conference championship hanging there for almost any of its 16 teams to take.

"Once again, I believe the Big 12 will be the deepest football conference in America," commissioner Brett Yorkmark stressed at Big 12 Media Day. "No league offers the competitive balance that we do."

"Last season the Big 12 led the nation in fourth-quarter lead changes and go-ahead scores in the

final minute of conference games," he said.

Throughout the league, the coaches may believe that the race will boil down to defending champion Arizona State, Kansas State, Iowa State, Texas Tech, Baylor, TCU and maybe Utah.

That means counting on the parity to make every game a competitive battle.

"The league from top to bottom is a strong as anything in the country," Cincinnati coach Scott Satterfield said.

"I think even the team that

maybe didn't win a game last year in the league could beat anybody in the league this year."

Yorkmark believes the conference is blessed with talent across the board, meaning anyone can rise to the top.

"This year our star power will be on full display," the commissioner said.

This is especially so at quarterback.

While the Big 12 may not go back to the wild west days of shootout after shootout with quarterbacks such as Patrick Mahomes, Baker Mayfield, Robert Griffin III, Geno Smith, Sam Bradford and others, this year's group of quarterbacks offer up dual-threat profiles who can light up not only the scoreboards but the fans.

Sam Leavitt, who led Arizona State to an unexpected conference title and near-upset of Texas in the

CFP, is acknowledged as the leader of the group and is the league's preseason Offensive Player of the Year.

The league features a series of talented QBs, including:

- Baylor's Sawyer Robertson, who led the Bears to six straight victories to end the regular season.
- Rocco Becht, who cover-boy of Iowa State's offense.
- Kansas State's developing Avery Johnson, who set a school record with 25 TD passes.
- TCU's Josh Hoover, who could have jumped into the SEC.
- Big 12 Newcomer of the Year Devon Dampier, a transfer at Utah and the cornerstone as it hopes to erase the sour memories of last season.
- Texas Tech's Behren Morton, who has the best team money can buy in the transfer portal around him.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

SAM LEAVITT QB, Arizona State

- Preseason Offensive Player of the Year led Sun Devils to CFP after transferring in from Michigan State.



SPENCER FANO OT, Utah

- The league's top offensive lineman is the chief protector of transfer quarterback Devon Dampier.



Big 12 Championship game matchup



Conference champion



JACOB RODRIGUEZ LB, Texas Tech

- Rodriguez developed into one of the nation's top linebackers as a redshirt junior last year and is this year's preseason Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year.



DEVON DAMPIER QB, Utah

- Transfer comes to Utes with his offensive coordinator at New Mexico, Jason Beck, to inject life into the offense and make a run at the title.



JAHIEM WHITE RB, West Virginia

- As Rich Rodriguez returns, he comes with a reputation of creating powerful running attacks. White will follow in the footsteps all-time leading career rusher Avon Cobourne.



STORIES TO FOLLOW

1 Will Utah bounce back?

A year ago, the Utes moved to the Big 12 from the Pac-12 and were picked to win the league. They won only two conference games. Coach Kyle Whittingham (below) enters his 21st season and could have ended his career on what he called his "most frustrating season" but is determined to turn things around.



2 Can coaches find past glory?

Can Scott Frost duplicate his 13-0 run of 2013 at UCF before leaving for Nebraska and can Rich Rodriguez get to the national championship game he missed at WVU before jumping to Michigan 17 years ago?

3 Can Texas Tech buy a Big 12 title?

Texas Tech reached into its deep pockets in search of a Big 12 championship through the NCAA's transfer portal, bringing in 22 transfers in what is considered one of the nation's top recruiting classes and adding it to returnees from an 8-5 team last year.

4 One more successful rebuild in Stillwater?

With a new, re-structure four-year contract worth \$6.5 million annually but built with less job security, Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy comes off a 3-9 season for his 21st year coaching his alma mater. After 18 consecutive winning seasons, 8 of them with 10 or more wins, he's starting over.

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

Kansas State
Texas Tech
Iowa State
Arizona State
Utah
Baylor
TCU
Kansas
West Virginia
BYU
Colorado
Houston
Oklahoma State
Arizona
Central Florida
Cincinnati

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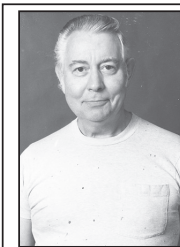
Salute to Vets

Honoring our Veterans on Veteran's Day

Mail or bring information and a photo of your favorite Veteran for **FREE** to run in our special Salute to Veterans in November.

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