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Jared Butler deals with pressures in unique way

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Sports

ON THE RUN
Sophomore Jazmine Oster paces down a court as the Lady Bears finish off win.

NaLyssa Smith leads Baylor WBB over OSU

HARPER MAYFIELD

After a down game against Iowa State, Baylor bounced back with a 77-58 win over a strong Oklahoma State team.

The Lady Bears got production from a number of players, including senior guard Moon Ulnen, forward NaLyssa Smith and senior guard DiJonai Carrington.

Richards contributed to Baylor’s 13-8 edge on the glass. Despite shooting just over 36 percent from the floor, Baylor finished the quarter with a 1-4-8 advantage. Her hot start was something the Lady Bears had certainly lacked in their last game, but Ulnen and the team

The Lady Bears dominated the glass, heading to the half with 10 more boards than OSU. After two, Baylor led 37-23. At the half, Mulkey was especially impressed with Ulnen.

“Moon, I could’ve kept her in there to get her career high! She played everything, she had her second rebound,” Mulkey said.

Baylor opened the second quarter with a 6-0 run to push their lead back to 14. At the end of the first, OSU was missing their free throws, which continued into the first quarter, leaving the Lady Bears with a 37-23 lead. At halftime, the Lady Bears were winning in the paint, including at the line. The Lady Bears continued to dominate the glass, heading to the half with 10 more boards than OSU.

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“You have to be ready when opportunity knocks,” said head coach Kim Mulkey. “You do what you can.”

Most coaches rely on the most talented players to score big points, but Mulkey knew that there was more to the game than that.

“You have got to be ready when opportunity knocks,” said Mulkey.

“NaLyssa had one of her finest games this year.”

KIM MULKEY | HEAD COACH

The Lady Bears will have had two practices before facing Oklahoma State in Stillwater, Okla. For Mulkey, that might not be enough.

“Oklahoma State is in our head,” Mulkey said. “You can only perform well on the day you’ve had enough hours in the gym to

The Lady Bears will be back home against Oklahoma at 7 p.m. tomorrow. The game will air on Big 12 Now on ESPN+.

Lady Bears remaining matchups

Jan. 23 - vs. Oklahoma
Jan. 26 - vs. TCU
Jan. 31 - at Iowa State
Feb. 4 - vs. Kansas
Feb. 7 - at K-State
Feb. 24 - vs. OSU
March 1 - at Texas

CONCERN WITH their lowest ranking since 2017 this Lady Bears roster has moved into a realm of uncertainty without having any experience at the lowly No. 9 spot in the AP poll.

“With their lowest ranking since 2017, this Lady Bears roster has moved into a realm of uncertainty without having any experience at the lowly No. 9 spot in the AP poll,” Mulkey said.

But the Lady Bears aren’t in the habit of falling apart. They’ve been through this before and know how to bounce back.

“Fortunately, it feels like we were real strong defensively, we could have looked at our scouting report a lot more,” Mulkey said.

The game’s closing period was intense, with the teams playing a game of one up, one down.

The Lady Bears will be back home against Oklahoma at 7 p.m. tomorrow. The game will air on Big 12 Now on ESPN+.

“I know what she did against us at Texas Tech, and the nature of the beast now is the transfer portal,” Mulkey said.

“Her speed and her quickness, her ability to shoot the perimeter shot, her motor runs fast, and I thought those are things we could redefine into our program.”

The Lady Bears are back in the top of the season, the Lady Bears will face No. 2 Iowa State on Jan. 23, a lost West Virginia team, another shot to face Kansas all the way to the end of the season.

The Lady Bears will be back home against Oklahoma at 7 p.m. tomorrow. The game will air on Big 12 Now on ESPN+.
Baylor MBB remains second at the midway point

MATTHEW SODERBERG 
SENIOR SPORTS EDITOR

The Baylor men’s basketball team is off to another hot start, beginning the season with 13 straight victories for the third time in the past 10 years. The Bears are the only remaining undefeated Power 5 school.

Junior guard Jared Butler returned this season for his third year in green and gold after pondering a move to the NBA, and his presence is even more prevalent. He is averaging 16.7 points per game with 5.4 assists, 3.4 rebounds and 2.4 steals to add insult to injury to opposing teams. He is yet again a Midseason Wooden Award Watchlist player, and when the game gets close, head coach Scott Drew and his teammates trust him to get the job done.

“One thing about Jared Butler is when the game’s on the line, his game goes to another level, ” Drew said.

Junior Davion Mitchell, the next number of Baylor’s elite backcourt, remains the driving force of the Bear offense. He is averaging 12 points and six assists per game while providing some of the best on-ball defense in the country.

The final member of the renowned guard squad is senior MaCio Teague. Averaging 15 points and four boards a game, the lanky shooter is lighting up the rim from everywhere, shooting 48% from the field, 37% from deep and 86% from the line. Scott Drew saw the other benefit of having Teague on the court in his sideline energy.

“McCoy got one of those bodies when he doesn’t really get tired, but he does so many things — low turnover guy. ”

Last year’s Defensive Player of the Year finalist senior forward Mark Vital and final returning starter is the do-it-all glue guy for this squad, and while averaging just five points, six rebounds, an assist, steal and block a game his defense and energy earn him one of the most important places on the floor.

Just look at his two alley-oops in Monday’s game against No. 9 Kansas. Each stopped a run by the Jayhawks and launched the Baylor offense into high gear as the 25% capacity crowd went into an uproar. Butler said his presence is the backbone of the team.

“Mark Vital is a great asset to our team, ” Butler said. ”He brings energy. He brings life. It doesn’t matter what anybody says. He’s always like that. ”

Finally, Baylor has one of the most prolific bench mobs in the country, with its top-three minute-earners (sophomore guard Adam Flagler, sophomore forward Jonathan Tchamwa Tchatchoua and junior wing Matthew Mayer) scoring 27.1 points per game.

Baylor ranks second in the KenPom overall rankings, falling just behind No. 1 Gonzaga whom the Bears were supposed to play earlier this season, with the fourth best offense and the top defense in the country.

With quality wins over No. 5 Illinois, at No. 15 Texas Tech and versus No. 9 Kansas, the Bears are set up for a season like few others in program history.

Bears remaining matchups

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Thursday, January 21, 2021
The Baylor Lariat