

MONDAY REPORT: OU

UP NEXT: vs. Washington • 6:45 p.m. Saturday • TV: ESPN-25 • Radio: KMOD fm97.5, KTbz am1430

Strategy strengthens OU

ANALYSIS

BY JOHN E. HOOVER
World Sports Writer

Oklahoma has a new weapon.

No, not Ryan Broyles, who did add a certain Mark Clayton element to the Sooner passing game.

This new weapon is a formation, a five-wide receiver, no-running back set. Coaches call it "empty" because there's no one in the backfield with the quarterback.

Saturday against Cincinnati, the Sooners ran empty 11 times — including the first play of the game — and had remarkable success with it. Quarterback Sam Bradford completed 9-of-11 passes for 85 yards with four first downs and a touchdown.

"It's just kind of another wrinkle to our offense," Bradford said. "I thought we executed very well when we were in empty today."

The Sooners didn't go empty once last year with Bradford as a first-year starter. In 2006, behind Paul Thompson, OU emptied its backfield just 14 times all season — but none after the Missouri game in late October. Offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson said he didn't use it last week against Tennessee-Chattanooga because he wanted to hold it for Cincinnati.

"We just had a lot of re-



OU receiver Ryan Broyles stretches out to make a catch in front of Cincinnati's DeAngelo Smith on Saturday. Broyles had seven catches for 141 yards as the Sooners went with a five-receiver, no-back set. MICHAEL WYKE/Tulsa World

spect for Cincinnati's defense coming in," Wilson said. "We thought we needed to throw a lot at them to be successful."

It's all a testament to the Sooners' offensive versatility and talent. Twice immediately after using the empty set, Wilson called for an I-formation, two-tight end package — without substituting.

An empty backfield and no tight end does leave a quarterback more susceptible to physical punishment, but spreading five wideouts across the line of scrimmage actually simplifies things.

"When you have tight ends and backs in the backfield, you have more blockers,

but because you have more blockers, you have the blitz threat, whether they come or they don't come," Wilson said. "If I'm not going to use the tight end or the running back as a blocker, there is merit to getting him out of the picture because it cleans out the picture for the linemen to see what's going on. And it cleans it up for the quarterback as well."

Oklahoma already had one of college football's best offenses. Now it's gotten better.

"It's nice," Bradford said, "having five receivers already out there."

John E. Hoover 581-8384
john.hoover@tulsaworld.com

OU NOTEBOOK

Some harm, no foul: Cincinnati quarterback Dustin Grutza fractured his leg after being caught in a pile of Oklahoma Sooners during a sack Saturday, prompting an accusation from Bearcats wide receiver Mardy Gilyard afterward.

"Grutza was kind of twisted up underneath a couple guys, and I saw a couple guys just reaching and grabbing and doing a little twisting that they shouldn't have been doing around his face and kind of rolling over his ankle," Gilyard said, according to the Cincinnati Enquirer. "Just stuff that wasn't good ball in my opinion."

Grutza was sacked by OU linebacker Travis Lewis, then was caught among defensive linemen Cory Bennett and DeMarcus Granger in the ensuing pile-up.

Asked to respond to Cincinnati's complaint Sunday, OU coach Bob Stoops said: "Bottom line, we had a blitz on and two guys are trying to grab him and go down. You see that all through the year from everybody. No, there was nothing that would have indicated (foul play). Absolutely not. Our guys do what any guy does just trying to get a guy sacked. Unfortunately, two guys had him and as they're taking him to the ground his foot was caught, I guess."

The Enquirer reported Grutza will likely not require surgery, but could miss three or four weeks.

Lewis still the one: Despite Lewis' own pronouncement last week that if healthy, Austin

KNOW THE FOE

	OU	UW
Pass offense:	350.0 (8)	175.5 (85)
Rush offense:	189.5 (35)	114.0 (87)
Total offense:	539.5 (11)	289.5 (97)
Scoring offense:	54.5 (6)	18.5 (98)
Pass defense:	129.5 (20)	289.0 (105)
Rush defense:	51.5 (8)	196.5 (99)
Total defense:	181.0 (8)	485.5 (112)
Scoring defense:	14.0 (28)	36.0 (101)

NOTE: National rankings in parentheses

Looking back: No team had a bigger heartbreak than Washington on Saturday. The Huskies took 17 plays to drive 76 and score what should have been a game-tying touchdown in the final seconds against BYU, only to be penalized 15 yards for excessive celebration. Ryan Perkins' 35-yard extra point try was blocked, and the Huskies fell 28-27 to drop to 0-2 on the season.

About the offense: Oklahoma might defend better pure passers this season, but Washington's Jake Locker provides the most potent run-pass punch the Sooners will face all year.

Box would be the starter at weakside linebacker, it was Lewis who got the call to start his second straight game. He responded with a team-high 12 tackles, becoming the first OU freshman to reach double figures in that category since Wayne Chambers in 2003.

"He played to his potential," middle linebacker Ryan Reynolds said.

"He played solid, certainly not spectacular," defensive coordinator Brent Venables said. "I like how he can run. I like how he thinks on the field. He's not

Locker gained 270 of his team's 337 yards against BYU, a pretty typical percentage since he took over the offense as a freshman in 2007.

About the defense: From a total yardage standpoint, Washington's '07 defense was the worst in school history. Tyrone Willingham hired former NFL coordinator Ed Donatell to fix things, and two games into Donatell's tenure, the Huskies rank 112th out of 118 NCAA Bowl Subdivision teams defensively.

About special teams: Remember Bob Simmons, the old Oklahoma State coach who would occasionally torment the Sooners? He coached special teams last year, and not very well. Simmons was fired. Not that it's made much difference. Besides Perkins' botched PAT, the Huskies have pitiful kick return numbers.

By Guerin Emig,
World sports writer

lost. He understands immediately when he's doing things incorrectly. He's an explosive, physical player."

Why not go with Box until the game was out of reach in the fourth quarter?

"When you're out for three weeks and now allowed to practice, you're not going to be as sharp," Venables explained, referencing Box's torn knee cartilage.

"He wasn't far off. I felt very comfortable playing him."

By Guerin Emig, World sports writer

MONDAY REPORT: OSU

UP NEXT: vs. Missouri State • 6:05 p.m. Saturday TV: None • Radio: KFAQ am1170, KRVT am1270

Bryant needs backup

ANALYSIS

BY MATT DOYLE
World Sports Writer

If Oklahoma State wide receiver Dez Bryant is Batman, then who is his Robin among OSU's receiver corps?

There is not an immediate call of concern that the Cowboys do not possess a dynamic duo at the wide receiver position yet. But is it too soon to start sounding the alarms and wondering if there is a second reliable wide out in OSU orange?

Bryant and quarterback Zac Robinson have worked in perfect harmony in OSU's first two victories this season.

Bryant has 16 of the team's 34 receptions so far this season. However, among OSU's other 18 receptions, only four have gone to wide receivers.

As expected, tight end Brandon Pettigrew has been a consistent second option with 10 catches in two games.

"If you check our track record, that's been pretty consistent over the last four years or so," OSU coach Mike



OSU's Dez Bryant has 16 of the Cowboys' 34 receptions for the season.

STEPHEN HOLMAN/Tulsa World

Gundy said of two pass catchers dominating the catches.

True. Bryant had 43 catches last season as a freshman to rank second behind Adarius Bowman's team-leading 67 receptions. In 2006, Bowman (60) and D'Juan Woods (41) for more than 100 catches and 1,800 yards between them.

Even in Rashaun Woods' record-setting seasons of 2002 and 2003, OSU had a receiver that recorded at

least 30 receptions.

Coming into this season, the Cowboys had good depth at the receiver position behind Bryant. However, most of that depth had little or no game experience.

Maybe the adjustment process to the collegiate game action for Bo Bowling, Josh Cooper, Damian Davis, and DeMarcus Conner has been slower than anticipated.

Gundy said there are plays designed to get the ball to everybody in the passing game.

Robinson said all throughout preseason practice that he has confidence in pass catchers not named Bryant or Pettigrew to make plays.

Robinson has not ignored the other receivers in the first two games.

It's just that Bryant has put together a spectacular start to the season and drawn a lot of attention.

But it will not be surprising if future opponents devote a lot of attention with their coverage to contain Bryant and force Robinson to throw more to the other receivers.

Matt Doyle 581-8316
matt.doyle@tulsaworld.com

OSU NOTEBOOK

Bryant honored: Sophomore wide receiver Dez Bryant is this week's Walter Camp Foundation National Offensive Player of the Week.

Bryant had caught nine passes for 236 yards and three touchdowns and returned a punt 74 yards for a TD in Saturday's 56-26 win over Houston.

Bryant's 236 yards stand as the second-highest single-game total in school history.

Block party: A couple of downfield blocks did not go unnoticed on Saturday. Sophomore wide receiver Damian Davis recorded two knockdown blocks within a 10-yard span to help spring Bryant loose for a 74-yard TD reception in the third quarter.

Right as Bryant caught Zac Robinson's screen pass, Davis went low to chop down Houston cornerback Brandon Brinkley. Not satisfied, Davis got up and blocked safety Ernest Miller.

"I don't know if I've ever seen that in open space," OSU coach Mike Gundy said. "I've seen that in the interior, but not in open space. A really nice job there."

Another big, bone-crunching block came later in the third quarter. Sophomore fullback Bryant Ward took out Houston's Cody Lubojasky to allow running back Keith Toston to gain 9 yards on a fourth-and-short play.

"That was textbook. He took out the outside hip of the player and upended him," Gundy said.

Injury update: Gundy did not have any additional information Sunday about the status of injured wide receiver Artrell Woods and defensive tackle Jeray Chatham. Woods left in the first quarter with an apparent sprained left knee. Chatham aggravated a foot injury that has been bothering him recently.

OSU also lost safety Lucien Antoine for the season with a torn left knee ligament suffered on the opening kickoff.

KNOW THE FOE

	OSU	Mo. State
Pass offense:	256.5 (36)	261.0 (16)
Rush offense:	276.5 (10)	172.0 (33)
Total offense:	533.0 (12)	433.0 (14)
Scoring offense:	47.5 (15)	27.0 (46)
Pass defense:	234.5 (76)	203.0 (56)
Rush defense:	105.0 (47)	171.0 (64)
Total defense:	339.5 (64)	374.0 (61)
Scoring defense:	25.0 (76)	35.0 (78)

NOTE: National rankings in parentheses. Missouri State rankings are for Football Championship Subdivision.

Looking back: The Bears were stunned in their season opener, falling 35-27 at home to Washburn (Kan.) last Thursday. It marked the first time Missouri State has lost to a Division II program since 1997. Third-year coach Terry Allen said a litany of mistakes made the Bears "look like a very poorly coached football team." Allen, who was coach at Kansas between 1997-2001, is 8-15 at Missouri State.

About the offense: Quarterback Cody Kirby was a sharp 21-of-24 passing for 261 yards with two touchdowns against

Antoine's loss hurts the Cowboys two-fold. The junior-college transfer was expected to play a considerable number of snaps in OSU's five defensive back package. Antoine also has a key role in OSU's special teams units as a blocker on the return game and as a disruptor on kick coverage.

Gundy said OSU officials are checking to see if Antoine redshirted one year at Butler County (Kan.) Community College. If Antoine did not, OSU hopes he can qualify for a medical hardship season and not lose this year of eligibility.

Filling the hole: With Antoine out, depth suddenly becomes an issue at the safety position. Seldom-used senior T.J. Bell moves into Antoine's spot when OSU uses the five-defensive back scheme. Gundy said a first-year freshman, likely Johnny Thomas, will prepare to see some action.

Washburn. But Kirby also threw two interceptions. Former Owasso standout Kingjack Washington had 68 yards rushing and a touchdown. Former Booker T. Washington player Justin Fuselier had three catches for 51 yards and a TD.

About the defense: The Bears allowed 374 yards in the opener. But Allen said that Washburn physically wore down his unit, particularly at the line of scrimmage. Linebacker Jeremy Dawson had a team-high 13 tackles. Safety Roger Wright added 11 stops.

About the special teams: Kicker Matt Hottelman was 2-of-2 on field goal attempts against Washburn. Punter Jordan Chiles only averaged 23 yards on six punts. Washington is a threat on kickoff returns and had a 21-yard return in the opener. Chris Farrer added a 41-yard kickoff return.

By Matt Doyle,
World sports writer

"We're not really sure yet. Relying on true freshmen is not something I get really fired up about," Gundy said. "But it looks like we're going to have to get one of them ready to play. I don't think they're ready to play, or they already would have played. But when you have injuries that are season ending at a position, you generally have to get a true freshman ready to be a backup."

Rankings: Bryant is the Big 12 leader in receiving yards per game (163.0) and all-purpose yardage (242.0). Running back Kendall Hunter leads the league in rushing at 158.5 yards per game. In the two major poll rankings, the Cowboys are listed under teams receiving votes. OSU would rank 32nd in the AP poll and 38th in the USA Today coaches poll.

By Matt Doyle, World sports writer

MONDAY REPORT: TULSA

UP NEXT: vs. New Mexico • 6 p.m. Sept. 20 • TV: None • Radio: KRMG am740

Johnson proves he's the right guy

ANALYSIS

BY ERIC BAILEY
World Sports Writer

Remember that Tulsa quarterback controversy that swirled last spring and through fall camp?

It may have been all for naught. David Johnson has established himself as TU's starting quarterback. The fifth-year senior has amazing numbers through his first two games — a combined 45-of-57 (78.9 percent) for 750 yards and nine touchdowns versus no interceptions.

For the second straight week, backup quarterback Jacob Bower's only serious action came in TU's final series of blowout victories.

Don't let Bower's limited playing time fool you. The sophomore is a very talented football player and definitely figures in TU's future. In fact, don't be surprised if the Tulsa staff has been saving him for things in upcoming games.

But Johnson's performed superbly.



TU quarterback David Johnson has nine touchdown passes and no interceptions through two games.

SHANE BEVEL/Tulsa World

In Saturday's 56-26 win at North Texas, the quarterback accounted for seven touchdowns (six passing, one rushing). His six scoring passes found six different receivers and his 418 passing yards is the ninth-most in school history.

"He has been getting chemistry with the receivers since last spring," said senior Brennan Marion, who snatched a 50-yard TD pass. "He has always worked hard and is a great

quarterback."

So how come Bower didn't see playing time earlier in Saturday's game, especially when the Hurricane enjoyed a five-touchdown lead going into the fourth quarter?

"We had talked about trying to get him in there for the last half of the fourth quarter, but we also have played only two games and now have an off week," Graham said.

"We have to have Dave hitting on all cylinders."

So it appears this is Johnson's team. And he's had the kind of start that he hoped for heading into a bye week.

"I'm just looking to come out and take what the defense gives us," Johnson said. "If it turns up the numbers, then great. But if the rushing numbers are better, the rushing numbers are better."

"My biggest thing is I want to take care of the football and do my job to help my team win."

Eric Bailey 581-8391
eric.bailey@tulsaworld.com

TU NOTEBOOK

First blood: Slick Shelley logged his first collegiate pass reception in Saturday's 56-26 win at North Texas.

"It feels great to have an opportunity to showcase what you can do and know that the coaches trust you to give you that opportunity," he said.

A fourth-year junior, the 6-foot-4 Shelley hadn't caught a pass since his senior year at Fort Smith (Ark.) Southside High School in 2004. He spent two injured seasons at the University of Tennessee before transferring to Tulsa and sitting out last year.

Shelley totaled four catches for 85 yards. None was more impressive than the first one. He gathered in a short toss from Dave Johnson and bolted 34 yards along the sideline, setting up Johnson's 18-yard scoring toss to Damaris Johnson on the next play.

"It was my first good catch in college football, and once I got it, I was going to go as hard as I could," he said. "It was a good feeling, like all the running and conditioning you did in the offseason was paying off."

Getting better: TU covered better on kickoffs in the second game.

The Hurricane allowed fewer yards (86) on six first-half kickoffs at UNT than it did on one the previous week at UAB when Frantrell Forrest returned 90 yards for a touchdown.

Freshman Cory Jefferis averaged fewer yards per attempt (60.1 on eight attempts), but every one landed inbounds and the Mean Green started only two possessions outside the 30 after kickoffs.

Jefferis reached the end zone to register his first collegiate touchdown in the fourth quarter.

Top the charts: Dave Johnson ranks No. 1 nationally in passer efficiency, completing 79 percent of his passes (45-of-57) for 750 yards and nine touchdowns with no interceptions.

Big hit, Part III: After delivering two punishing blows in the win at UAB, junior defensive back James Lockett raced down to nail UNT's Micah Mosely on the opening kickoff.

Century mark: With four catches for 107 yards and a touchdown, TU receiver Brennan Marion went over 100 receiving yards for the second straight game and the eighth time in 16 games over two years.

By Mike Brown, World sports writer