

THE JOURNEY OF THE 2011-12 SEASON
OKLAHOMA STATE FOOTBALL

PROUD & IMMORTAL

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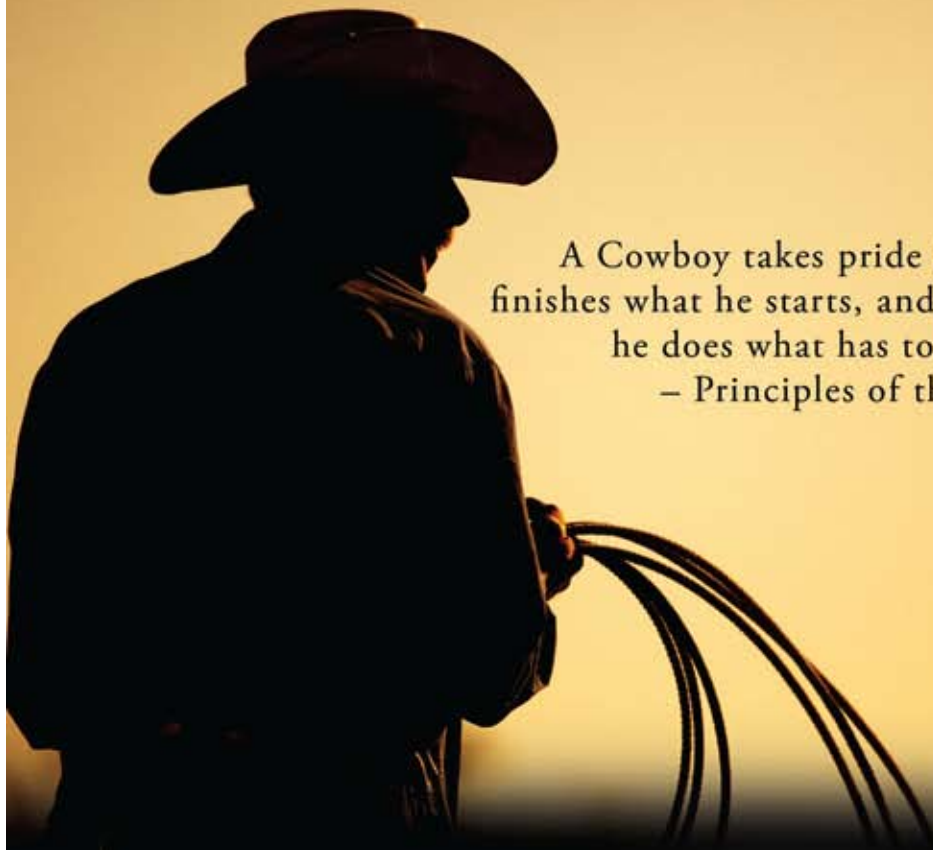
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> Oh what a night

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ON THE COVER: Oklahoma State quarterback Brandon Weeden runs on to the field before the game against the Baylor Bears at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater on Saturday, Oct. 29, 2011.

PHOTO BY SARAH PHIPPS, THE OKLAHOMAN

O P U B C O C O M M U N I C A T I O N S G R O U P

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Look good, play great.

Oklahoma State players say the new uniform combinations make them feel good, which makes them play good. And administrators kind of like the marketing and advertising implications.

B Y G I N A M I Z E L L , S T A F F W R I T E R

Oklahoma State defensive tackle Anthony Rogers has a simple motto when it comes to the Cowboys' new uniforms.

"If you look good, you feel good. And if you feel good, you play good," Rogers said.

And if by chance the uniform does not look good, fear not. It will change. Every game.

The Cowboys could go almost four seasons without ever repeating a uniform combination.

The players are the ones that ultimately get to flash OSU's new looks — which feature jerseys and pants in orange, white, black and gray and helmets in white, black and gray — but the strategy to feature a slew of uniform combinations goes beyond the product on the field.

It's about marketing. It's about recruiting. It's about branding.

And making change and surprise a major part of that strategy has officially caught on across college football.

Oregon has been the king of the wide variety of eye-popping looks — some call them brilliant, others call them terrible — for the better part of 15 years.

This season, OSU used orange, black, gray and white jerseys. Maryland wore its state flag on its helmet and cleats. Arizona State sported an all-black look and has worn four different helmets. Even Wyoming now has 27 different uniform choices.

There are plenty of reasons for the trend.

It's a way to appeal to student-athletes — both current ones and potential ones.

Wyoming coach Dave Christensen said he approached Nike about adding uniform elements to use as a recruiting tool.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 6





GAME 1: VS. ULLAF



GAME 2: VS. ARIZONA



GAME 3: @ TULSA



GAME 4: @ TEXAS A&M



GAME 5: VS. KANSAS



GAME 6: @ TEXAS



GAME 7: @ MISSOURI



GAME 8: VS. BAYLOR



GAME 9: VS. KANSAS STATE



GAME 10: @ TEXAS TECH



GAME 11: @ IOWA STATE



GAME 12: VS. OKLAHOMA



GAME 13: VS. STANFORD

In 13 games, Oklahoma State had a different jersey, pants, helmet combination each time. The usual home game jersey, orange was worn only twice, against Baylor and Oklahoma. The gray jersey only made one appearance, during the season opener. The only loss for Oklahoma State came in orange pants, against Iowa State. The all black combination was worn during the Fiesta Bowl win over Stanford.

Photos by The Oklahoman

"If you go to a high school now, you're going to see kids with brand new tennis shoes on," Christensen said. "It's a big deal to have trademarked tennis shoes, clothes, that kind of stuff. I think it's just another avenue to get in front of recruits and get them excited about what we're doing."

And he's not the only one that thinks uniforms plays a role in the recruiting process.

"Back in high school, I used to like

OSU because of the uniforms," Rogers said. "It's something about that orange and the black. I think the uniforms play a big impact on recruiting for younger high school athletes."

But schools also look at football uniforms as a platform to market the university's overall vision. Some are selling tradition; others are selling innovation and creativity.

Put OSU and other schools that have debuted new uniforms this season in

the second category.

"The whole uniform selection sort of supported that," OSU director of marketing Kyle Wray said. "It was 'Hey, let's do something new. Let's do something exciting.' Change is a good thing."

The simple strategy of selling change appeals to the common football fan, marketing guru and author Seth Godin said. He compares it to when DC Com-

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

ics makes an alteration to a character and collectible sales skyrocket.

"With something that we need, we don't want it to change at all," Godin said. "But when it comes to want, all we want in our life is novelty. Novelty is what they're selling."

And with that change comes increased exposure and an additional topic of conversation.

Early in the season, ESPN's College Football Final devoted a whole segment to debating the uniform craze, and OSU was highlighted. Maryland's "State Pride" uniforms became a news story. Arizona State was trending nationwide on Twitter when it wore all black against Missouri. Fans on message boards and at tailgate parties can weigh in on what they think their favorite team will wear for the next game.

"When you see it come up on

ESPN and they talk about it there, it would cost us millions of dollars in advertising to pay for that," Wray said. "But it's all free, and it's all because of the change in uniforms."

Of course, the chance to make money is also involved.

OSU's new contract with Nike, which was amended to reflect the new uniforms, gives the university \$1.7 million in athletic apparel over the next two years. And for every Nike replica uniform sold at retail outlets, about \$3.50 comes back to the school.

With four jersey options, there is a greater opportunity to sell more.

Whether using a multitude of uniform combinations as a way to sell a brand continues to spread to more college football programs remains to be seen.

But the philosophy has worked for

Oregon. The school has more national notoriety than ever, executive senior associate athletic director for development Jim Bartkosaid, an all-time high in enrollment and a football team that played for the national championship a year ago.

"You look back, and in 15 years, it's kind of amazing what's happened," Bartko said.

And Wray is happy with the way OSU's new looks have brought an extra bit of attention to the Cowboys in what has so far been a special season.

"Obviously, there's a lot of buzz about it," Wray said. "That's a really, really good thing. The team looks good and they feel good. We're glad to be able to provide our team with that."

>>> Published: October 11, 2011

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A STEP FORWARD

OSU 61, ULLAF 34



>>> Even with a new offensive coordinator, the Cowboys still rolled up huge numbers in the season opener. Joseph Randle rushed for 129 yards and two touchdowns, Justin Blackmon had 144 yards receiving and No. 9 Oklahoma State beat Louisiana-Lafayette 61-34. Brandon Weeden completed 24 of 39 passes for 388 yards and three touchdowns.



>>> **PICTURED ABOVE:**

Oklahoma State receiver Tracy Moore leaps over Dwight Bentley of ULLAF in the first quarter of the Cowboys' win over the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Ragin' Cajuns at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater on Sept. 3, 2011. Moore, a junior from Tulsa, finished the game with seven catches for 112 yards.

Photo by Nate Billings,
The Oklahoman



LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, SEPT. 3, 2011



Justin Blackmon (81) and the rest of the Cowboys sing the alma mater after a season-opening win at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater.

Photos by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



BACK TO BLACKMON

OSU 37, ARIZONA 14



>>> Brandon Weeden connected with Justin Blackmon on two short touchdown tosses, Joseph Randle ran for two scores and Oklahoma State used an early burst of offense to beat Arizona 37-14 in a rematch of the 2010 Alamo Bowl. Weeden threw for 397 yards and two touchdowns to Blackmon for the Cowboys. Weeden also benefited from the presence of Randle, who had 121 yards rushing and nine catches for 99 yards. The Cowboys (2-0) scored on their first three drives to open a 21-0 lead in the first 16 1/2 minutes, then put it away with two scores midway through the second half.



>>> **PICTURED ABOVE:**

Oklahoma State receiver Justin Blackmon makes one of this two touchdown receptions against Arizona at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater, on Sept. 8, 2011. Blackmon had 128 yards on 12 receptions to extend his streak to 14 straight games with at least 100 yards receiving. The 37-14 win over Arizona moved the Cowboys to 2-0.

Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman

ARIZONA AT OKLAHOMA STATE: THURSDAY, SEPT. 8, 2011



Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman

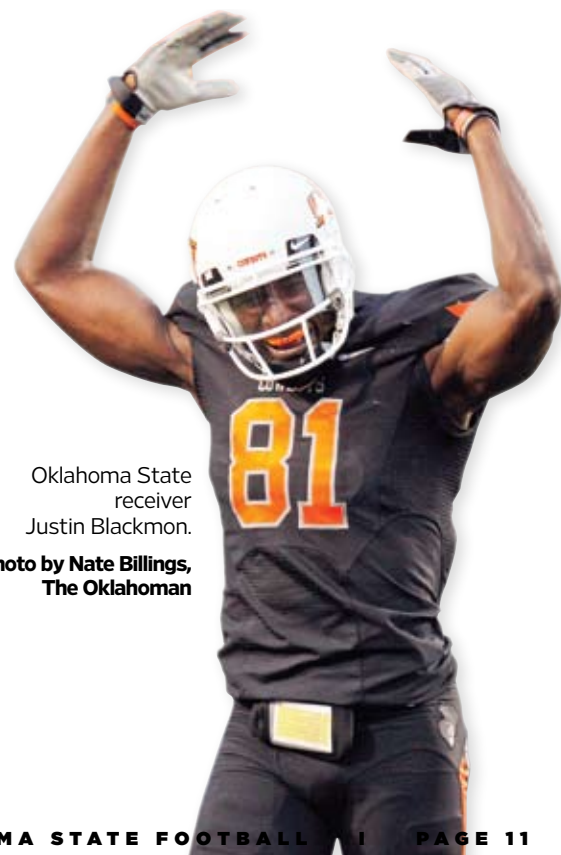
Above: The Cowboys take the field before the game against Arizona.

At right: Oklahoma State defender Alex Elkins brings down Arizona's Gino Crump.

Photo by
Bryan Terry,
The Oklahoman



Below:
The Oklahoma State Cowboys Marching Band
Photo by
Nate Billings,
The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State
receiver
Justin Blackmon.

Photo by Nate Billings,
The Oklahoman



GAME
THREE

OKLAHOMA STATE AT TULSA: SATURDAY, SEPT. 17, 2011

A EARLY MORNING IN TULSA

OSU 59, TULSA 33



>>> iPods and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches helped get the Oklahoma State football team through a lengthy weather delay. The Cowboys posted their third straight comfortable win, routing Tulsa 59-33 early on a Sunday morning. Brandon Weeden threw for 369 yards and three touchdowns, Joseph Randle ran for 128 yards and three more scores after waiting out a three-hour rain delay. The Cowboys built up a 45-6 lead less than 6 minutes into the second half.



>>> PICTURED ABOVE:

Oklahoma State receivers Justin Blackmon (81) and Hubert Anyiam (84) celebrate Anyiam's touchdown in the first quarter of the Cowboys 59-33 victory over the Tulsa Golden Hurricane n Sept. 18, 2011 at H.A. Chapman Stadium in Tulsa. Blackmon's NCAA record run of 14 straight games in triple digits for receiving yards ended. He had a 4-yard TD catch in the fourth quarter but had only 57 yards when the game ended at 3:35 a.m.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



OKLAHOMA STATE AT TULSA: SATURDAY, SEPT. 17, 2011



Lightning streaks across the sky during a weather delay before the Oklahoma State game at Tulsa.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State running back Jeremy Smith is hit by the Tulsa defense

Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State receiver Justin Blackmon catches a pass.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State cornerback Justin Gilbert intercepts a pass.

Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman





Hubert Anyiam and David Paulsen celebrate a Oklahoma State touchdown during the win over the Tulsa Golden Hurricane at H.A. Chapman Stadium in Tulsa. **Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman**



The coach's wife.

Remember that stormy night in Tulsa? Oklahoma State assistant coach Glenn Spencer will never forget it. That was the night he lost his wife, the night his sons lost their mother. This is Angela Spencer's story, because Glenn Spencer wouldn't have it any other way.

BY JOHN HELSLEY, STAFF WRITER



ushing through the teeth of powerful thunderstorms and wind in a panicked rush to return from Tulsa to Stillwater, Glenn Spencer tried to calm driver Richard Atkins, the captain of the Oklahoma State University Police Department.

"We weren't going too fast and I knew it was bothering him," said Spencer, OSU's linebackers coach and co-defensive coordinator. "And he kept saying, 'I'm sorry, coach. I'm sorry coach.'"

"He was gripping the steering wheel with both hands and he kept apologizing, because he couldn't really go as fast as he wanted to.

"To ease his mind I said, 'Don't worry about it, Richard. Listen, the boys don't need to lose their dad tonight.'"

One lost parent would be devastating enough.

Spencer had been summoned from the press box at Tulsa's H.A. Chapman Stadium, where he and other Cowboys coaches were waiting out a lengthy rain delay before their Sept. 17 game against the Golden Hurricane.

Once down onto the field, the news from home concerning his

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 16





The Spencer family, from left: Angela, Abe, Glenn and Luke at the Alamo Bowl in San Antonio in 2010.

Photo provided

wife Angela, while not completely surprising, shook Spencer still.

"That's when they told me that they're calling from Stillwater and Angela is not doing well," Spencer said.

Angela's 12-year struggle with heart problems had resulted in emotional highs and lows and scares and close calls. Yet this was different.

A call to Angela's parents revealed that his wife had been rushed to the emergency room at Stillwater Medical Center. And she was unresponsive.

"From that point on, I was kind of in a daze," Spencer said. "I was trying to find a policeman,

a neighbor, anybody, I was just trying to find a car.

"At that point, the game was irrelevant. I just had to get back to Stillwater as soon as possible."

Atkins, who regularly accompanies the Cowboys on road trips, climbed behind the wheel of a patrol car and they headed west, into weather bad enough to delay kickoff more than three hours.

"I'm sure it was dangerous," Spencer said. "Not much was said. We got back to Stillwater as quick as we could.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

“Richard did great.”

In Stillwater, doctors labored to keep Angela alive.

“I asked them to keep going until I get there,” Spencer said. “When I finally got there, they were in the room trying to bring her back, trying to resuscitate her. Those doctors were worn out. They were just doing that for me. And when I walked in, they finally stopped.

“And I said goodbye to her.”

‘UNBELIEVABLE MOTHER. DEVOTED WIFE’

Glenn Spencer doesn’t want the story to be about him. Sure, he’s the recognizable face, a key coach on an OSU team still carrying national championship hopes.

But, it’s Angela, he said, that was and is the backbone of the Spencer family.

“It should be more about honoring her as an unbelievable mother and as a devoted wife in this crazy profession and what she sacrificed for our family,” Glenn said. “And how unselfish she was throughout her whole ordeal the last 12 years with this disease.

“I don’t want it to be about me. That wouldn’t be right.”

Angela first started noticing something wrong while Glenn was the head coach at the University of West Georgia, where the two had met as graduate students.

It started with chest pains and heart arrhythmia and was misdiagnosed early. When her conditioned worsened, a lengthy stay at the Mayo Clinic revealed a disease of the heart muscle itself.

And the diagnosis involved a startling word: non-curable.

The condition was treated with diuretics and medicines for years, but the Spencers were told that a transplant was the only hope at extending her life long term.

None of it — not the illness, nor the pain or the suffering or the fear — got in the Spencers’ way. Glenn continued to coach and Angela continued to be a wife and a mother to sons Luke and Abe, who are now 16 and 13.

There was help and support, yes, from both sides of the family and friends and neighbors, too. Still, Angela pressed on in her most cherished roles as mother, wife and daughter.

“She was very strong,” said her mother, Glynda Folds. “She almost constantly hid her suffering from everyone. Very few people realize how seriously ill she was.

“She was very personal and private about it and wanted to be treated like a perfectly normal individual. She didn’t want any special attention. She didn’t want sympathy. She just wanted to be a normal mother and wife and daughter.”

Glenn observed and admired Angela’s passion to live, not for herself, but for her family.

As Glenn moved on in the profession, to Georgia Tech, then Duke and finally OSU in 2008, he was clear about his wife’s condition and the challenges they faced. But through it all — even a heart transplant in February of 2010 — they kept even the most difficult times private and personal.

“That’s just a tribute to her, because a lot of people didn’t know it,” Spencer said. “She didn’t want it to be public knowledge. She didn’t want to be treated any different.

“And she wanted to be at every ball game she could. She wanted to do every ounce of homework and go on every field trip and every football game she could. She wanted to be the mother that she thought she was supposed to be.

“Up until she died, that’s what she was about.”

FAITH. FAMILY. TEAM.

O SU coach Mike Gundy gave his defensive coach no guidelines for returning to the team. Spencer would be missed, for sure, but Gundy understood the need for time and healing could be lengthy.

“I told him to take as long as he needed,” Gundy said. “I told him, ‘Glenn, you may need a month. Whatever you need to do, you do it.’”

Spencer, however, needed something else. He

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 18





needed work to redirect his focus. He needed his sons. And he needed his team.

While back in Carrollton, Ga., for the funeral, Spencer called Gundy and told him that he wanted to coach that Saturday at Texas A&M, as long as his boys could travel with the team and be on the sideline for the game.

"He called me," Gundy said, "on what would have been Wednesday. He said, 'I'm going to come back Friday and I want to be on the plane to A&M.'"

"I said, 'Glenn, you don't need to do that.' And

he said, 'I want to. I need to. And I want my boys to be with me.'

"He said, 'Mike, I just want you to put me on that plane and I want my boys to be with me.' I said, 'If that's what you want, that's what we'll do.' "

Not only was Spencer there in College Station, he played a prominent role in righting the defense for the second half, critical in a comeback from a 20-3 halftime deficit to a 30-29 win.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

"That's big," OSU cornerback Justin Gilbert said after the game, "for him to go through what he went through this week and to come with us on the road and stay in tune with us."

For Spencer, it all seemed right.

"Besides my faith and my family, these kids here, my players, are the only concern of my life," Spencer said. "So I wanted to get back for them. Because I knew some of my players were hurting for me and I wanted them to see me and say, 'Hey, coach is OK. Coach wants me to play hard. Coach wants us to run to the football. He's OK.'"

Spencer also recognized the benefits for his own boys, Luke and Abe.

"It was good for me and them to just be together, to hang out, stay in the hotel room that night, just for us to be by ourselves," he said.

"That was a way for us to be together without a lot of family around. And to talk about mom and talk about what it's going to be like these next few days and these next few months.

"And how she was honored was great for the boys to see. The players huggin' their neck. The stickers on the helmets. The Lord blessed us with a win and to be in that locker room after that win was the memory of a lifetime, for them, too."

SPENCER AND OSU, A GOOD FIT

When Gundy interviewed Spencer for a defensive staff opening in 2008, the topic of Angela's condition came up.

At no point was it a cause for pause for either man.

"When I took this job and came out here, she was sick," Spencer said. "Mike knew that. And Mike told me things in my interview about what he was about. And about his family being important to him; more than anything.

"Without that assurance, I probably wouldn't have come."

Said Gundy: "I believe there's a bigger picture out there than winning and losing. So here's a guy who's tried to do everything right, stands for all the things that I believe in. So why should it be an issue that his wife had a heart

condition?"

And it never became an issue, even as Angela required extra attention.

Spencer occasionally missed a team meeting or a practice to take his boys to visit their mom at the hospital in Oklahoma City, always with Gundy's blessing.

Over the past two years, there were several instances when Angela's condition spiraled downward — "it was touch and go," Gundy said — and Spencer might be called away suddenly.

"Mike didn't blink, not one time, when she started having extended hospital stays, before the transplant, after the transplant," Spencer said. "I can honestly say he didn't blink one time about expecting me to be a husband and a father before my duties here as a coach."

Gundy shared bits of information about the Spencers' struggles with the team, so that they would understand his absence.

But also so that they would understand the man.

"Glenn is such a wonderful person," said Bill Young, who works alongside Spencer as co-defensive coordinator. "Not only is he a great football coach, he's a great man. We all have so much respect and admiration for him." Gundy said he considers Spencer's time at OSU a blessing.

"People's paths cross your life and you don't know why," Gundy said. "And he's come in here as a football coach and he's been a great example for me. I don't fear a lot of things. I don't fear anything in athletics.

"I fear the day I lose one of my parents or somebody in my family, but you never know. That's something I've always feared, because I never knew how I'd handle it.

"But he knows. And it's strong."

SPENCER'S BEST RECRUIT

Angela and Glenn Spencer met in school at West Georgia.

She already had a degree from there and was back to get a teacher's certificate. He was there working as a grad assistant on the coaching staff.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



"I tell the story I used to let her cheat off me, which is a lie," Glenn said. "She tells the story that I was the teacher's pet, because I was a coach there. The teacher always coddled me and let me get by with things that nobody else did.

"Well, I snookered my way in to a dinner one night, claiming that I needed to go over some notes in class that I missed. And she took the bait. And we started dating after that."

Two years later they were married.

"I'm a recruiter, right?" Glenn said. "That's the best recruiting job I ever did. That's my best signee."

A JOURNEY OF STRUGGLE, AND HOPE

Almost from the beginning of Angela's illness, the hits kept coming for the Spencers.

First there was the misdiagnosis. One surgery helped relieve the symptoms, but only for a while. Then came the revelation that a transplant was necessary.

And after the transplant, which offered optimism of a solid 10 more years, the disease returned in a rare occurrence.

"The surgeon told us he's done a thousand transplants and it's happened three times," Glenn said.

So the Spencers faced the need for a second transplant, which they were awaiting when she died, at age 46.

Through it all, they always focused on hope.

"When you're in one of these trials, you try to find hope," Glenn said. "We talked a lot about that, me and her. Around every corner you try and find hope. You get some bad news, you deal with it and what keeps you going is hope.

"You have a heart disease, you have to take these medicines, your diet has to be super strict. Alright, let's do it. We can manage it and she can still be mom, she can still be my wife. That's all she wanted.

"Then when that didn't work, you have to have a transplant. Another shot, you're down. Then you go for hope. Alright, transplant, we'll get better."

The Spencers made the most of the times when Angela felt good, including the months after her recovery from the transplant.

"She got to go to some baseball tournaments," Glenn said. "She got to see the old one have his first girlfriend. All those experiences, we were looking back those last few days saying, 'This is awful, what's going on, but what a blessing this last year was.'"

A painful blessing, too, for a mother and daughter drawn together by the worst of circumstances.

"That's one thing I'm very proud of," said Mrs. Folds, "my daughter was always my best friend. We went shopping together. We giggled together. We cooked together. We were very, very good friends.

"And the bond deepened during this time even more."

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

"The Grandmas," as Glenn likes to call them, Mrs. Folds and Glenn's own mother Mary Spencer, have tag-teamed with help around the house for months.

Sometimes they're in Stillwater together, previously assisting with Angela's care and more recently helping Glenn with the boys. Sometimes they alternate with the help.

And they plan to keep coming, for themselves as well as for Luke and Abe.

"We're grandmothers," said Mrs. Folds. "Angela was my only child. I feel closest to my daughter when I'm here, when I'm with the children. And I don't want them to feel the separation so severely all at once.

"I just felt that it would be good for all of us, myself included."

Angela's parents spent Thanksgiving at the Spencers, with Mrs. Folds preparing all of Angela's favorite dishes for dinner.

"One of her most favorites was pecan pie," she said. "And she loved old Southern chicken dressing. And she loved green beans and potato salad and corn. And I make rolls.

"We're definitely remembering all of that."

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 21



So far, keeping busy has kept Glenn and his sons forging forward.

Both boys are heavily involved in baseball and school. And, of course, they have the Cowboys to follow and cheer.

Still, there are those inevitable moments when things slow down.

"It's like I told my boys, we had a great time to grieve and we still do every day," Glenn said. "But a day doesn't go by that I don't have a nauseous feeling in my stomach at some point in the day. It's like you take a punch. You get sick and nauseous about it.

"Being busy helps. But you're not busy 24/7 and there are those times in the day, you're laying in the bed by yourself or they don't have mom in the kitchen cooking

for them, that you hurt. You hurt.

"It doesn't bother me to hurt that way. As strange as it sounds, it doesn't bother me. It just means how much she meant to us."

And in his two sons, Glenn said he has a lasting memory of Angela.

"That's her greatest work," he said. "She lives through them. And she raised two champions. Respectful kids. Children of faith. Without her doing that, that would worry me more. She was the champion of the home.

"That's her greatest work, what's left behind in them."

And that's the story Glenn Spencer wants told.

Not a focus on the challenges that he faces as a single dad and college coach, but the work of the

love of his life preparing Glenn and his sons for whatever lies ahead.

"I just want people to know how devoted and how unselfish she was," Glenn said. "And what she did. How she wanted those boys to be raised. Up until her dying day, she was mom, and that's all she wanted to be, mom and a devoted wife to me.

"And that's her testimony. I don't know the answer to why it happens and why it happened to her. All we're asked to do is to keep the faith and to keep living.

"That's what the Spencers are all about, what that lady brought as a mom and a wife."

>>> Published: November 26, 2011

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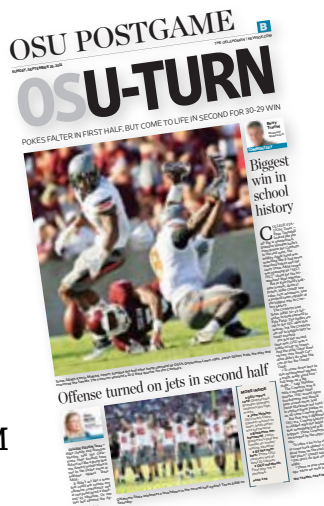
OKLAHOMA STATE AT TEXAS A&M: SATURDAY, SEPT. 24, 2011

ONE LAST W IN AGGIELAND

OSU 30, TEXAS A&M 29



>>> Brandon Weeden threw for a school-record 438 yards and two scores and Justin Blackmon and Josh Cooper combined for 244 yards receiving as No. 7 Oklahoma State rallied for a 30-29 win over Texas A&M. Cooper had 11 catches for 123 yards, Blackmon had 11 receptions for 121 yards, and Hubert Anyiam had 10 receptions for 92 yards. It was the first time in school history that three receivers had at least 10 catches in a game. A&M built a 20-3 halftime lead before OSU took advantage of three A&M turnovers to reel off 27 straight points.



>>> PICTURED ABOVE:

Oklahoma State head coach Mike Gundy celebrates the Cowboys' 30-29 win over Texas A&M on Sept. 24, 2011 at Kyle Field in College Station, Texas. OSU won its fourth straight in the series against A&M and its seventh overall on the road in the first top 10 match-up at Kyle Field since 1975. It marked the first time the Cowboys have won consecutive games in College Station.

Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman



OKLAHOMA STATE AT TEXAS A&M: SATURDAY, SEPT. 24, 2011



Oklahoma State running back Joseph Randle tries to get past Texas A&M's Garrick Williams in the second half of OSU's 30-29 victory.

Photos by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



GAME
FIVE

KANSAS AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, OCT. 8, 2011

PERFECT PERFORMANCE

OSU 70, KANSAS 28



>>> Brandon Weeden threw for 288 yards and five touchdowns before being pulled before halftime, and No. 6 Oklahoma State matched its highest scoring total in 94 years in a 70-28 rout of Kansas. "It was pretty efficient," coach Mike Gundy said. "Some days, things just work, you know? You hit a golf ball and it hits a tree limb and bounces back in the fairway." Everything the Cowboys did was working: They scored touchdowns on all eight of their first-half possessions before halftime against the nation's worst defense.



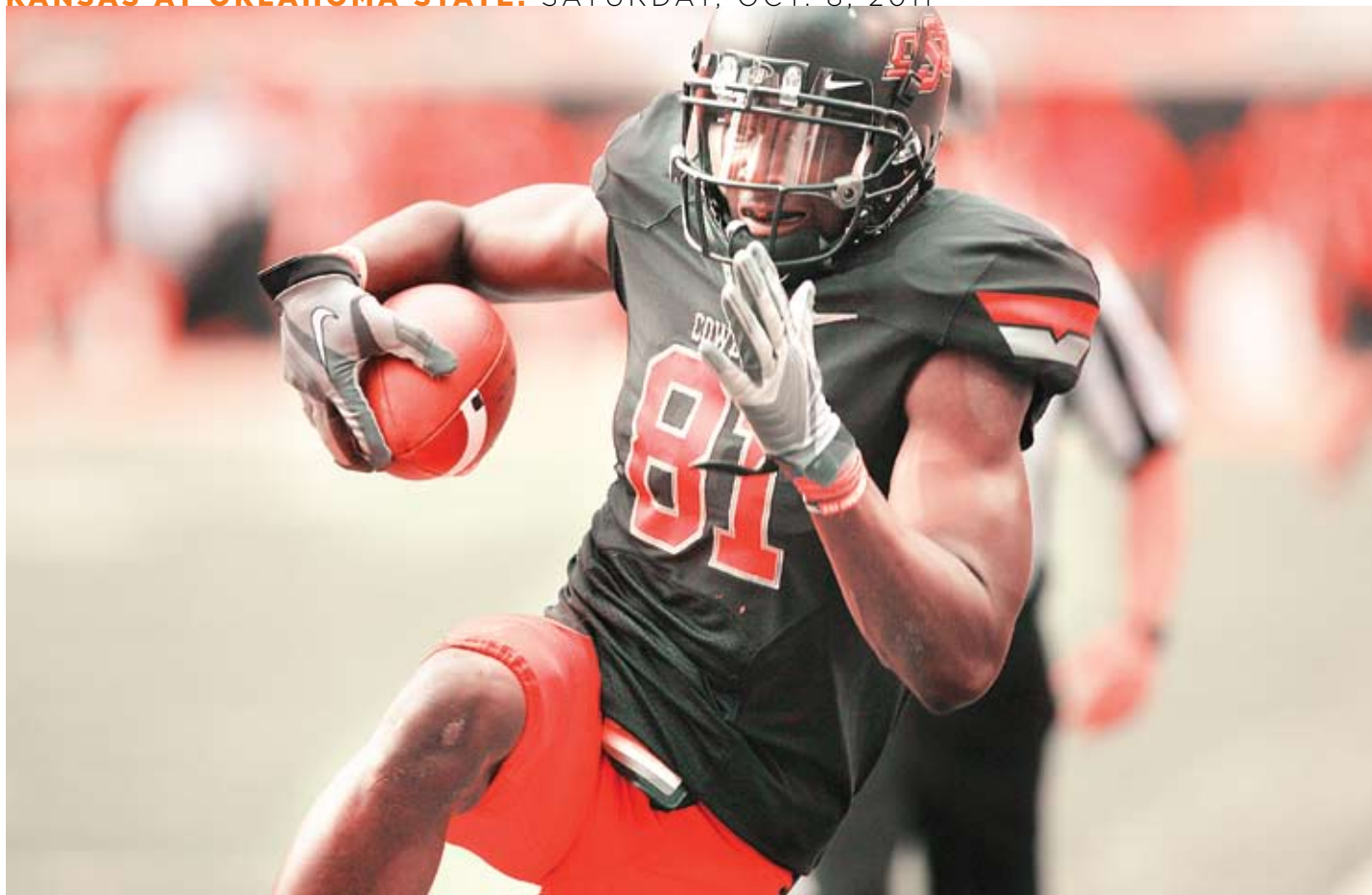
>>> **PICTURED ABOVE:**

Oklahoma State receivers Justin Blackmon (81) and Josh Cooper (25) celebrate a touchdown during the first half of the Cowboys' 70-28 win over the Kansas Jayhawks on Oct. 8, 2011, at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater. The Cowboys scored their most first-quarter points in the modern era with 35 and tied the school mark with 56 points in a half. The only time OSU had reached 70 points since 1916 was a 70-7 win against Southern Illinois in 1973.

Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman



KANSAS AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, OCT. 8, 2011



Oklahoma State receiver Justin Blackmon makes a move to get around several Kansas defenders after a catch during the Cowboys 70-28 win.

Photo by Steve Sisney, The Oklahoman



Cancer patient Taylor Brandt, 5, joins Oklahoma State's Cooper Bassett in celebration after the Cowboys' win over Kansas on Saturday, Oct. 8, 2011.

Photo by Steve Sisney, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State's Shaun Lewis, left, and Tyler Johnson, right, sack Kansas' Jordan Webb during the first half of the Cowboys' 70-28 win over the Jayhawks.

Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman



GAME
SIX

OKLAHOMA STATE AT TEXAS: SATURDAY, OCT. 15, 2011

UNTOUCHABLE

OSU 38, TEXAS 26



>>>> Oklahoma State's performance wasn't pristine. The passing game was not in high gear and the kicking game was suspect. But the No. 6 Cowboys did enough things right to win comfortably, 38-26, in a tough environment. Jeremy Smith ran for 140 yards on seven carries, scoring on runs of 30 and 74 yards straight up the middle to help the Cowboys to a sixth straight victory. Justin Gilbert tied a school record with his fourth career kickoff return for a touchdown that helped OSU win in Austin for the second year in a row.



>>>> PICTURED ABOVE:

Oklahoma State running back Jeremy Smith scampers through the Texas defense during the Cowboys' win over the Longhorns on Oct. 15, 2011 at Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium in Austin. Smith finished with two long scoring runs. The first came in the second quarter on fourth-and-inches when he ran off left tackle. The second came in the third quarter and put the Cowboys ahead 38-24.

Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman



OKLAHOMA STATE AT TEXAS: SATURDAY, OCT. 15, 2011



Oklahoma State receiver Justin Blackmon dives for a touchdown past Texas cornerback Carrington Byndom on Saturday, Oct. 15, 2011 at Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium in Austin, Texas.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



Far left: Oklahoma State cornerback Justin Gilbert tackles Texas receiver Jaxon Shipley.



Left: Oklahoma State running back Jeremy Smith tries to get past Texas' Alex Okafor.

Photos by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman

Right: Oklahoma State defenders Zack Craig (23) and Andrae May (16) tackle Texas' Fozzy Whittaker.

Far Right: Texas running back Fozzy Whittaker gets tripped up by Oklahoma State's Brodrick Brown.

Photos by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



From walk-on to superstar.

Oklahoma State quarterback Brandon Weeden took a chance by returning to school and football after leaving baseball. It paid off for him and the Cowboys.

BY GINA MIZELL

STAFF WRITER



B

random Weeden calmly holds his golf swing as the tiny white ball slams into a screen projecting the image of a fairway. Hanging from the ceiling of the simulator is a computer recording the distance and accuracy of the shot. Welcome to the beginning golf class at Oklahoma State, where the Cowboy quarterback is undoubtedly the best-known student working on his game. It's the Tuesday before Bedlam, and Weeden and classmate Connor Sokolosky are discussing possible uniform combinations for the game in between swings. "Yeah, I know what we're wearing," Weeden says with a smile, without revealing the secret. After class, Weeden will grab lunch with

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



Beginning in 2007, at left, Brandon Weeden has been a huge part of the Oklahoma State football program. Weeden's first real impact came against Colorado in 2009, center, when he played in place of Zac Robinson.

Oklahoman archive photos





Melanie Weeden, left, is greeted by her husband, Oklahoma State quarterback Brandon Weeden, during the Spirit Walk before the game against Arizona in 2011.

Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman

his wife, Melanie, before heading to team meetings and practice. The day might also include a trip to the academic center to work on his four online graduate classes.

Life is good for OSU signal-caller these days. His Cowboys throttled Oklahoma 44-10 to capture their first Big 12 title and a trip to the Fiesta Bowl against Stanford on Jan. 2. He has finished up a semester of graduate courses after earning his degree in management last year. He's OSU's all-time passing leader and a future NFL quarterback.

It's almost hard to believe now that more than four years ago, Weeden walked on at OSU without fanfare after a five-year career in professional baseball

fizzled out.

He'll leave Stillwater as one of the OSU greats on the field — and one of the school's most recognizable figures off it.

"These last five years have been, without a doubt, the (most fun) five years I've had playing any sport," Weeden said. "I wish I could start over from Day 1 and do it all over again. I'm pretty blessed."

• • • • •

OSU coach Mike Gundy first met a 24-year-old Weeden in one of the football offices before the 2007 season. Gundy had scouted Weeden during high school, but he gave up on the quarterback

when he heard Weeden would be a high baseball draft pick.

Yet there was Weeden, asking Gundy if he could walk on to the football team.

"I kind of joked with him that this is not minor league baseball," Gundy said. "I really didn't think he'd make it."

Weeden hadn't put on the pads in more than five years. He also hadn't attended a class, written a paper or taken a test since graduating high school in 2002. Getting back to both school and football would require major adjustments.

But his maturity, leadership and attention to detail showed early on. Academic counselor Terry Henley noticed that

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

Weeden quickly linked up with former OSU running back Kendall Hunter, making sure he always had a ride to the academic center and was attending his tutoring sessions.

"Anytime that Brandon was coming up here, Kendall would be coming with him," Henley said. "I didn't know anything about (Weeden), what his background was exactly, but I remember thinking 'I don't know what kind of quarterback that guy's going to be,' but I remember seeing the leadership qualities that were present."

Life on the football field wasn't easy, however.

Weeden was the third-string quarterback behind Zac Robinson and Alex Cate his sophomore season and in an offensive system that did not fit his style of play. He was constantly getting chewed out by the coaches, Gundy said. Safety Markelle Martin admitted that teammates used to joke that Weeden would probably throw an interception every time he took the ball during practice.

But Weeden kept hanging around.

"I firmly felt like I was the second-best quarterback behind Zac, and I think one of the hardest times for me was when they made Cate the backup," Weeden said. "That was the adversity that I kind of had to overcome and just deal with."

"I've never been a guy that's going to quit. I'm too competitive. I was going to keep fighting for that job, and fortunately I did, because that Colorado game happened."

"That Colorado game" — also known as Weeden's breakout



moment in 2009.

Robinson was battling injury, and Cate went 0-for-9 in the first half. Enter Weeden, who after intermission helped lead the Cowboys back from an 11-point deficit to a 31-28 win.

That win gave Weeden the confidence that the following season, the Cowboys would be his team. And after that game, he was recognized by fans for the first time while celebrating the victory out on the town with kicker Dan Bailey.

It was the night that launched Weeden's career.

• • • • •

Two years later, Weeden is a record-breaking quarterback with the rare opportunity to turn pro in a second sport.

That high level of play makes you an icon in Stillwater. But Weeden's immense popularity also stems from his engaging yet easy going personality that

makes him relatable to fans. He'll pose for pictures at the bagel shop on Main Street. He'll sign a hat after a class or say hi to students as he cruises around campus on his scooter. He'll interact with his 20,000 followers on Twitter. He doesn't mind being stopped nearly everywhere he goes in public.

"That's the least thing I can do is just be as friendly as I possibly can," Weeden said.

Said Sokolosky: "He chats it up with everybody. He acts like a normal kid during class. It's not like he has some arrogance about him or anything. He's a down-to-earth guy. He's really cool."

Weeden's journey has been far from regular, however. And that's part of the draw as well.

Some OSU fans will remember him as the hero who quarterbacked their Cowboys to unprecedented heights. Some will look at his walk-on-to-superstar story as an inspiration.

Weeden hopes he will leave a legacy as one of the best quarterbacks in OSU history. But he wants to be remembered more as someone who cared about people, and a guy who proved it's possible to change one's life path and find success.

"You're only given so much time to do certain things," Weeden said. "You don't want to look back when you're 35, 40, 50 years old and say, 'Man, I wish I had gone back and done something.'"

"I've just always been a person that says, don't say, 'What if?'"

>>> Published: December 20, 2011

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WHITE-WASHED

OSU 45, MISSOURI 24



>>> With two of its top receivers out, Oklahoma State put the game in Joseph Randle's hands. Randle's four touchdowns helped the No. 4 Cowboys pull away from Missouri and up their record to 7-0. Randle had 138 yards on 14 carries and scored on runs of 16, 59 and 12 yards. He also caught a 13-yard touchdown pass in the second quarter. The victory for OSU came against another SEC-bound team, Missouri, from the Big 12 Conference.



>>> **PICTURED ABOVE:**

Oklahoma State running back Joseph Randle scores his fourth touchdown of the game, late in the fourth quarter during the Cowboys' win over Missouri at Faurot Field on Oct. 22, 2011, in Columbia, Mo. The victory moved OSU to 7-0 for just the third time in school history, also doing it in 2008 and 1945. Missouri quarterback James Franklin committed four turnovers in the second half on three interceptions and a lost fumble at the OSU 4.

Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman

OKLAHOMA STATE AT MISSOURI: SATURDAY, OCT. 22, 2011



OSU celebrates its win over Missouri at Faurot Field in Columbia, Mo., Saturday, Oct. 22, 2011.

Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman

Oklahoma State defenders Jamie Blatnick, top, Wilson Youman, left, and Caleb Lavey tackle Missouri running back Henry Josey during the Cowboys' win at Faurot Field in Columbia, Mo.

Photos by
Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State's Jamie Blatnick forces another turnover from Missouri quarterback James Franklin. Franklin committed four turnovers in the second half, including three interceptions and a lost fumble at the OSU 4.

Photos by
Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman



OVER THE TOP

OSU 59, BAYLOR 24



>>> Sure the Cowboys gave up more than 600 yards. But Oklahoma State's five takeaways and red-zone defense against Baylor begged another question: Who says there's No 'D' in Stillwater? Brodrick Brown recovered two fumbles, and Daytawion Lowe and Justin Gilbert had interceptions as OSU forced five turnovers. Joseph Randle set career-highs by running for 152 yards and four touchdowns. Justin Blackmon matched his career best with 13 catches for 172 yards and two scores as No. 3 OSU beat Baylor 59-24.



>>> **PICTURED ABOVE:**

Oklahoma State receiver Justin Blackmon makes a touchdown catch in the corner of the end zone despite the defense of Baylor's K.J. Morton during the Cowboys' 59-24 win over Baylor at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater, Oct. 29, 2011. Blackmon matched his career best with 13 catches for 172 yards and two scores against Baylor.

Photo by Nate Billings,
The Oklahoman

BAYLOR AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, OCT. 29, 2011



Oklahoma State defenders Cooper Bassett, right, and Caleb Lavey, center, celebrate a sack on future Heisman Trophy winner Robert Griffin III during the Cowboys' win over the Baylor. OSU forced five turnovers in the game, including two interceptions from Griffin. **Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman**



Oklahoma State fullback Kye Staley, left, celebrates a touchdown. **Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman**



OSU fans beat their paddles against the padding along the sidelines to make noise during the Cowboys' win over Baylor at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater on Saturday, Oct. 29, 2011.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



GAME
NINE

KANSAS STATE AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, NOV. 5, 2011

HANGIN' TOUGH

OSU 52, KANSAS STATE 45



>>> Brandon Weeden threw for a school-record 502 yards and four touchdowns, and Joseph Randle scored the final, tie-breaking 23-yard touchdown with 2:16 remaining to lift No. 3 Oklahoma State to a 52-45 victory against Kansas State. The Wildcats had a chance to score again, but Collin Klein overshot Tramaine Thompson in the end zone as time expired. An earthquake hit shortly after the Wildcats' last-second pass fell incomplete.



>>> PICTURED ABOVE:

The Oklahoma State sideline goes crazy as James Thomas returns an interception during the Cowboys' win over Kansas State at Boone Pickens Stadium on Nov. 5, 2011 in Stillwater. Thomas returned the interception 47 yards to help set up a 5-yard Brandon Weeden TD pass to Tracy Moore on the next play.

Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman



KANSAS STATE AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, NOV. 5, 2011



Oklahoma State's Kye Staley celebrates the Cowboys' win over Kansas State on Saturday, Nov. 5, 2011.

Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman

The Oklahoma State defense stops Kansas State running back John Hubert during the Cowboys win over the Wildcats. The Cowboys gave up 507 total yards, but made a stop to win the game in the fourth quarter.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



All-American receiver Justin Blackmon caught 13 passes for 205 yards and two touchdowns, atoning for his two-fumble game with a 54-yard touchdown catch with 4:47 remaining that pulled the Cowboys out of a 38-37 deficit.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



A real beast.

Justin Blackmon, a back-to-back Biletnikoff award winner, has made himself into a star. He dominates defenders by playing larger than life. Or at least bigger than 6-foot-1, 215 pounds.

BY JENNI CARLSON, COLUMNIST



Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman

Dez Bryant made the prediction between lifts. It was the fall of 2008, and the Oklahoma State receiver was in the middle of a monster season. But one day in the weight room, he pronounced greatness on another Cowboy.

“Coach, you see that guy, that freshman over there?” he said to strength and conditioning guru Rob Glass. “He’s going to be unbelievable.”

Glass looked at the kid, lanky and skinny.

“What’re you talking about?” Glass asked.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 39



Justin Blackmon celebrates a touchdown at Boone Pickens Stadium during a game against Troy on Sept. 11, 2010. Blackmon has 40 career touchdown catches as a Cowboy. **Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman**

"I'm telling you," Bryant insisted, "that guy is going to be really good."

That guy was Justin Blackmon.

On the day Blackmon is likely to win back-to-back Biletnikoff awards, it's amazing how far he's come. He's gone from lightly heralded recruit to widely celebrated star. He's transformed from a self-proclaimed scrawny, weak freshman into a beast.

It goes beyond his 1,336 yards receiving and 15 touchdown catches this season, beyond the 3,000-plus yards he's amassed during these past two seasons.

It is how he plays. He dominates defenders. He towers over tacklers. He looks larger than life.

Or at least bigger than 6-foot-1, 215 pounds. "Everybody says that," Cowboy receivers

coach Kasey Dunn said. "I'll have friends that call me and say, 'What is he? 6-4?'"

Dunn chuckled.

"He's no taller than I am. Boy, he plays like he's about a foot taller."

How did he do it, transforming himself and becoming the beast?

For starters, Blackmon never lacked for confidence. He was only 4 years old when he first started playing sports. He played mostly youth league sports while his family was living in California, and when the Blackmons moved to Oklahoma, he started playing on traveling teams and more competitive squads.

Regardless of the level or the stakes, Blackmon always wanted to win.

He is hard-wired to be competitive.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



Justin Blackmon will be remembered as one of the best receivers to play at Oklahoma State.

Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman

"I think that's just a part of who he is," said Terry Henley, the primary academic counselor for the football team. "He's just one of those kids."

That competitiveness showed when Blackmon led Plainview High to never-before-seen heights. He refused to let the team lose in the state quarterfinals, an overtime victory against a storied Seminole program that he sealed with an interception in the end zone.

That competitiveness showed as soon as Blackmon arrived at OSU. Even in his first year on campus, toiling on the scout team and facing off against future pros Jacob Lacey and Perrish Cox, Blackmon went hard every play, every day. He had the tenacity to succeed.

He just needed the body.

Going to a smaller school and playing three sports at Plainview, Blackmon had never focused on lifting or conditioning. When he did, he quickly added 20 pounds.

"And his strength shot up and his vertical leap shot up," Glass said. "I think having some time to really focus on his body really kind of turned the corner with him."

Suddenly, Blackmon had the body to do everything that his mind wanted. He could battle with defenders. He could jump over them. He could overpower them.

He could dominate them.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

He always had the desire to do those things, to go get the ball when it was in the air, to stand up to anyone who got in his way. That was his competitiveness. Being able to do that in big-time college football require the necessary physical tools.

He went out and got them.

"It makes it a lot easier when you're strong," Blackmon said. "I just put some weight on so I can battle a little more with people, be more physical.

"I try to play as physical and big as I can."

Mission accomplished.

Watch the Cowboys, and you can't help seeing it. Blackmon toys with defenders. Knocks them down. Breaks their tackles. Eludes their grasp. He just plays like someone who's bigger than 6-foot-1.

In case you need a more technical approach, ESPN's Sports Science did a segment earlier in the season on Blackmon. From a standstill, he caught a ball that was 10-feet, 11 inches off the

ground. That's three inches higher than New York Jets receiver Plaxico Burress.

Blackmon is four inches shorter than Burress.

That was the kind of greatness Dez Bryant saw in Blackmon back in 2008. He not only told Glass how much he thought of the true freshman but also Henley.

"With a guy like Dez," Henley said of the gregarious receiver, "there's very few people athletically that he is in awe of beyond Dez Bryant."

Even though he was still that lanky, skinny freshman, Blackmon always had a different attitude, a tenacious approach.

And now, he's headed to professional football.


"There was never any doubt in his mind that he was going to be a great receiver," Henley said. "You could just see the confidence — 'I just need somebody to get me the ball.'"

The beast was lurking.

The past two seasons, he terrorized college football like no other receiver has.

>>> Published: December 7, 2011

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COWBOYS GONE WILD

OSU 66, TEXAS TECH 6



>>> Second-ranked Oklahoma State moved to 10-0 for the first time in school history with a blowout win over Texas Tech. The only points the Cowboys gave up were on a fumble return for a touchdown. Brandon Weeden threw for 423 yards and five touchdowns and Joseph Randle ran for three more scores to lead OSU. Weeden, who completed 31 of 37 passes, threw touchdown passes of 2, 27, 28, 48 and 66 yards, and had no interceptions before backup Clint Chelf entered the game late in the third quarter.



>>> **PICTURED ABOVE:**

Oklahoma State's Josh Stewart and Justin Blackmon celebrate a Stewart touchdown during the Cowboys' win against Texas Tech on Nov. 12, 2011, at Jones AT&T Stadium in Lubbock, Texas. Stewart scored on a 66-yard reception for one of his two scores. Blackmon and Josh Cooper each had more than 100 receiving yards.

Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman



OKLAHOMA STATE AT TEXAS TECH: SATURDAY, NOV. 12, 2011



Oklahoma State's Cooper Bassett celebrates an interception with teammates Markelle Martin, Caleb Lavey and Wilson Youman against Texas Tech.

Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman



Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman



Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman

It was a great day for Oklahoma State. The Cowboys led the nation in takeaways coming into the game and got three more against the Red Raiders. OSU scored off all three first-half turnovers by Texas Tech, including two scores from Josh Stewart, above, and three scores from Joseph Randle, shown at right. Randle's rushing scores went for 2, 1 and 10 yards, and he finished with 78 yards on 18 carries.



Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman

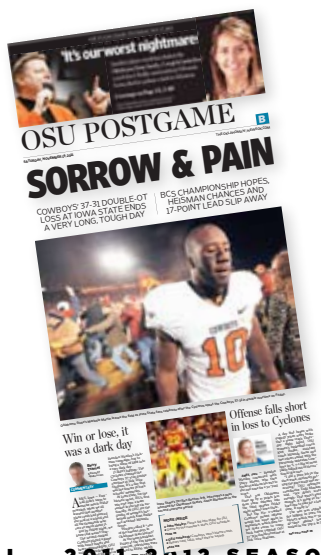


HOUSE OF PAIN

IOWA STATE 37, OSU 31 (2OT)



>>> A day that began with tragedy, ended when Jeff Woody scored on a 4-yard run in the second overtime and Iowa State stunned second-ranked Oklahoma State 37-31. The OSU offense uncharacteristically never got in rhythm, while ISU scored 17 unanswered points to force overtime. The Cowboys turned the ball over five times, including three interceptions by Brandon Weeden. Earlier in the day, the team learned that a plane crash the previous day killed OSU women's basketball coach Kurt Budke, assistant coach Miranda Serna and two others.



>>> **PICTURED ABOVE:** Oklahoma State defender Brodrick Brown walks off the field after OSU's 37-31 double-overtime loss as Iowa State fans celebrate after the Cyclones win over the Cowboys on Nov. 18, 2011 at Jack Trice Stadium in Ames, Iowa. "This one stings. This one's tough. But here's the deal: All the goals we set at the beginning of the year are still there," Cowboys quarterback Brandon Weeden said after the loss.

Photo by Bryan Terry,
The Oklahoman



OKLAHOMA STATE AT IOWA STATE: FRIDAY, NOV. 18, 2011



Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman

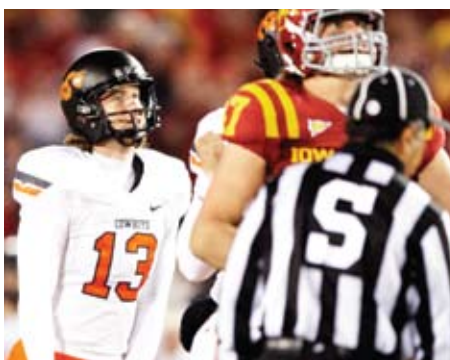


Photo by Bryan Terry, The Oklahoman



Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman

Oklahoma State quarterback Brandon Weeden threw for 476 yards, but he had three interceptions, including one from Ter'Ran Benton, shown at top. Running back Joseph Randle, shown at right, struggled as well, fumbling twice, allowing Iowa State to come back from a 17-point deficit after Oklahoma State stretched its lead to 24-7 less than 3 minutes into the second half. With the game tied at 24-all, kicker Quinn Sharp, shown above, pushed a 37-yard field goal right with 1:17 to go, sending the game to overtime.



THE CHAMPS

OKLAHOMA STATE 44, OKLAHOMA 10



>>> A dominating performance made Oklahoma State a conference champion for the first time in decades. Joseph Randle ran for 151 yards and two touchdowns, Richetti Jones returned a fumble for a score and No. 3 Oklahoma State throttled Oklahoma 44-10 to win the Big 12 Championship. The Cowboys hammered away, running for 278 yards and producing two 100-yard rushers. On 33 carries in the game, Cowboy rushers were never dropped for a loss.



>>> PICTURED ABOVE:

Justin Blackmon celebrates with the Oklahoma State crowd following the win over Oklahoma in the 2011 Bedlam game at Boone Pickens Stadium on Dec. 3, 2011 in Stillwater. The win over the Sooners gave OSU its first outright conference championship and first victory over the rival Sooners since 2002.

Photo by Bryan Terry,
The Oklahoman



OKLAHOMA AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, DEC. 3, 2011



Photos by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman

Above, Oklahoma State's Alex Elkins sacks Landry Jones to cause a fumble, recovered by Jamie Blatnick. Blatnick, shown in photos at right, picked up the fumble and returned it 59 yards to the 1-yard line. Joseph Randle scored on the next play to make it 17-0.



OKLAHOMA AT OKLAHOMA STATE: SATURDAY, DEC. 3, 2011



An Oklahoma State fan uses his phone from atop a goal post that was torn down after the Bedlam win over Oklahoma.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State running back Jeremy Smith flies into the end zone to score a 9-yard touchdown.

Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State's Alex Elkins hits Oklahoma quarterback Landry Jones to cause a fumble.

Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman



Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State fans Melissa Colvert, left in black hat, and Jacob Russell, right in orange sweatshirt, celebrate with Cowboys quarterback Brandon Weeden after OSU's 44-10 victory over Oklahoma. **Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman**

Picture perfect.

BY JENNI CARLSON, COLUMNIST

Jacob Russell's uncle sent him a text the morning after Bedlam. "You've GOT to see the front of the sports section," it said. The Oklahoma State junior didn't think much of the note. He figured there was probably a picture of the celebration from the night before. The Cowboys had rolled the Sooners, and the fans had stormed the field. Maybe there was a fun shot of the pandemonium on the Boone Pickens Stadium turf. Perhaps a shot of the goal posts being carted around the field. But then Russell's dad called. "You're a star," he said.

"What are you talking about?" Russell said. What his dad, his uncle and hundreds of thousands of others saw that morning on the cover of *The Oklahoman's* sports page was Russell celebrating with Cowboy quarterback Brandon Weeden. He was one of several fans captured by photographer Chris Landsberger, but of course, in the mad crush of fans, there was no way to gather all their names.

But each and every one of them has a story of their encounter with the OSU star.

Through the wonder if social media, we found a couple of them, and their tales remind us just how special that night was for Cowboy fans.

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 51

A picture's worth a thousand words?

Then a thousand words it is for this column.

Melissa Colvert and her husband, Jared, bought season tickets for the first time this year. They'd attended games regularly since she graduated in 2008 with an elementary education degree, but this season, they didn't want to take a chance that they wouldn't be able to find Bedlam tickets.

They knew the game was going to be something special.

Sitting with half a dozen friends in Section 332, they watched as a night for the ages unfolded. The Cowboy offense clicked along like always. The Cowboy defense played better than ever. OSU was going to not only blow out OU but also win its first outright Big 12 title and qualify for a first-ever BCS bowl.

"I think was just kind of unspoken," Colvert said, "but toward the end ... it was like, 'We're going down there, right?'"

Colvert never experienced anything as big as this Bedlam during her college days. Sure, she's worked at Daylight Donuts south of campus and served Mike Gundy coffee almost every day — "Practically part of the football family, if you ask me," she joked — but that was nothing compared to this.

Colvert had to be part of the celebration, planning to go down the steps onto the field but finding that the momentum of the crowd left her no choice but to go over the wall that surrounds the field. After getting onto the turf, she somehow found her husband and started to make her way to the middle of the field.

That was when she spotted Weeden.

"C'mon, it's Weeden!" she hollered at her husband. "Get a picture of me with Weeden!"

They started trailing the quarterback, Colvert patting his back, trying to get his attention.

Nothing.

For the better part of five minutes, she trailed Weeden as he high-fived and hugged and had a great time with the fans.

As for that hoped-for picture?

"We only got a picture of me and Weeden's arm," Colvert said, laughing.

No worries. Our photo man Chris took care of getting that picture. Colvert, a temporary OSU tattoo on her cheek and a black hat covering her brown hair, is easy to spot behind Weeden's right shoulder.

She was pumped to find out she was on the cover

of the paper.

"I always try to get on the fan cam or the kiss cam," she said. "I was like, 'Oh, I one-upped it. I'm in the paper!'"

Jacob Russell couldn't believe he made the paper. He is wearing the orange hoodie in the right foreground, patting Weeden on the shoulder and chest, smiling from ear to ear.

That grin was genuine, too. Russell has been going to Cowboy football games since he was 2 years old. His grandparents and his parents all attended OSU. Even though his parents grew up only eight miles apart — his dad in Duncan, his mom in Empire — they first met at the Edmon Low Library on campus.

As near as he knows, he's only missed one home game since he started attending.

"So I've seen it all," he said.

Bad years. Building years. Good years.

He remembers the 2002 season as the one that kicked his Cowboy fandom to another gear. That was the year OSU fans stormed the field not once, but twice. First came Nebraska. Then came OU.

Then a sixth grader, he watched both celebrations from the stands.

"I was a little guy, I would've gotten hurt," he said.

"But I said then, 'If this happens when I'm in school, I'm going down there.'"

And so he did.

From his seat about halfway up the student section, Russell made his way onto the field after the game was over. He ran about 20 yards before he was surrounded and found it difficult to even move.

But almost immediately, he saw Weeden.

The two had actually met before. Russell's uncle lives in Edmond and has kids who attended high school at Edmond Santa Fe with the Weeden boys. Their families are friends, and when the entire Russell clan tailgates before OSU games, the Weedens are regulars.

Still, Russell didn't go looking for Weeden that night.

"It was really neat to run into him like that," he said.

"It was very random."

And very quick.

Russell suspects he was only around Weeden for five seconds before moving on.

It was but one of the indelible images from an incredible night. Every Cowboy fan left that stadium with their own special memories. We just captured one of the many that will be remembered forever.

>>> Published: December 15, 2011



FIESTA
BOWL

STANFORD VS. OKLAHOMA STATE: MONDAY, JAN. 2, 2012

FANTASTIC FINISH

OSU 41, STANFORD 38 (OT)



Photo by Bryan Terry, The Oklahoman



STANFORD VS. OKLAHOMA STATE: MONDAY, JAN. 2, 2012



>>> Brandon Weeden threw for 399 yards and three touchdowns to Justin Blackmon in their final collegiate game, and Quinn Sharp hit a 22-yard field goal in overtime to give No. 3 Oklahoma State a 41-38 win over Andrew Luck and No. 4 Stanford in a wildly entertaining Fiesta Bowl. “Our team rallied. Every time we got down, they just found a way to come back,” said Cowboys coach Mike Gundy, who dedicated the victory to the four people who died in the Nov. 17 plane crash that killed Oklahoma State women’s basketball coach Kurt Budke and assistant Miranda Serna. Weeden completed 29 of 42 passes and the three scores to Blackmon, who had eight catches for 186 yards.

>>> PICTURED ABOVE: Oklahoma State’s Quinn Sharp kicks the game-winning 22-yard field goal to win the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 3, 2012 at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. Sharp’s 22-yard field goal in overtime capped a thrilling 41-38 Fiesta Bowl victory for the Cowboys in a game it appeared that OSU had lost when Stanford missed a field goal with three seconds remaining in regulation.

Photo by Bryan Terry, The Oklahoman



STANFORD VS. OKLAHOMA STATE: MONDAY, JAN. 2, 2012



Big hits, sacks, and a Brandon Weeden rushing touchdown all helped Oklahoma State to a Fiesta Bowl win over Stanford. OSU coach Mike Gundy, shown at right with Shelley Budke, dedicated the victory to the four people who died in the Nov. 17 plane crash that killed Oklahoma State women's basketball coach Kurt Budke and assistant Miranda Serna.

**Photos by Bryan Terry and Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman**





Oklahoma State quarterback Brandon Weeden, left, threw for 399 yards and three touchdowns to Justin Blackmon, shown above, in their final collegiate game, a Fiesta Bowl win for the Cowboys. Oklahoma State had just 15 yards rushing on 13 carries, but Weeden made up for it, completing 29 of 42 passes and the three scores to Blackmon, who had eight catches for 186 yards.

Photos by Bryan Terry and Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman



Oklahoma State head coach Mike Gundy and Justin Blackmon celebrate the Fiesta Bowl victory over the Stanford Cardinal at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz.

Photo by Sarah Phipps, The Oklahoman

Best season ever.

BY BERRY TRAMEL, COLUMNIST

W

hat a season. What a ballgame.

What a night for names that will be remembered for as long as football is played at Boone Pickens Stadium. What a night for jersey numbers that make you check your program.

What a night not just for Brandon Weeden and Justin Blackmon, but for Colton Chelf and Alex Elkins and Caleb Lavey.

Oklahoma State's Cowboys capped the greatest football season in school history with an epic Fiesta Bowl victory. OSU beat Stanford 41-38 in overtime Monday night.

Stanford had Andrew Luck, but OSU had Lady Luck. The Cowboys never led until they won. They played from

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 57





Oklahoma State offensive coordinator Todd Monken, center, celebrates with offensive lineman Nick Martinez, left, and Grant Garner after the Fiesta Bowl at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz.

Photo by Bryan Terry, The Oklahoman

behind all night. But they never lost the faith.

The Cardinal's Jordan Williamson missed a 35-yard field goal on the final play of regulation, then a 43-yarder in overtime, which meant the Cowboys could play for Quinn Sharp's field goal in the extra session.

They almost didn't need it, when Weeden's rifle pass to fellow former walk-on Chelf went for an apparent touchdown. Instead, replay review counted Chelf down at the 1-yard line, so Sharp was summoned for a 22-yard field goal that won it.

"Colton's been doing it every day in practice," Weeden said. "We just saw some things that they do defensively. Their linebackers are really aggressive. We just liked the way he went about his business."

Yep, Weeden2Chelf. Just the way we drew it up. Of course, Chelf (five catches, 97 yards) had the chance to be the hero because that other receiver, Blackmon, played a game for the ages.

Blackmon had eight catches for 186 yards (all in the second and fourth quarters) and three touchdowns. Most of his damage was made on slants, catching the ball and shaking off Stanford tacklers.

And Weeden sealed his legend with a 399-yard, three-TD game. Would have been 400 yards and four touchdowns had Chelf's touchdown stood.

No matter. The Weeden legacy is set. Greatest quarterback, greatest team, and now one of the greatest games in school history.

"I can't say enough about the job that Brandon did," OSU coach Mike Gundy said. "Every time we got down, we were resilient and came back. What a great job by our players."

A rousing rally in overtime for the third-ranked Cowboys against fourth-ranked Stanford. A statement that this team sure would have been interesting playing down in New Orleans in the Big Bowl

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 58



against LSU, no matter how Alabama does next week.

But enough of that. Let's not think about what ifs. Let's focus on what is.

Whale of a ballgame. Stanford's Luck was unbelievably good. Stanford's offense was the same – OSU's defense got only one second-half stop, and that on an unforced fumble.

But OSU's offense was equal to the task. Twice the Cowboys took the field in the fourth quarter. Both times, OSU trailed by seven points. Both times, Weeden and Co. produced a touchdown.

Each possession was punctuated by amazing throws.

On 3rd-and-8 from the OSU 42-yard line, Weeden zipped an arrow on a deep-out pattern to Josh Cooper, good for 18 yards. NFL throw.

Upper-half-of-NFL-quarterbacks throw. Five plays later, another Weeden to Blackmon pass tied the game.

Then with 3 1/2 minutes left in the game, 4th-and-3 from the OSU 40-yard line, Mike Gundy disdained a punt. Great call. The Cowboys had shown no sign of stopping Stanford.

It was do or die. Weeden and Blackmon did. The Cowboys went to their best play, the Blackmon slant, and Blackmon speared another Weeden bullet and carried Stanford defenders to a 21-yard gain.

Three plays later, the Cowboys had another tie, and the game was in Luck's hands. Until it was on Williamson's foot.

Gundy said he had a feeling something good would happen, and it

did, when Williamson pulled the kick.

That gave OSU life, and in overtime, the defense finally reared its head. Linebackers Elkins and Lavey nailed stud tailback Stepfan Taylor for a three-yard loss, setting up a 3rd-and-13. Then safety Markelle Martin stuffed flanker Ty Montgomery on a short pass.

When Williamson missed again, this time from 43 yards, it was all over but the shouting. Weeden, and Chelf, and finally Sharp ended a rousing Fiesta Bowl that was just as good as the bowlmakers hoped it would be.

"It's a very special win," Gundy said.

Very special win on a very special night.

>>> Published:
January 3, 2012



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Oklahoma State head coach Mike Gundy enters the stadium during the Spirit Walk before the Cowboys' win over Baylor.

**Photo by Sarah Phipps,
The Oklahoman**



Oklahoma State quarterback Brandon Weeden gives out high fives and signs autographs for fans that greeted the football team as they arrived back at the Stillwater Airport from their BCS Fiesta Bowl win. **Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman**

Welcome home.

BY JOHN HELSLEY, STAFF WRITER



cars were parked in the grass, lining a long stretch of road leading to Stillwater Regional Airport, where the parking lot was overflowing with even more cars.

A mob of fans decked out in orange cheered and screamed and applauded as their Cowboys strolled down the portable steps from the Continental charter jet delivering the Fiesta Bowl champions home.

Lezlee Cavanaugh, an Oklahoma State fan from Perkins, clutched the day's sports page from The Oklahoman, hoping

to present it to one Cowboys hero whose picture was plastered across the page.

"I want to give it to Quinn Sharp," Cavanaugh said of the OSU kicker, who provided the winning points in Monday night's 41-38 overtime win over Stanford. "Watching the game at home, I was sitting on the edge of my seat the whole game. Then the last minute of the game, I was standing. As soon as the kick went through, I started jumping and screaming."

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 61





Oklahoma State fans cheer on their team as the Cowboys arrive back at the Stillwater Airport from their BCS Fiesta Bowl win on Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2012, in Stillwater.

Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman

That was the tone all around the airport, where fans of all ages gathered to welcome home a Cowboys team that made history, winning a school-record 12 games and claiming the first BCS bowl victory in the program's first BCS bowl appearance.

Players accepted congratulations as they passed through the crowd of supporters. Some, like quarterback Brandon Weeden, lingered long, signing autographs and posing for photos.

"It's awesome," Weeden said. "It's been like this all year. We're fortunate, we've got great fans. And they're loyal. The turnout in Arizona was incredible. There was a lot of orange in that stadium and they got loud.

"Just the support we've had all year, it's been tremendous. Poke

Nation is alive. This program is on the rise and I don't see it going anywhere anytime soon."

Stillwater's Julie Teubner missed out on the trip to Arizona, so she figured showing up at the airport was the next best thing.

"I didn't get to go to the bowl game and I was sorry I didn't get to go," Teubner said. "So I wanted to be here.

"I always thought they'd pull it out. It was really exciting to see. It just seems there's something inside these guys, something special that helps them pull these games out. OSU teams of the past didn't do that."

Stillwater's Joe Nelson knows all about that. He used to work around and rub elbows with many of the people in athletics down the hall in the assistant business manager's

office. Now he's across campus at the school of hotel and restaurant administration, but still as orange as ever.

"I came out to see them back," Nelson said. "I still have a close relationship with a lot of these people.

"The game was nerve-wracking. Too close. I truly expected a game like Bedlam. What it showed me is Stanford is a better team than I expected and a better team than OU."

Wide receiver Colton Chelf, another Cowboy game hero with a career-high in catches and yards against Stanford, smiled as he emerged from the sea of fans.

"They've supported us all season," Chelf said. "We have the best fans in the country. It's just what they do. And we love them."

>>> Published: January 3, 2012





Lauren Crosthwait, 3, cheers for her Cowboys as they arrive at the Stillwater Airport from their BCS Fiesta Bowl win on Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2012.

Photo by Chris Landsberger, *The Oklahoman*





Pistol Pete shakes hands with the Oklahoma State fans while during the 'Spirit Walk' before the Bedlam game in Stillwater.

Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman

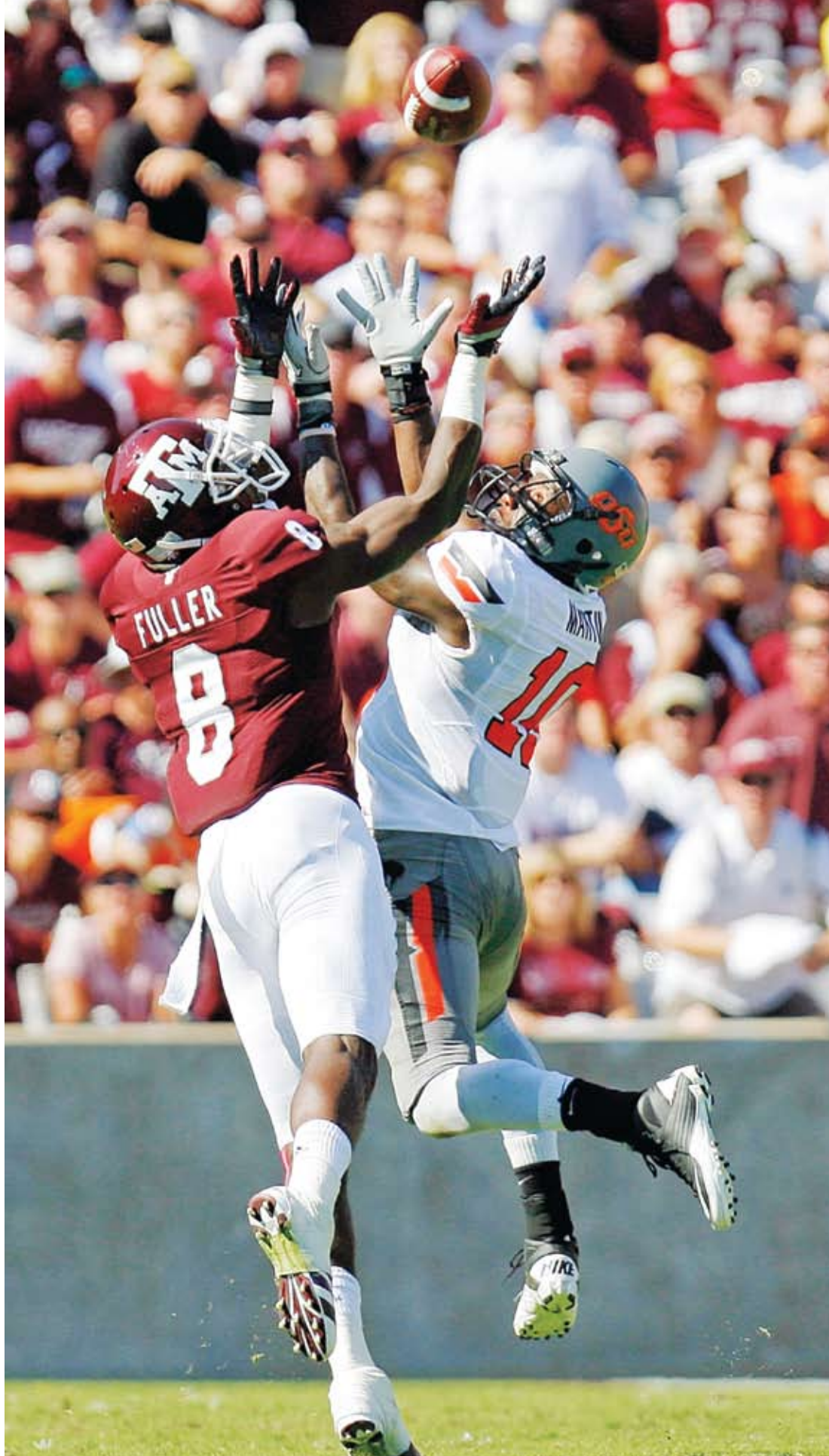




A sea of Oklahoma State fans wearing orange waits for the start of the Fiesta Bowl between Oklahoma State and Stanford.

Photo by Bryan Terry, The Oklahoman





OVER THE TOP

Oklahoma State safety, Markelle Martin, attempts to break up a pass intended for Texas A&M's Jeff Fuller during the Cowboys' victory over the Aggies on Sept. 24, 2011 at Kyle Field in College Station, Texas.

**Photo by Nate Bilings,
The Oklahoman**



Photo by Nate Billings, The Oklahoman

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