



## FWAA writing contest winners

The results from the FWAA's 17th annual Best Writing Contest are listed below. All places will be recognized at the FWAA's Annual Awards Breakfast on Jan. 7, 2010, at the BCS Championship Game Media Hotel in Newport Beach,

Calif. Places 1-3 receive certificates and cash prizes, and honorable mentions get certificates. Winners in each category also will receive commemorative footballs. The winning entries are the focal point of this issue of the Fifth Down.



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#### GAME

**First place:** Andy Staples, *SI.com*

**Second place:** Bob Condotta, *Seattle Times*

**Third place:** Mark Anderson, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

**Honorable mention:** Eric Thomas, *Carlisle Sentinel*; Stewart Mandel, *SI.com*; Pete DePrimio, *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*

#### LOOSE DEADLINE

**First place:** J. Brady McCollough, *Kansas City Star*

**Second place:** Jason King, *Yahoo! Sports*

**Third place:** David Barron, *Houston Chronicle*

**Honorable mention:** Ron Higgins, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; Pete Thamel, *New York Times*; Kirk Bohls, *Austin American-Statesman*

#### FEATURE

**First place:** Steve Wieberg, *USA Today*

**Second place:** Josh Robbins, *Orlando Sentinel*

**Third place:** Gene Wojciechowski, *ESPN.com*

**Honorable mention:** Jake Trotter, *The Oklahoman*; Stewart Mandel, *SI.com*; Brian Landman, *St. Petersburg Times*

#### COLUMN

**First place:** Gene Wojciechowski, *ESPN.com*

**Second place:** Michael Lev, *The Orange County Register*

**Third place:** Peter Kerasotis, *Florida Today*

**Honorable mention:** David Teel, *Newport News Daily Press*; Leopold Geans, *Ogsportsshow.com*; David Jones, *Harrisburg Patriot-News*

#### ENTERPRISE

**First place:** John Helsley, *The Oklahoman*

**Second place:** Bud Withers, *Seattle Times*

**Third place:** J. Brady McCollough, *Kansas City Star*

**Honorable mention:** Mark Anderson, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*; Al Lesar, *South Bend Tribune*; Cory Giger, *Altoona (Pa.) Mirror*

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**Lenn Robbins**  
*New York Post*

**Phil Steele**  
*Phil Steele Magazine*

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*The State (S.C.)*

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*Memphis Commercial Appeal*

**John Davis**  
*Oxford (Miss.) Eagle*

**Heath Dinich**  
*ESPN.com*

**Pete DiPrimio**  
*Fort Wayne (Ind.) News-Sentinel*

**Ryan Finley**  
*Arizona Daily Star*

**Pete Fiutak**  
*College Football News*

**Kevin Gorman**  
*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

**Anthony Hanshaw**  
*Huntington Herald-Dispatch*

**Dave Matter**  
*Columbia (Mo.) Daily Tribune*

**Mick McGrane**  
*San Diego Union-Tribune*

**Rodney McKissic**  
*Buffalo News*

**Adam Sparks**  
*Daily News (Tenn.) Journal*

**Jimmy Watson**  
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*Central Florida*

# President's column



**GEORGE SCHROEDER**

In the last edition of the Fifth Down, I wrote that the Southeastern Conference, more than any other conference, appears to get the need for good relations with the media. The context was media guides — the SEC is for 'em — but that wasn't the only evidence that shows the

league is media-friendly.

How then to take the latest maneuvers?

In late July, the SEC issued a media credentials policy that was, to be kind, draconian. Probably unenforceable. Perhaps illegal. And for those media organizations covering college sports, unacceptable.

Backlash and uproar followed, and the league backpedaled, issuing a revised policy. It wasn't acceptable, either — at least not according to the letter sent to SEC commissioner Mike Slive by a combination of heavy-hitting media groups (the American Society of News Editors, Associated Press Managing Editors and Associated Press Sports Editors).

At press time, with less than two weeks before kickoff of football season, there hadn't been further revision. It would be worth your while to review the entire policy, which can be found at this link: [http://www.secsports.com/doc/lib/0910\\_media\\_credential\\_policy.pdf](http://www.secsports.com/doc/lib/0910_media_credential_policy.pdf)

But as laid out in the letter from ASNE, APME AND APSE, here are three major points of contention:

- Newspaper Web sites would be prohibited from using video or audio highlights from SEC games and restricted in use of audio/video from interviews.

- Use and sale of photographs taken by news organizations at SEC events would be restricted, while the SEC and its schools would be allowed to use those photographs in their publications and on their Web sites.

- In-game blogging and other Internet transmissions — with the definition to be determined by the SEC — would most likely be prohibited. Blogs? Twitter? Facebook status updates? Whatever the next thing is? If the SEC deems it a “real-time description,” it's against the policy. Hard to know what that means, but it's reasonable to assume a tweet — “Great move by Tebow, the guy is fantastic” — might be construed as a threat.

There's more, and again, I'd encourage every FWAA member to review the policy, and to make sure your organization has a handle on it, even if you're not covering the SEC. There are credentialing issues with other conferences; several intend to limit in-game Internet transmissions (blogs, tweets, etc.). But the SEC's policy, even revised, is the most far-reaching attempt to date by a college sports organization to control coverage.

The SEC's restrictions echo the policies of professional leagues; the battles between media organizations and those leagues have been going on for a while now. It's also the SEC's attempt to deal with new, ever-changing technology. We've seen how newspapers have struggled to deal with the Internet — why are we surprised to learn others can't harness it, either?

While this battle should be fought by individual media organizations — your publisher should already be involved — the FWAA agrees philosophically with the ASNE, APME and APSE. We're hopeful the SEC will revise the revised policy, and return to its former status as the conference that gets the need for good media relations.

## Reminders, odds and ends

- The final FWAA membership count for 2009-10 is more than 1,100, which is

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# Column: Gene Wojciechowski

*Comment of the judge, Micky Spagnola: Really good job of reporting here, yet incorporating all the facts and all sides of the story into a commentary-type piece to give the reader a real feel for this strange, strange episode in high school recruiting.*

By **GENE WOJCIECHOWSKI**  
ESPN.com

The small-town football player involved in the most bizarre recruiting story, well, ever, answered the phone on the third ring.

"I'm not going to make any comment on it," said Kevin Hart, his voice subdued, almost sad. "I don't mean to be impolite. I'm just going to hang up the phone."

A moment later, click.

Thursday was not a good day for Hart. How could it be? The sheriff's department wanted to talk to him again.

But Wednesday was worse. Wednesday is when the pride of Fernley High School admitted that he had lied to the police, to his family, his friends, his teachers, his coaches, his teammates, his classmates, and anyone else in a small Nevada town who thought Hart was going to be the first Vaqueros player to receive a Division I football scholarship.

"I've been with the Lyon County Sheriff's office for 18 years," said Lt. Rob Hall, "and I've never seen anything like this."

A week ago, in front of television cameras and a packed high school gymnasium, the 6-5, 290-pound offensive guard placed two baseball caps on a table -- a Cal Bears cap on his right, an Oregon Ducks cap on his left -- and then, after a dramatic pause, put the blue-and-gold Cal hat on his head.

"They really won me over," Hart told reporters. "Coach [Jeff] Tedford and I talked a lot, and the fact that the head coach did most of the recruiting of me kind of gave me the real personal experience."

Actually, the Cal head coach barely knew he existed. That's because there was no scholarship offer. Not from Cal. Not from Oregon. Not from anywhere. Hart made it up. He made everything up.

What began six months ago as a small, ego-driven lie, somehow gained weight and strength and grew into an uncontrollable hoax. It enveloped a school, a town, a family and maybe a future.

Chin strap-deep in his own confused dishonesty, Hart issued a statement Wednesday through the county school district saying that he fabricated it all.

"I wanted to play D-I ball more than anything," he said in the statement. "When I realized that wasn't going to happen, I made up what I wanted to be reality."

You've got to at least give Hart credit for facing the truth. Not that he had any choice.

GENE WOJCIECHOWSKI

– ESPN.com

Age: 52

College: Tennessee

**Background:** Wojciechowski was part of the original *ESPN The Magazine* staff in 1998 and in 2005 became ESPN.com's Senior National Columnist. Among his career highlights: *taping* a segment of ESPN's now-deceased "Halftime Blitz" on the first take at a local junior college — and doing so as players mooned him as they walked by the camera. Wojciechowski came to ESPN from the *Chicago Tribune* and also has worked at the *Los Angeles Times*, *Dallas Morning News* and *Denver Post*. He has authored or co-authored eight books, the most recent being *The Bus*, a New York Times bestseller with Jerome Bettis. Wojciechowski and his wife, Cheryl, live in Wheaton, Ill., where, sadly, the tile floor in the family laundry room features the orange and white checkerboard pattern of Neyland Stadium's end zone. His other weaknesses: golf, the Green Bay Packers, Chicago Cubs and anything written by P.J. O'Rourke and Dan Jenkins.



Not long after Hart received a standing ovation at the school assembly, word of his decision made its way to the recruiting chat rooms. A sampling from The Bear Insider.com:

"1st DI player to come out of that high school? He must be a superstar at the school." ... "I think this qualifies as a KABOOM." ... "Yes, I have seen him play. He's pretty good. Has college size, good skills. Good addition for Cal." ... "Sounds like a great young man with size and attitude!" ... "I think Kevin Hart will be one hell of a sleeper recruit for Cal."

Except that Cal never recruited him. And even though Hart attended football camps at Oregon and the nearby University of Nevada, he wasn't on either program's list of approximately 300 potential recruits.

"We knew of the kid," said a sympathetic Chris Ault, head coach at Nevada. "He was in our camp, but he's not a scholarship athlete."

And yet, about 10 days ago, a Nevada assistant coach told Ault, "Coach, you won't believe this, but the Hart kid is gonna go to Oregon."

"What?" said Ault.

"Oregon's offering him a scholarship," said the assis-

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# Game: Andy Staples

*Comment of the judge, Gene Duffey: Excellent lead, short and to the point. The writer quickly puts into perspective the magnitude of the Georgia loss in regard to the season. Good takeoff of Georgia legendary radio announcer Larry Munson. A little short on quotes, but the ones used were good ones.*

**By ANDY STAPLES**

*SI.com*

ATHENS, Ga. -- Hedges to hedges, dust to dust.

We gather here tonight to pay our respects to the national championship hopes of the Georgia Bulldogs. Please gather 'round the gravesite. The Bulldogs' national title dreams will be interred at the 50-yard line, near the spot where, in tonight's first quarter, 365-pound Alabama nose tackle Terrence Cody flattened Georgia tailback Knowshon Moreno after a screen pass. The Right Rev. Larry Munson couldn't be here tonight to deliver the eulogy, but we can guess at what he might have said.

*Good God. They're just killing us. Killing us. Terrence Cody is occupying our entire offensive line. Andre Smith is mauling our defensive linemen. Glen Coffee is running through us like a 59-cent burrito. We're discombobulated on offense. We're confused on defense. And Julio Jones? My God. A freshman?*

Who knew Alabama strength coach Scott Cochran would be so right? As Crimson Tide players stretched before Tuesday's practice, Cochran yelled, screamed and then, just for a few seconds, lowered his volume. "They're wearing black because they're going to a [compound adjective that would get a bar of Dial stuffed in your mouth] funeral," he said, not quite under his breath. A camera caught the entire soliloquy, and, naturally, it was given unto the masses through the magic of YouTube.

Which brings us to this reading from Alabama 41-30.

*Yea, though the Crimson Tide walk through the valley of the shadow of Herschel Walker, they shall fear no Dawg. For Nick Saban art with them. His scheme and his staff, they comfort them. He preparast a game plan for them in the face of their enemies. He cheweth their fannies at practice. Their signing class runneth over -- with five-star recruits.*

With death comes rebirth. Alabama fans, wearing angelic white Saturday, now can dream anew of the national title they consider their birthright. The No. 1 spot in the polls is up for grabs thanks to USC's loss at Oregon State on Thursday. The eighth-ranked Tide booted Georgia from No. 3. Florida will vacate No. 4 after losing at home to Ole Miss on Saturday. Some voters doubtless will consider Alabama's 31-0 halftime lead, its 129-

**ANDY STAPLES —**

**SI.com**

**Age:** 31

**College:** Florida

**Background:** I'm married to the warmest-hearted, smartest, funniest, most breathtaking woman alive. It's a sports-writer thing. We're slobes, but we almost always manage to outkick our coverage when it comes to finding a mate. Earlier this year, Anne and I were blessed with the birth of our son, Will. Will already is the most hyped recruit in the class of 2028, but in spite of the recent wave of early commitments, he's determined to take all five official visits. ... So how did I get to this point? From September 2000 to June 2002, lived in Knoxville, Tenn., and covered University of Tennessee sports for the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*. I then moved to *The Tampa Tribune*, where I covered local sports in Pasco County from July 2002 to March 2004. In March 2004, I moved to Gainesville to cover the Gators. In January 2008, I left behind the ink-and-paper world for *SI.com*, where I'm allowed to channel the voice of Larry Munson and use phrases like "he's running through us like a 59-cent burrito." My hobbies are searching for the world's greatest rack of ribs, reading, general basset hound maintenance, jogging and lifting weights. I do the last two so I can keep doing the first one.



50 rushing advantage Saturday, two wins against top-10 teams and the fact that the Tide have not trailed for a solitary second all season and vote 'Bama No. 1. That will not please Saban, who does not want to get his team to get ahead of itself. Too fresh are the memories of last year's 6-2 start that preceded a four-game losing streak. That streak, the Alabama faithful remember all too well, included a home loss to Louisiana-Monroe.

"So if you want to drink the Kool-Aid ..." Saban said.

Even after his team demolished one of the nation's best in its own house, Saban seemed downright funeral. He couldn't find fault with the first half -- who could? -- but he made clear that the Tide lost the second half, 30-10. "Aw yeah," offensive tackle Andre Smith said. "He ripped us pretty good."

Saban swore he wrung a few drops of joy from the most important Alabama win in almost a decade. "I know I don't look happy," Saban said. "But I am happy." Ru-

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## Game (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

mor has it he even cracked a smile. "Maybe," quarterback John Parker Wilson said.

Wilson smiled enough for both of them. With Smith, left guard Mike Johnson, center Antoine Caldwell, right guard Marlon Davis and right tackle Drew Davis protecting him, he had to feel like a visiting head of state. On one second-quarter play, Wilson had enough time to read his progressions, balance his checkbook and knit a sweater before throwing a strike to one of three open receivers. "That guy just had too much time to watch everything develop," Georgia coach Mark Richt said.

Meanwhile, when 'Bama chose to travel by land, that line bulldozed the Bulldogs. That success on the ground made it impossible for Georgia to leave a safety to help with 6-foot-4 freshman Jones, who broke free against man coverage late in the second quarter for the 22-yard touchdown catch that put 'Bama up by 31 going into the half.

'Bama's defensive line was equally rude to its host. When Cody lined up across from true freshman center Ben Jones, Georgia avoided running inside the hashmarks. That allowed Alabama's ends and linebackers to squelch star runner Moreno, who is at his best when he can blast through a hole between the tackles before bouncing outside. Moreno, who finished the game on the bench with an elbow injury, gained 34 yards on nine carries. By the time 'Bama took a 17-0 lead midway through the second, Georgia had to abandon the run entirely.

The quickest way to lose a football game is to get dominated at the line of scrimmage on both sides of the

ball. "We got ourselves into a mess," Richt said. "I don't know how else to explain it other than Alabama took it to us." Said Bama tackle Smith: "They had probably never been hit in the mouth like that."

The Bulldogs and their fellow Cocktail Partiers, Florida, could spend Nov. 1 looking like two lonely drunks at the end of a desolate bar while the rest of the national title contender party moves to the hip new club across the street. You know the one. It used to be the place to go, then it just sort of fell off the map. Now it's under new ownership, and there's a line out the door every Saturday night. Call it Club Tide.

That crowd is fickle, though, and Saban knows it. That's why he appreciated the dichotomy of his team's performance; he can use all of Georgia's garbage-time scoring to convince his players that if they relax for even a second, Kentucky will morph into the second coming of the 1984 49ers next week. Saban knows we'll all look ahead to 'Bama-LSU on Nov. 8, but his players can't, lest they suffer the same fate as the Trojans, Gators and Bulldogs.

But before we throw the final shovelfuls of dirt on the title aspirations of USC, Georgia and Florida, let's remember one thing: LSU lost twice and still won the 2007 national title. Those hopes can be resurrected faster than Alabama's Cody can break a futon. Still, on a Saturday night in Athens when everyone wore black, it felt like a funeral. The sign one Alabama fan held as the clock wound down cinched it. It bore three letters.

R.I.P.

## President's column (continued)

an all-time high, and that's interesting. Despite the current struggles in our industry, the FWAA continues to have an important voice in college football.

- The FWAA's newly formed Ethics Committee, chaired by Ron Higgins, my immediate predecessor, is in place. The Knight Foundation's Malcolm Moran, an FWAA Board Member, is also serving on the committee. The FWAA's Executive Committee adopted a code of ethics, and the committee is the first stop for resolution of conflicts between FWAA members and the schools and conferences we cover.

- Update on the access battles: Oklahoma State has never had more positive publicity going into a season — which makes the actions of Mike Gundy, now 42, even more strange. With one day's notice in mid-August, the coach cut off interviews with players and coaches for 12

days — until his first regular game-week media access.

There didn't appear to be any significant precipitating agitation (not that it would have excused Gundy's actions). Oklahoma State's media relations staff did a fantastic job scrambling to set up what was, in effect, a second media day to help reporters get stories in the can before the blackout started. But Gundy's actions reflected poorly on his school and serve as a reminder of the access issues we continue to face.

- The FWAA will conduct a "Super 11" system to honor SIDs this coming season. Tim Griffin of ESPN.com, the FWAA's first vice-president, is chairing the committee. Each conference will have a representative and be seeking input from FWAA members covering their respective conferences.

# Features: Steve Wieberg

*Comment of the judge, Ken Stephens: As a Heisman candidate and a record-setting quarterback on one of the country's best teams, Sam Bradford is a natural feature topic. Throw in his Native American heritage and what he means to a people with few modern athletic stars, and you've got a winning story,*

**By STEVE WIEBERG**  
*USA Today*

ANADARKO, Okla. -- Sam Bradford's a genuine star now. Saturday, the Oklahoma quarterback will join college football's glitterati in New York for the televised presentation of the Heisman Trophy. He's favored to win it. At 6-4, with smarts and cool and an uncannily accurate right arm, he is beginning to generate talk of going first in the NFL draft -- whenever the third-year sophomore might choose to enter it.

"The guy's unbelievable," says Bob Stoops, who declares him better than both the Heisman winner and Heisman runner-up he previously coached at OU.

But it's in places such as this little town an hour's drive west of Norman, at the edge of Oklahoma's Great Plains Country, that each touchdown pass, each win, each TV close-up of Bradford's 21-year-old face resonates loudest.

This is Native American land, home to seven western Oklahoma Indian tribes, where life is hardscrabble and optimism and inspiration can be scarce. Anadarko's Riverside Indian School, the nation's oldest federally operated Indian boarding school, doles out both to some 600 students from 25 states enrolled in fourth grade through high school. Its football program has struggled and was dropped for a couple of seasons but restarted this year and drew more than 40 boys who suited up for the varsity team.

Their inspiration is Bradford.

The Sooners star is four generations removed from the last full-blooded Native American in his family, and his suburban rearing came with little exposure to American Indian culture. But he's Indian nonetheless, a registered Cherokee. And Saturday's prospective Heisman coronation -- near the end of a season in which Bradford has led No. 1-ranked Oklahoma to the cusp of a national championship -- is momentous and moving for many Native Americans.

"It opens everything up for us," says Ray Brady, a Riverside junior and tight end on the football team. "Like Obama becoming president."

Nearly a century has passed since Jim Thorpe, a Sac and Fox Indian also born in Oklahoma, began shaping his legend as the greatest all-around athlete the modern world has seen. It has been 44 years since Billy Mills, a Sioux, ran to a 10,000-meter gold medal in the 1964

**STEVE WIEBERG —**  
**USA Today**

**Age:** 54

**College:** Missouri

**Background:** Part of USA TODAY's original startup staff in 1982. Begged off the NASCAR beat and has been primarily responsible for the coverage of college sports since 1983, in particular football and basketball and NCAA matters. Has covered 15 national championship football games and every basketball Final Four since 1983. Also covered seven Summer and Winter Olympics. Works out of the Kansas City area, where he and his wife, Paula, somewhat uncomfortably straddle the heated Missouri-Kansas rivalry. One of their twin sons, Eric, is a KU graduate (now in graduate school at the University of Texas). Their daughter, Katie, is a senior at Steve's alma mater, MU (and a recipient of the FWAA's Volney Meece scholarship). Nobody is much bothered that their other son, Michael, graduated from Truman (Mo.) State. Coaches summer baseball, still stubbornly refusing to sit on a bucket when he warms up pitchers. Won earlier FWAA writing awards for best enterprise reporting (1999, 2001, 2005 and 2008), and also has won numerous U.S. Basketball Writers Association and Associated Press Sports Editors writing awards. Named by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as one of the 10 Most Powerful People in College Sports in October 2007.



Olympics. They remain the standards of Native American athletic excellence.

Elders such as J.R. Cook, a Cherokee who heads United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY), an Oklahoma City-based agency designed "to foster the spiritual, mental, physical and social development" of young American Indians and Alaska Natives, rank Bradford right behind them.

"It's not just that he's a college football player," Cook says. "He's the quarterback, a team leader. He's admired by his peers and coaches. They speak very highly of him. ... And being a serious contender for the Heisman, that's not happened before.

"It's a little sad," he says, "that you have to go back 40-some years to find a role model of this quality."

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# Features (continued)

*(Continued from page 6)*

Cook pulls out his Blackberry and pulls up a text message he has saved for a couple of weeks. It's from an acquaintance in Arizona, a Sioux woman who caught the nationally televised 61-41 victory against Oklahoma State in which Bradford passed for four TDs and made a now-famous, cartwheeling dive for the end zone to set up a short scoring run.

"Bradford for president," she'd typed.

Cook slips the Blackberry back into his pocket.

"It's all over the country," he says. "I really don't think Sam realizes."

## 'A perfectionist'

Bradford, whose dad, Kent, once blocked for Billy Sims is a former OU offensive lineman, is something of a conflicted hero. Kent's great-grandmother, Susie Walkingstick, was Cherokee, and he's of one-eighth descent. Sam, whose mother, Martha, is white, is one-sixteenth. But until Oklahoma publicized his lineage a year ago, it was incidental to the family's life. They're aware and even proud of their heritage, Kent says, but unattuned to its customs.

"When people ask me questions about it, I have to be careful with how I answer," Sam says. "It's something I'm definitely proud of, and I'll never shy away from it. But I don't know probably as much as I should know or as much as some people may think I know."

At the same time, he says, "God has blessed me with a great platform. If I can use that in a positive way and be a role model for younger kids, set a good example for them, I think it's a really good thing."

His appeal starts, of course, with his performance. Throwing for 4,464 yards and a nation-high 48 touchdowns, Bradford has been the centerpiece of a ridiculously prolific Oklahoma offense that scored 60-plus points in each of its last five regular-season games -- something no team had done since 1919.

He throws a TD pass every nine or so attempts and an interception once every 74 and is on pace to break the major-college efficiency record set two years ago by Hawaii's Colt Brennan. Bradford's all over the OU record book, supplanting 2003 Heisman winner Jason White and 2000 runner-up Josh Heupel in just about every relevant single-season passing category and setting a career mark with 84 TD passes in two seasons.

Turn in a typical game Jan. 8 in Miami, where he and the Sooners (12-1) will play Florida (12-1) for the national championship, and Bradford also will surpass White's career record of 7,922 passing yards. He needs 338.

It's his precision -- the 68.3% accuracy, a single interception in OU's last six games -- that wows. "If it's not a good ball, it's probably for a reason. He's putting it in a

place where you don't have a chance to get your head knocked off," says the Sooners' All-Big 12 Conference tight end, Jermaine Gresham. "Wherever he puts the football, just roll with it."

That hasn't come by accident.

"He's a perfectionist by nature," says Heupel, now the Sooners quarterbacks coach. "That's why he comes in on Monday afternoon (to pore over film) after going 23 of 26 -- nearly perfect -- finding flaws and finding ways to get better."

"The best coaching tool," offensive coordinator Kevin Wilson says, "is to look at (him) and say, 'That's what it looks like. That's how you practice. That's how you prepare.' It's better than sitting at the board and drawing circles. A picture's worth thousands of words."

"Whether he's the greatest now or will ever be or where he ranks doesn't really matter. It's just nice in this day and age to see a great player bust his tail every day and buy in."

## 'Danged-near perfect'

A finance major, Bradford carries a 3.95 grade-point average. Post-football, he plans to become a corporate attorney. It's not hard to see how an Indian populace thirsting for positive role models has latched onto him.

Some 4.1 million U.S. residents consider themselves Native Americans, including 281,000 Cherokees and more than 729,000 who claim some Cherokee ancestry. Close to 11.4% of Oklahoma's population -- almost 392,000 -- has Cherokee ancestry, according to the 2000 census.

The difficulties of Native American life are well-documented: higher-than-normal rates of poverty, alcoholism, suicide. "It's getting a little better," Riverside Indian School co-superintendent Milton Noel says. "But there are so many places where there's not enough to go around."

Precious few Native Americans make it big in sports. Charles Albert "Chief" Bender and Allie "Superchief" Reynolds found fame in baseball. Hall of Fame catcher Johnny Bench, who grew up 21 miles north of Anadarko in Binger, Okla., is one-eighth Choctaw, though he never has been popularly identified or celebrated as an Indian star.

Native eyes today are on a couple of young major leaguers in baseball: New York Yankees pitcher Joba Chamberlain, a Winnebago from Nebraska, and Boston Red Sox outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury, who's Navajo.

Bradford, however, is a supernova.

"Usually, what you see about Native American people is something bad. They're drunk in bar fights. It seems like there's always a negative image," says Brady, the 17-year-old tight end from El Reno, Okla., who's in his sec-

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# 2009-10 Contest Rules

Rules and procedures for the 2009-10 FWAA Best Writing Contest.

1. FWAA members in good standing can now begin sending entries for the following categories:

- GAME Story (Immediate Deadline)
- LOOSE Deadline (Spot News and Second Day Game Stories)
- FEATURE Story/Profile
- ENTERPRISE/Investigative
- COLUMN/Analysis/Commentary

2. Deadline: June 15, 2010. Entries sent after June 15, WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

3. Limit: One (1) article per category.

4. Entries had to appear in print or on-line between Feb. 1, 2009, and Jan. 31, 2010.

5. Entries MUST BE SENT via e-mail to [contest@sportswriters.net](mailto:contest@sportswriters.net). Entries not sent to this e-mail address WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

6. Put this information at the top of each entry:

- Publication or on-line service where story appeared.

- Writer or writers
- Category
- Date of publication
- E-mail address and telephone numbers for the writer or writers

7. The entries will be sorted and stripped of identifying information and forwarded to the judge(s).

8. Entries MUST be in MS Word or text files only. DO NOT SEND HTML files, Word Perfect files or links to stories on the Internet.

9. Delete any advertising, photos or cutlines from the files. The file should contain only your story and your identifying information.

10. Take out unnecessary carriage returns to improve the readability of your entry for the judges.

10. Files containing your entries should follow this naming convention:

**yourname-category.doc**

The category must be one of these five words:

Game, Loose, Feature, Column or Enterprise

Questions? E-mail [ken.stephens@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ken.stephens@sbcglobal.net)

## Features (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

ond year at Riverside. "That's not always the case as of now."

James Sutteer, Riverside's coach, suggests the number of players who came out for his rebuilding program -- 70 in junior high and high school -- was that high, in part, because of Bradford. "They see him perform, and people tend to think they can do the same thing. Or at least want to try," he says.

"He'd be a role model for anybody. The guy's carrying a 3.95. Never gets in trouble. Is well-spoken. Puts off the impression that he's danged-near perfect. ... Something we hopefully can inspire these kids to do is not only look at him but look at good people like that in general."

Of more than 306,000 athletes in Divisions I, II and III in 2006-07, the most recent year tracked by the NCAA, just one-half of 1% were Native American. In major-college football, the percentage drops to 0.4%. Bradford is thought to be the first to start at quarterback for a major program since Washington's Sonny Sixkiller in the early 1970s.

Saturday's step is potentially far bigger. Seventy-three Heismans have been handed out since 1935. If it's Bradford's name that is called, he'll be the first Native American to win.

"I can hear all the Indian kids, at Riverside or wherever, hollering when that happens. And the community," Noel says. "Lots of whoops."

## Meece Scholarship nominations are open

Nominations for the annual Volney Meece Scholarship are now open. The committee that determines the winner will be taking nominations through the month of September. The nominations with supporting information should be sent via e-mail to the *Tulsa World's* Dave Sittler, the committee's chairman. Dave's e-mail is [dave-sitt@aol.com](mailto:dave-sitt@aol.com)

The Volney Meece Scholarship is awarded annually by the Football Writers Association of America and named for the late Volney Meece. Meece served 22 years as the FWAA's executive director and was the organization's president in 1971. The scholarship is a \$1,000 annual grant for four years. It is given to a deserving son or daughter of an FWAA member.

The committee looks at a student's academic standing as well as service, outside activities and citizenship to determine the winner. The son or daughter of an FWAA member must be planning to further his education after high school. Dave can also take inquiries about the award at the same e-mail.

# Column (continued)

*(Continued from page 3)*

tant.

A few days later, after spending time with nine players making their official weekend recruiting visits to Nevada, Ault came home, ate dinner and then saw some jaw-dropping footage on the local news.

There was the non-prospect Hart placing a Cal cap on his head.

Ault couldn't believe it. He started calling his assistant coaches, all the time consumed by a single, paranoid thought: Holy god, the guy's a half hour from our campus and we didn't even recruit him! What's this going to look like?

As early as last September, Hart told his school newspaper, the *Vaquero Voice*, that he was being recruited by Nevada, Boise State, Washington, Oregon, Cal, and Oregon State -- and that Oregon and Washington had already offered him full scholarships. And last Friday, Hart told reporters how difficult it had been to choose between a list of finalists that included Cal, Oregon, Nevada, Illinois and Oklahoma State.

All lies.

"Didn't talk to the kid one time, never recruited him," said Cal's Tedford during a Wednesday news conference."

"He was in our camp," Oregon coach Mike Bellotti told me Thursday. "We evaluated him. We did not recruit him."

Nobody on that list did. But Hart apparently was overwhelmed by his fixation on playing big-time football, on being wanted, on the need to replicate what he had seen done by actual blue-chip players on national signing day: the semi-insanity of high school seniors announcing their college decisions on local and even national television outlets, including ESPNU.

"Now that it's over, you just feel sorry for him," said Ault.

Hart created a lie of audacious proportions. It was a lie doomed at conception. After all, what did he think would happen when news of his "commitment" reached Cal? Or when the police probed just below the water line of his flimsy cover-up story (Hart told police he was duped by a fake recruiter, prompting a brief investigation)?

But there are more important questions to ask, such as, where were the adults in this football horror flick?

Tedford, Bellotti and Ault never set foot in Hart's home, never even contacted the family -- all standard recruiting doctrine when you're trying to sign a kid -- and yet, Hart's parents didn't think something was a little screwy? And wouldn't you think Fernley coach Mark Hodges might have been a teensy bit curious why nobody from Oregon, Cal or Nevada ever bothered with a

visit, a phone call, a letter to him?

Or maybe they simply wanted to believe the unbelievable.

Fernley High principal Dave Regalado, when reached in his office Thursday morning, declined to comment on the situation. He referred all questions to Teri White of the Lyon County School District. White also was unavailable for comment.

The adults hid, but not Hart's classmates.

"I'm disappointed, but I'm not angry," said Sean Lewandowski, a Fernley High junior who writes for the school newspaper. "I texted him and told him that I stand by him."

Hart needs all the friends he can get these days. According to Lewandowski, Hart hasn't been at school since last Friday's event. And if and when he returns, Lewandowski said the reaction among the students will be "mixed." No standing O's this time.

As for football, Ault suggested Hart consider playing for a junior college program.

"But what if he wanted to walk on at Nevada?" I said.

There was a pause.

"I think it's best that we just let it lie," said Ault. "I think it would be very difficult for him here."

It's going to be difficult for him everywhere. At Fernley. At the next place he wears a football uniform. That's what happens when you become the latest cautionary tale of college recruiting.

"The people who have talked to him say he's really embarrassed, ashamed of himself," said Lt. Hall, whose own two sons played football at Fernley. "It sounds like he's learned his lesson."

Hall's investigation should be completed by early next week. The findings will be submitted to the district attorney, but Hall said he would be "surprised" if charges were filed against Hart for falsifying a police report.

Makes sense. The one truth in all of this is that nobody can do to Hart what he's already done to himself.

# Enterprise: John Helsley

*Comment of the judge, Gene Duffey: Excellent look into the behind the seasons negotiations of one of the most significant football hirings of the last decade. Good lead sets the scene. Good info on what Oklahoma did to lure Stoops to Norman and what Iowa didn't do. Liked how Castiglione talked about his first impressions of Stoops from years before. Also good background on the firing of John Blake.*

**By JOHN HELSLEY**  
**The Oklahoman**

NORMAN – Huddled in a DFW International Airport conference room, hashing out the final details of a job offer, Joe Castiglione sat across the table from Bob Stoops and surged with the satisfaction that he'd secured his No. 1 target as Oklahoma's next coach.

Then Stoops dropped a bombshell.

"That's when he told me, 'I've got a little bit of a challenge here,'" Castiglione said in recalling that critical hire in the winter of 1998.

Hesitantly, Castiglione waded in.

"I said, 'Well, what is it?' Bob said, 'I'm supposed to meet with Iowa in the morning.'"

Gulp.

Of course, Stoops became a Sooner, and the rest – history of the highest standard, complete with a seventh national championship and restoration of OU pride and stature among the nation's football elite.

But a look back inside the search reveals how Stoops vaulted to the front of Castiglione's list and some anxious hours wondering if Stoops might be swayed by his alma mater.

## **Bitter End, New Beginnings**

The end of the John Blake era at OU was both surreal and startling to Castiglione.

On the job for just five months, the football coaching transition was Castiglione's first major move as athletic director.

Blake refused an opportunity to resign, despite an offer to buy out his contract in full. So a special meeting of the regents was called to order, with their votes – which were not unanimous – carried out in an unusual public forum inside the Oklahoma Memorial Union on campus.

The decision, coming one day after the Sooners beat Texas Tech to end a 5-6 season, was controversial, reflecting emotions pro and against Blake among fans and players, some demanding action, others preferring patience.

On a Sunday, Nov. 22, 1998, the regents voted 4-2 to fire Blake in a roll call procedure that was dramatically carried on live television and radio across the state.

**JOHN HELSLEY – The Oklahoman**

**Age:** 48

**College:** Central Oklahoma

**Background:** Just passed 16 years at The Oklahoman, where I can now say I've hit for the cycle of college beats, as in, I've covered OSU football, OU football, OU men's basketball and now OSU men's basketball as primary beats. After covering OU hoops last year, while also assisting with football, this fall brings another change in a switch to OSU, where my college beat reporting started with an eight-year run on Cowboys football. This time, I'll be No. 2 on football and the main hoops writer. Was the primary high school reporter the first five years at the paper. Along the way, have also handled the Big 12, women's basketball and college baseball. I've worked BCS title games, Final Fours and the College World Series. Received honorable mention recognition from the FWAA for loose deadline game story in 2002 and a third place in 2001 for game story. Oklahoma City area Big Brother of the Year for 1993 (Big Brothers/Big Sisters). Married (Roberta) with two daughters (Sarah and Jillian). Competitive racquetball player. Avid, yet mediocre, golfer. Dominator of fantasy baseball and football leagues.



"I never in my life imagined anything like that," Castiglione said. "We all realize there's a high level of importance to decisions and how they're made. But to this day, I don't know of any (proceeding) like it. I just don't. Have never heard of it."

In those moments, Castiglione discovered the gravity of the search he was about to conduct.

"If I wasn't able to quantify how important this process was," Castiglione said, "that Sunday night cemented everything."

## **Committee of One**

Castiglione moved quickly to initiate his search.

And it was *his* search – a committee of one.

University president David Boren didn't even have knowledge of the candidates.

"At the time, there was this sort of industry philosophy that you have a big search and create these big committees that represent all facets of campus and people have a chance to contribute what they think," Castiglione said.

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# Enterprise (continued)

*(Continued from page 10)*

Castiglione was of a different philosophy.

His experience suggested that employed coaches don't like their names tossed around in regard to other jobs. And big committees lend themselves to big mouths.

Castiglione didn't want anything getting in the way of attracting the best coaches.

"They may not be willing to come and meet before a big group like that," he said, "because of the risk factor."

Castiglione had to convince Boren his way was the right way.

"We had a robust conversation about it," Castiglione said.

In the end, Boren understood and agreed, yet found himself tempted at times to check in on the search and any potential names Castiglione might be willing to share.

To no avail.

"With all due respect, president, you're on a need to know basis," Castiglione said he jokingly told Boren. "When you need to know, I'll tell you."

"Of course, he's the president. If he gave me a directive, I'd have told him."

Castiglione did lean on a few people he trusted for advice and information. Among them: Lee Roy Selmon, Chuck Neinas and Eddie Crowder, all heavyweights tuned in to the pulse of college football.

Working on their input and his own past experiences, Castiglione immediately formed two lists: A and 1A.

Stoops, then a hot name as defensive coordinator at Florida, was the lone assistant making the cut for the A list.

When it came to Stoops, Castiglione sensed a need to act fast. Competition loomed in the chase for a new coach. Four other prominent programs – Clemson, South Carolina, Mississippi and most notably Iowa – also had athletic directors on the prowl.

So the Monday morning after Blake's firing, Castiglione made contact with Stoops.

That Wednesday: a face-to-face meeting in Dallas.

## First Impressions

Castiglione's first encounter with Bob Stoops came when he was at Missouri and Stoops was an assistant under Bill Snyder at Kansas State.

Jim Leavitt, a Missouri grad, was the co-defensive coordinator with Stoops at K-State. Leavitt introduced Stoops to Castiglione, who had accompanied the Tigers for a basketball game in Manhattan.

"If first impressions mean anything, the time I met him, he really impressed me," Castiglione said.

"Sharp guy. It's one of those, you file it away."

There was another chance encounter, on the football field when Missouri and K-State played. And when Stoops moved to Florida, overhauling the defense and helping Steve Spurrier win a national title, Castiglione again took note.

"That's a savvy move right there," Castiglione said he remembered thinking.

"I had a chance to just sort of watch. I'm always watching."

When Castiglione and Stoops met in the Admiral's Club at DFW Airport, the day before Thanksgiving, Castiglione was focused much deeper.

The formal interview lasted six hours. They talked, ate lunch, traded philosophies and volleyed questions back and forth.

"We didn't argue about his defensive philosophy," Castiglione said with a laugh. "I wanted to learn a certain amount about his coaching philosophy. How he would think through his role as a head coach. How he would develop his program."

"I was really keyed into his attention to detail. His understanding of the psychology of people, getting people to do things because they want to, as opposed to you wanting them to."

Castiglione sought out all sorts of details, including game week preparation, recruiting philosophy, the importance of academics, the hiring of staff, what kind of offensive scheme Stoops might favor.

Then Stoops surprised Castiglione.

"One thing I never heard, 'Give me five or six years.' Never once did he say that or infer it," Castiglione said. "He said, 'I don't think I would be fair to the players that we inherit or that we recruit that first year, if I didn't give them the best chance to be successful."

"I have to ask them to buy into my system. And I have to put them in the best position to be successful. I don't want to just throw away a year by excluding them from the process of building this program."

"When he told me that, that was one of a number of things that just clicked with my philosophy."

Castiglione said he was acutely aware of the plight of OU players. The Sooners were about to undergo their fourth coaching change in 10 years. For the seniors, their time under Gary Gibbs, Howard Schnellenberger and John Blake were filled with disappointment and turmoil.

"We wanted them to have the best overall experience they could for as long as they were going to have eligibility," Castiglione said. "Give them the chance to have a great experience, so they would remember that year as being something very important, that they contributed to"

*(Continued on page 12)*

# Enterprise (continued)

*(Continued from page 11)*

this future success of the program.”

So Stoops’ skipped any talk of five-year plans and putting his own players in place. Stoops let it be known, the future was now.

“When he said that,” Castiglione said, “I’m thinking to myself, ‘All right.’”

“Sometimes, at the end of the day, even though you have all the pieces together, there’s something that grabs you in the gut and you know, that’s the right one.

“With Bob, after that meeting, he got in my gut.”

## **The Iowa Bombshell**

Castiglione moved forward, conducting some interviews over the phone, one more in person with a standing head coach.

As was the case then, the Sooner athletic director still declines to name names out of ongoing respect for those involved and in keeping his word.

Besides, with Stoops in his gut, who else had a chance?

Castiglione took the next step with Stoops, arranging another Admiral’s Club interview that fateful Sunday, this time with Boren, three regents, a booster, Neinas and Crowder.

Neinas – frequently used in coaching searches – informed the group that he had then-TCU coach Dennis Franchione on standby to come for a chat, if needed.

The group meeting with Stoops went brilliantly.

And when Stoops stepped out for a moment, a buzz filled the room.

Neinas and Boren announced that no more interviews were necessary, that OU had found its man. Soon everyone was in agreement and Castiglione joined Stoops in an adjoining room to discuss details of a deal.

Soon, Stoops was tempering the enthusiasm.

Yes, the interview had gone well, but Stoops had a commitment to talk to the folks at Iowa.

The same Iowa where Stoops had played and met his wife Carol and began his coaching career under Hayden Fry, who was retiring.

“I felt out of respect – I had been there 10 years, that’s my alma mater – that I owed that to them,” Stoops said recently. “I’m a loyal person that way. I felt that I owed them that.”

For Castiglione, it only raised Stoops to another level.

Still, it was hardly an encouraging revelation.

“You start to wonder,” Castiglione said, “the heart strings are tugging at the alma mater, they start rolling out the black and gold carpet, who knows who they roll out at this meeting, maybe Coach Fry himself.

“Who knows?”

When Castiglione walked back through the door into

the conference room, Boren and the others knew something was amiss.

“They knew when I walked in, they could just tell from my body language,” Castiglione said. “They said, ‘What?’”

“I said, ‘Well, the good news is there’s a characteristic here, if you can look beyond what I’m about to tell you, that just endears him more to the University of Oklahoma. But there is an area of concern.’”

Stoops left to catch a flight for Iowa.

The OU contingent talked, feeling confident and holding the framework for a deal with Stoops.

“All we could do was be patient and wait,” Castiglione said. “And that was a grueling 24 hours.”

In the end, there was no need for concern, although it did exist, and heightened when weather delayed Stoops’ flight to meet with Iowa officials, thus delaying an arranged phone call to Castiglione.

At that meeting, however, athletic director Bob Bowsby didn’t roll out any black and gold carpet or enlist Fry to welcome Stoops home.

Instead, Bowsby told Stoops they were considering him, as well as others.

“Fortunately,” Stoops said, “I realized that soon into the interview and made sure that everything was OK at Oklahoma.”

Oh, everything was OK, as soon as Stoops called with the good news that he’d be returning – for good.

Castiglione had gone to Boren’s office that afternoon, where he nervously awaited Stoops’ delayed call.

“I had my phone with me and finally got the call,” Castiglione said. “Bob had accepted the job.

“Of course, we were all ecstatic.”

The next day, Tuesday, Dec. 1, Stoops was introduced as OU’s 21st head coach on the front porch of Evans Hall on the north oval.

Nine days since the firing of John Blake, Castiglione’s search process came to a close.

Just like Blake’s firing, there were initial mixed reviews, even among those in the media.

“I remember several people pointing their finger right into my shoulder saying, ‘I hope you realize what you have done,’” Castiglione said. “Basically, they were inferring we should have hired a sitting head coach.

“Now everybody says, ‘Oh, this was an easy hire. Bob Stoops was a no-brainer.’”

# Loose deadline: Brady McCollough

*Comment of the judge, Gene Duffey: The winning story was cleanly written. It had a good lead and offered interesting quotes from coaching colleagues about what the two guys were like when they coached together as assistants at Oklahoma. Good comparison of their personalities and their offenses.*

**By J. BRADY MCCOLLOUGH**

*The Kansas City Star*

LAWRENCE — The first meeting of the day would begin at 8:30 a.m. for the 1999 Oklahoma coaching staff. Bob Stoops, then OU's first-year head coach, wouldn't start until all of his assistants were present.

Being punctual was no problem for offensive line coach Mark Mangino, who wouldn't know a morning without a sunrise. But Mangino and the other coaches often had to wait for the team's offensive coordinator, who didn't deal so well with 8:30.

The way Mike Leach ran up the stairs -- inevitably, about 8:29 -- it would have surprised no one to find out that he had been setting his alarm for 8:15.

"You could hear him coming up those back steps because the staff room was right against the stairwell," said Jonathan Hayes, OU's tight ends coach then. "He'd be the last one in and the door would shut."

Their friends said Mangino and Leach had not changed at all in the past decade. So you can assume that Mangino was at work way before Leach this morning in preparing for Saturday's game between No. 19 KU and No. 8 Texas Tech at Memorial Stadium. Heck, now that Leach doesn't have to answer to anyone, he barely makes it in before noon.

"He'll work until 1 or 2 in the morning but won't come in the next day until 11:30 or 12," said Cale Gundy, the OU running backs coach for the entire Stoops era.

"Coach Mangino, he's more from the old school, getting up at the crack of dawn, making sure things are done perfectly."

They were an odd couple, Leach the passing game coordinator and Mangino the run game coordinator. That much became obvious a few weeks into spring ball when Mangino and Leach were discussing whether or not the Sooners needed the counter run -- one of the most traditional run designs in football -- in their playbook.

Leach didn't want it, which said everything. Leach was a Californian, a no-rules thinker with a law degree from Pepperdine. As the offensive coordinator at Division I-AA Valdosta State and Kentucky under coach Hal Mumme, his offenses threw the ball 70 times a game and made defensive coordinators rethink their choice of profession.

**J. BRADY MCCOLLOUGH —  
The Kansas City Star**

**Age:** 27

**College:** Michigan

**Background:** When I was 12 years old, my dad (a Web site designer) made me a site called ncaatop25.com, where I would put out my personal top 25 each week of the college football season. By the time I was a freshman at Michigan, I was getting about 35,000 hits per fall. Sadly, when I started being an actual journalist at the *Michigan Daily*, the site fell by the wayside. I guess my point is that I have always lived for college football season. ... In that vein, I made my college decision based on overall college football experience. The choices were Texas, Texas A&M (had been in top 15 the previous season and were within five hours of my dad in Dallas), Michigan and Penn State (had been in top 15 the previous season and were within five hours of my mom in Buffalo, N.Y.). I chose Michigan because I was lucky enough to see a UM-Notre Dame game in person and was blown away. ... Since I am single and looking, I can't tell you all about my wonderful wife and beautiful children. But I can tell you that I have great parents who were both at one point musicians. ... Hobbies: Oh wait, I'm a sportswriter. I don't need hobbies. ... Past awards: third place in the 2008 National Headliner Awards for Sports Writing, first place in the 2008 Missouri Press Association writing contest for sports feature, third place in the 2008 FWAA writing contest for loose deadline and honorable mention for enterprise, fourth place in the 2008 USBWA writing contest



Mangino wanted the counter, which also said everything. Mangino grew up in New Castle, Pa., a child of America's Rust Belt. He was a no-nonsense guy, working his way up the food chain at Kansas State under Bill Snyder, clocking 16-hour days. Mangino didn't tolerate tardiness, and he certainly wasn't going to let this smooth operator cut the counter. For a guy whose friends called him "Bear," it was a matter of principle, really.

Neither Leach nor Mangino would budge, which eventually led to shouting and the coaches getting up from their seats. They were almost chest-to-chest before Hayes, a former NFL tight end, pushed them apart.

*(Continued on page 14)*

## Loose deadline (continued)

*(Continued from page 13)*

"It's amazing how passionate these two guys were," Hayes said.

Mangino and Leach coexisted peacefully from then on, and the Sooners went 7-5 after five years without a winning season in Norman. Texas Tech plucked Leach to be its head coach, and Stoops promoted Mangino to offensive coordinator. With the offense at his controls, Mangino implemented more runs. It was only natural.

"We still ran Mike Leach's offense," Gundy said. "Everything we did in the year 2000 was what Texas Tech is doing right now. We just threw in a couple plays here and there. Coach Mangino saw that it was a good system for the players we had. We still slung it around for the most part."

Of course, the Sooners went 13-0 and won the national championship that season. One year later, Mangino was off to Kansas.

Mangino, since coaching the spread for the first time at OU, has not wavered from it. He said that some of KU's spread offense had roots in Leach's system. Although it would appear Mangino has gotten more out of his time with Leach, this year's Red Raiders are rushing

for 138.6 yards per game.

Mangino seemed impressed with the guy who once tried to eliminate one of the staples of the run game.

"They are running the ball very well," Mangino said. "In fact, they had 50 snaps against Nebraska, 25 runs and 25 passes. That's balance for Tech."

Mangino and Leach may have adapted their spread offenses, but they have the same opposite personalities. Mangino is unlikely to offer advice on what makes a good first date as Leach recently did on a local TV show.

"You wanna end it at some cool coffee-shop type of place," Leach said, "where there's bizarre-looking characters going in and out so that if the conversation isn't going well you can reference some of the different characters."

Hayes, now the tight ends coach with the Cincinnati Bengals, has kept in touch with Mangino and Leach. He no longer has to play the role of moderator.

"I think they both have learned something from each other," Hayes said. "I think Mike tries to insert more runs when he can, just to keep defenses more honest. And I think that Bear finds more exotic ways to move the ball now. It's a compliment to both of them that they have a lot of respect for each other."



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