

# Stoops, Barnett meet in Big 12 clash of titans

Keith Whitmire  
The Dallas Morning News (KRT)

Saturday's Colorado-Oklahoma game is a much-anticipated matchup of the Big 12's two division leaders. The teams haven't met since 1999, although they almost collided last year in the Big 12 championship.

It will be Oklahoma's unmerciful defense against Colorado's power running game, led by the nation's leading rusher, Chris Brown.

But most of all, it will be a meeting of the minds. Colorado coach Gary Barnett and Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops are, if not the two best coaches in the league at the moment, certainly the two most intriguing sideline commanders.

Stoops has a national title and a reputation as a gambler who knows the odds better than the house. There's little mystery to the straight-talking Stoops, unless you want to know about a particular injury or what trick play the Sooners will pull next.

Barnett, on the other hand, can be a hard guy to figure out. He's still known mostly for the resurrection he conducted at Northwestern, leading the perennial Big Ten doormat to the Rose Bowl.

But the last two years, he's revived Colorado's program in midseason. This year's run to the top of the Big 12 North is looking remarkably similar to last year's Big 12 title run.

A year ago, Colorado had a heart-breaking loss in the season opener, looked totally outclassed in another loss, lost its starting quarterback and had an internal controversy between a player and a coach.

That's all happened again this year. The Buffs opened the season with a 19-14 loss to rival Colorado State, recalling last year's two-point opening loss to Fresno State.

Starting quarterback Craig Ochs went down to an injury, just like last year, and the Buffs looked terrible in a 40-3 loss to Southern Cal. Just like last year, when Ochs went down and the Buffs were throttled by Texas, 41-7.

Barnett deserves some credit, too, although he probably deserves some blame for the slow starts the last two seasons. He's not perfect and certainly has his detractors in the Colorado media.

Two seasons ago his motivational tricks — including a threat to remove the logos from the Buffs' helmets — couldn't revive a 3-8 season. But this season the Buffs look as if they're ticketed for the Big 12 title game again.

Even if Colorado turns in a USC-like performance on Saturday, which is a possibility given OU's speed demons and goblins on defense, recent history says you can never count out these Buffs.

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## The Weekly Sports Poll

Now that's more like it. Now those sports fans are coming out of the woodwork. Hey, sports fan, nice to meet you. Ready to do it again?

The Weekly Sports Poll shattered all records for participation as 43 people weighed in on how many games they thought the Oregon football team would win over the rest of the season.

Yes, the words "shattered," "43," and "poll" were all in the same sentence right there.

Come on, people, let's show the world how Oregon fans really love their sports. Vote in this week's poll.

We think we've got a doozy of a question for this week, too. Everybody's talking about it, everybody's dissecting it, so tell us: **What do you think about the new Duck?** If you were at the game last week, you saw it

hatch out of its egg. You saw it crawl around the field like it was the "Green Goblin" or something. So now, tell us what you really think about it. Go to [www.dailyemerald.com](http://www.dailyemerald.com), click the "sports" link and scroll down a little bit, cast your eyes to the right-hand side of the page and cast your ballot.

**Last week's poll results went a little something like this:**

41.9 percent of the people thought Oregon would win six more games this season.

39.5 percent said "four."

16.3 percent said "two."

2.3 percent said "none."

Looks like it's good to be in the minority on this one; it's now impossible for the Ducks to win six more games this season.

Get out the vote. See you online.

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Voices

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