

## BIG 12 SPOTLIGHT

A weekly look inside the conference

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## Setting the juco trend

## K-State reshaping roster with influx of transfers

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While most of the Big 12 football teams have junior-college transfers sprinkled across their rosters, Kansas State has started a trend in the conference. Forget the traditional method of bringing in juco transfers to plug a hole or two. Coach Ron Prince now has enough juco players to revamp the entire team.

Prince used 19 of his 32 scholarships on juco transfers for this fall's incoming recruiting class. The Wildcats have 29 juco transfers listed on their roster, far and away the most in the conference.

Why are they doing this? Desperation? Arguably. But the combination of last year's disappointing 5-7 finish and lofty Manhattan expectations had Prince making big-time roster changes.

Last year, the Wildcats didn't make a bowl game and lost five of their last six contests. To say K-State's defense was suspect would be an understatement. The Wildcats gave up 34.75 points per game in Big 12 play.

Prince's focus to improve the defense was evident: 11 of the 19 juco signees play defense.

Prince, in his third year at K-State, is attempting a quick fix with the already-experienced transfers. While the signings could pay off, the outrageous juco number likely makes K-State the biggest wild card in the conference for the 2008 season.

The rest of the Big 12 seems to be bringing in juco recruits to fit the traditional purpose of



Charlie Riedel/AP File Photo

**KANSAS STATE COACH RON PRINCE WATCHES** the final moments of K-State's game against Missouri last year in Manhattan. After a 5-7 season in 2007, Prince loaded up on junior-college transfers — 19 new ones to be exact. The Wildcats' 29 roster spots held down by jucos are by far the most in the Big 12.

plugging a few holes on offense or defense.

Oklahoma State has the second-most roster spots in the conference dedicated to juco transfers with 13. The Cowboys have actually won their last two bowl games (Independence Bowl in 2006 season, Insight Bowl last season), but OSU coach Mike Gundy ultimately

would like to give Texas, Oklahoma and Texas Tech an annual run for their money. It hasn't happened lately (UT or OU has won the South nine straight years), in large part due to the Cowboys lack of defense.

Counting its bowl game, Oklahoma State gave up just under 30 points and 177 rushing yards per game last season.

The Cowboys' two biggest playmakers on defense next season could be juco transfers: Defensive tackle Swanson Miller and safety Lucien Antoine, who has developed a hard-hitting reputation around Stillwater.

Iowa State (10) and Kansas (nine) round out the top four schools in the Big 12 with the most juco transfers.

Last year, the Jayhawks received boosts from juco transfers Kendrick Harper in the secondary and Chet Hartley on the offensive line. Both should start in the fall.

Kansas has 20 fewer juco transfers than K-State listed on its roster, but if there's one juco transfer to track next season, it's KU tailback Jockes Crawford. Kansas may have struck gridiron gold in Crawford, who transferred to KU from Cisco (Texas) Junior College, where he was the 2007 national junior-college offensive player of the year.

Positive news for Crawford: He may not have to win a running back battle against Jake Sharp or Angus Quigley. Sure, the Jayhawks will name a starter, but Sharp "backed up" Brandon McAnderson (1,125 rushing yards) and still rushed for 821 yards and scored nine total touchdowns last season. There's room for multiple running backs in KU coach Mark Mangino's offensive scheme.

Texas was the only school in the conference to not have any juco transfers listed on its 2008 roster.

## JUCO BREAKDOWN

The following is a list of each Big 12 school and the number of junior-college transfers listed on the 2008 roster. The new juco transfers for the 2008 season follow in parentheses. Not all incoming jucos are listed on the 2008 rosters yet.

1. Kansas State: 29 (19 new)
2. Oklahoma State: 13 (8 new)
3. Iowa State: 10 (1 new)
4. Kansas: 9 (3 new)
5. Oklahoma: 9 (3 new)
6. Baylor: 8 (3 new)
7. Missouri: 7 (0 new)
8. Nebraska: 7 (2 new)
9. Texas A&M: 6 (0 new)
10. Texas Tech: 5 (4 new)
11. Colorado: 2 (1 new)
12. Texas: 0 (0 new)

❖ **More on KUSports.com:** Several Big 12 teams recruited junior-college transfers with lofty expectations for the 2008 football season. For a story on some of the top juco transfers in the conference to keep an eye on for the 2008 season, log onto KUSports.com.