Houston, we have an

Baylor hasn't been in a bowl game since 1994. Now, with It's the same place where just last toward a berth into the Elite Eight of the NCAA tournament. Now we're seven wins under its belt, the 2010 team is headed to the Texas Bowl year Baylor Nation cheered on its men's basketball team as it worked in Houston at Reliant Stadium. back. Different sport, same goal to win.

2010 Texas Bowl edition

Postseason play 'a great opportunity'

By Chris Derrett Sports Editor

Before speaking at Sunday's press conference, a smiling head coach Art Briles slapped himself. He offered an explanation to the media in attendance, but there was more understanding among the reporters and camera operators than confusion.

"Just making sure this is real," Briles said. "It's real."

If Baylor's football history seemed like a 16-year long nightmare of futility to the green and gold faithful, Baylor Nation finally awakened as McCaw and Briles officially revealed the Bears' bid in Houston's Texas Bowl.

"The perception of Baylor has certainly improved; the image of Baylor has improved. There are people still standing on the playground, and we got chosen," Briles

After Kansas State announced it would be playing in New York City's Pinstripe Bowl, the Texas Bowl's choices essentially became either Baylor or Texas Tech, both of whom finished 7-5 overall. Fifth in the Big 12 bowl pecking order, the Texas Bowl chose the Bears, leaving the Red Raiders to Dallas' TicketCity Bowl.

The Bears face Illinois on Dec. 29 at Reliant Stadium, a familiar



DANIEL CERNERO I LARIAT PHOTO EDITOR

Head coach Art Briles and Baylor athletic director Ian McCaw happily announce Baylor's Texas Bowl bid at a Sunday press conference. The bowl will be the Bears' first since 1994.

site for Baylor fans.

Just over eight months ago Baylor fans packed the stadium to watch their men's basketball team in the school's historic Elite Eight run. Briles and the team expect the same homefield advantage when Robert Griffin III and Co. take the

"Everybody has been waiting,

because it has been a really long time. Everybody is going to have a reason to be there, whether it is a special trip or they call in a sick day at work, so I am sure they will

Ticket Info

>>On campus Students can purchase tickets in the SUB beginning Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and continuing Thursday and Friday at the same hours.

>>Online, BU athletics Anyone can get seats from baylorbears.com for either \$65, \$60, or \$25.

be ready to go," Griffin said.

The game holds meaning to any and all associated with Baylor football, and more broadly Baylor University and its surrounding community.

For a number of men on the field, it will be the final chapter in a story filled with both success and disappointment.

"I know those guys have always talked to me and told me about all the things they have been through with different coaches and different transitions they have had to make," senior Byron Landor said.

Current fourth-year Baylor players began their collegiate career with a 3-9 effort in 2007 under head coach Guy Morriss. A rocky start to the Briles era brought a 4-8 campaign in 2008, and unexpected injuries to offensive leaders Griffin and Jay Finley in 2009 hindered the Bears as they again went 4-8.

Healthy and experienced, this year's squad can finish the way it always envisioned.

"You have to get there first, and now you have to do a great job in preparation and doing whatever we've got to do to win the football game. That's the way I want this senior class to go out, as winning the first bowl game around Baylor [since 1992]," Briles said.

For other players, it could be a only a taste of things to come.

"It is one chip off the shoulder. I mean, I have a couple more I need to pluck off, and I am sure these guys do, too," Griffin said alongside Landor and senior Danny Watkins. "So we will continue to play with all those chips on our shoulders and be ready to go out there and get after somebody."

Finally, for the Bears' future, an appearance on ESPN during primetime can prove an immense help in the recruiting game.

"There's going to be a lot of recruits that are going to be able to come out and watch us practice and be around us for two or three days," Briles said. "Those are huge advantages. We're still in the news and football season is going on, so

YOU WIN SOME, YOU LOSE SOME

A look back at the Bears' 7-5 campaign

Sept. 4: Football wins its season opener against Sam Houston, 34-3. Back for his first game since his injury, Robert Griffin rushes for 59 yards and passes for 242. Defensively, the Bears hold their opponent scoreless in the first half. "If we play defense like that every week we are going to win a lot of football games," Head Coach Art Briles says.

Sept. 11: The Bears dominate Buffalo, 34-3, for back-to-back home game wins. Griffin runs for two touchdowns, his second putting the Bears in the lead at 34-3 toward the beginning of the third quarter. Jay Finley finishes with 76 yards on a 5.8-yard average. After two wins, Baylor's next challenge is TCU.

Sept. 18: Baylor loses 45-10 after TCU scores touchdowns on its first five possessions. The Horned Frogs take a quick 35-3 advantage over the Bears gaining 335 of their 558 total yards by halftime. The Bears are stifled by TCU's defense. Griffin finishes 16-of-28 passing for 164 yards while running 14 times for

Sept. 25: The Rice Owls fall short as Baylor redeems itself in a 30-13 win. "We hit a couple of big plays in the first half and one in the second. I know Kendall caught one and Josh (Gordon) caught one. We were trying to be methodical throughout the night," Briles says.

Oct. 2: The Bears win their fourth game of the season against Kansas at home, 55-7. Griffin sets a single-game school record with his 444 total yards while 10 field goals on the season from Aaron Jones already outnumbers last year's kicking output.

Oct. 9: Baylor loses at the Cotton Bowl, 45-38, against Texas Tech. Griffin has a career high 384 passing yards. Wright grabs 11 receptions for 145 yards, bringing in a 62-yard touchdown pass from Griffin in the frist half that helps the Bears close the margin to 35-28.

Oct. 16: While playing on the road the Bears defeat the Buffaloes, 31-25. Finley rushes for a career-high 143 yards. After a fight for a pass in the end zone, Chance Casey's last-second pass breakup helps the Bears win in their final meeting with Colorado before the Buffaloes leave the Big 12.

Oct. 23: The Bears earn bowl eligibility for the first time since 1995 after their 47-42 win over against Kansas State. "It means a lot. To be here for my fifth year now, I've been through a couple of changes. The program has turned around. It's a blessing," Finley says. Griffin is 26 of 38 passing with two touchdowns each to Gordon and Wright, and Finley averages 9.6 yards per carry.

Oct. 30: The Bears continue to delight fans by beating Texas, 30-22, in Austin for the first time since 1991. Griffin has a 59-yard touchdown to Terrance Williams and passes for 219 yards. Finley rushes for 116 yards on 15 carries. "I don't think there was any player in the locker room that had any doubt that we were going to win this game," senior Byron Landor says.

Nov. 6: Following its two victories, No. 22 ranked Baylor loses to No.19 Oklahoma state, 55-28. After being held scoreless in the first half, Baylor scores all of its 28 points in the second half. However, the Bears efforts don't compare as Oklahoma State's lead proves to be too large to overcome.

Nov. 13: The Bears come back to play in the comfort of Floyd Casey Stadium for the Battle of the Brazos. Despite taking an early 30-14 advantage, a stagnant offense and special teams miscues eventually hinder the Bears in a 42-30 loss. Finley's 172 rush yards push him past the 1,000 yard mark on the season.

Nov. 20: Baylor finishes the 2010 regular season going 7-5 overall, 4-4 in the Big 12 with a 53-24 loss against Oklahoma. "It's like I told the players, we're not going to let this deal beat us up because it would be easy to do that, and I don't like doing easy things." Briles says.

Illinois analysis: BU must stop rush

By Matt Larsen SPORTS WRITER

It has been a momentary breath of fresh air for the Bears since their last regular season game on Nov. 20, but this year the breath is shorter than it has been in 16 seasons as they look to down the Fighting Illini Dec. 29 in the Texas

"We have a great opponent in Illinois. They have done some fabulous things this year on the football field," head coach Art Briles said. "Coach (Ron) Zook is very well respected in the coaching circles around the country."

In his sixth season coaching the Illini, Zook's squad experienced down years in 2008 and 2009 after an eye-catching, ninewin season in 2007 that ended in a trip to the 2008 Rose Bowl. Zook received numerous Coach of the Year honors that year.

The last two have been less convincing, as 2008 and 2009 saw that we will really look into." a combined seven Illini wins.

Like the Bears, who closed the season with three losses, the Illini did not finish their season on a high note, losing three of their last four. Most recently the team lost 25-23 at Fresno State on Friday.

Also like the Bears, the Illini managed no big upsets in route to their improved but middle-of-theconference finish, their biggest win coming in a 33-13 win over 7-5 Penn State.

Most of Zook's Fighting Illini teams have been led by a rushing attack, and this edition is no dif-While both backfield starters

have speed, junior running back Mikel LeShoure draws the most attention. "Both those guys are really

good," Briles said. "The QB is a good runner. LeShoure is Firstteam All Conference. They are 13th in the nation in rushing the football, third in the nation in time of possession. Those are all factors

At 6 feet, 230 pounds, LeShoure

combines speed and power in his running style.

He has picked up more than 1,500 yards this season while quarterback Nathan Scheelhasse has added 815 of his own.

Though playing in a pass-saturated Big 12, the Bears showed their ability to overcome a runminded Kansas State team and the conference's second-best rusher, Daniel Thomas, in a 47-42 win earlier this year.

Senior safety Byron Landor took advantage of the chance to scout the Illini last Friday.

"Actually they came on TV the other night and I texted all my roommates and told all of them 'Make sure you watch the game," he said with a smile. "They are a running team; I think we have done a pretty good job with the run this year as a defense."

The Illini offense has also been lights out in the red zone, finishing nearly 94 percent of red zone trips with points.

Defensively, Illinois brings a football team," he said.

consistent and balanced approach. They sit at fifth in the Big Ten in total defense, giving up 344 yards a game, 131 rushing and 213 pass-

With their game Friday against Fresno State, the Illini's schedule had them playing their last game two weeks later in the season than the Bears.

Unlike Landor, senior offensive tackle Danny Watkins chose to use this time to take a mini hiatus from football.

"I didn't watch any football over the past week," he said, smiling after his teammate's comment about watching the Illinois-Fresno game. "We had a little shutdown there for a bit. It was nice to cool the jets so to speak. When we got on the field there [in Saturday's practice], it was a good atmosphere. Everyone was juiced up, ready to go."

Briles believes the rest has been just what the doctor ordered.

Seniors' marks etched in Bears' history

OFFENSE & SPECIAL TEAMS



Jay Finley No. 23 RB 1155 rush yards, needs 33 to set BU single-season record



Danny Watkins, No. 59 OT Could be third BU OL chosen in NFL draft in last three years



Derek Epperson, No. 38 P Averaged 44.2 yards per punt Honorable mention AP All-Big 12

By tyler Alley REPORTER

Baylor's seniors will have one last game to wear the green and gold; they will have one last chance to showcase their abilities on the field and possibly earn their eighth win of this season.

Here is a recap a just few of the seniors who have made an impact.

Byron Landor transferred from Blinn Junior College two years ago. He started all 12 games at strong safety for the Bears this season. He had 115 total tackles, three being for loss. He also had an interception, a fumble recovery, five pass breakups and a forced fumble. At Sunday's press conference Landor spoke on the meaning of the

seniors finally notching a bowl victory. "I know those guys have always talked to me and told me about all the things they have been through with different coaches and different transitions they have had to make," Landor

Antonio Johnson started all 12 games this year at outside linebacker for the Bears. The Waco product has 41 solo tackles with 21 more assisted, five of those tackles being for loss. He also earned three sacks, an interception and a fumble forced this year. He was named a Coaches' and AP Honorable Mention All-Big 12 for his efforts.

Jay Finley started all 12 games at tailback for the Baylor Bears this season, marking the first season he started the whole season. He has gained 1,155 yards on 183 attempts with 11 touchdowns this year, along with 76 yards on nine receptions. He earned an Honorable Mention All-Big 12 by the coaches and AP, and the Kansas City Star named him second team All-Big 12.

Finley has played in 45 games for the Bears while starting 22. He has amassed 2,597 yards and 21 touchdowns on 466 rushes, along with 416 yards and three touchdowns on 40 receptions. He nursed an ankle injury his junior year that limited him to only three starts in nine games. Finley is also a two-time member of the Big 12 Commissioner' Honor Roll. He graduated in May with a degree in general studies.

Phil Taylor transferred from Penn State in September 2008 and has started all 12 games for Baylor this season. He has 52 total tackles on the year, seven tackles for loss and two sacks. He also forced a fumble. Taylor was named second-team All-Big 12 by the AP, Coaches, and multiple news outlets. He is also projected by CBSsports.com to be a second-round pick in the upcoming NFL Draft.

Danny Watkins, a native Canadian, transferred from Butte College, a junior college in California. He has started all 24 games as a Baylor Bear, and he has done very well after taking NFL draft pick Jason Smith's position. Baylor's offensive line this season ranks second in the Big 12 in fewest sacks allowed and third in rushing offense. Watkins has recorded 122 knockdowns on the season.

Watkins was named first team All-Big 12 by the AP and the Kansas City Star, and is a Coaches' second team All-Big 12 pick. He is currently projected to be drafted in the late-second or early-third round by CBSsports.

Derek Epperson, from Southlake, has been Baylor's punter for every game of his collegiate career. This season he ranks 21st in punting in the nation with a 44.2 yard average. He is a Ray Guy Award candidate and an All-American candidate. The Dallas Morning News also named him second-team All-Big 12, and he has earned Honorable Mention All-Big 12 by the coaches and the Associated Press. Epperson could eventually join former Baylor punter Daniel Sepulveda in the NFL.

DEFENSE



Byron Landor, No. 14 S Team-high 115 total tackles 1st team AP All-Big 12 pick



Antonio Johnson, No. 7 LB 62 total tackles led all BU LBs



Phil Taylor, No. 98 DT 52 total tackles, seven for loss 2nd team AP All-Big 12 pick



Reliant Stadium hosts the fifth rendition of the Texas Bowl Dec. 29. Able to house 71,500 fans, the stadium has been used for concerts and rodeos in addition to football at the high school, collegiate and professional level

Texas Bowl 'reliant' on strong teams, exposure

By Krista Pirtle REPORTER

In 3 weeks, Baylor will head down to Houston, Texas, to face the Illinois Illini in the fifth Texas Bowl held at Reliant Stadium.

This bowl is one of the youngest, with the Illinois vs. Baylor matchup only its game.

"We were very pleased today to invite Baylor and Illinois to play in the Texas Bowl," said Heather Houston, Texas Bowl Executive Director. "Baylor fans traveled extremely well to the NCAA Championship basketball regional here at Reliant Stadium last year and we feel confident that energy will transfer to a bowl appearance as well. Illinois has a great football tradition and the largest alumni base in the country. We are thrilled that they are our first ever Big Ten

The NCAA awarded Houston with the opportunity to host a bowl game on June 27, 2006, replacing the Houston Bowl. The inaugural game was held December 28, 2006, when Rutgers defeated Kansas State 37-10, hosting 52,210 fans, the largest crowd since 1972 without any team from Texas com-

"Anytime there's a team from Texas, it's a great opportunity for us. We are excited to have Baylor with their alums either living in Houston or within driving distance, which helps attendance. We've already heard from Baylor alums and fans and they're excited and can't wait to get here," said Zac Emmons of Houston Texans me-

Since then, the Texas bowl has hosted TCU vs. Houston (20-13), Rice vs. Western Michigan (38-14) and Navy vs. Missouri (35-13).

Last December, it was announced that ESPN Regional Television would partner with the Texas bowl after the 2009 Texas Bowl. With this new partnership, the

Texas Bowl will host the Big 12 and the Big Ten. Previously, it hosted the Big

East and either Conference USA or the Mountain West Conference on alternating years.

This means that ESPN will broadcast for the next four years.

For the past three years, the Texas Bowl annually generated an average of \$25 million; now, with ESPN, that income will increase.

"We are excited to work with ESPN to take the Texas Bowl to an even higher level of performance for our community, our conference partners and the student athletes we serve," Houston said. "ESPN brings a wealth of resources and experience that will help the Texas Bowl rapidly reach its full potential. We look forward to working with the professionals at ESPN on this exciting project and expanding our relationship with them in the vears to come."

The Texas Bowl's charity partner is the DePelchin Children's

Restaurants cater

to appetites,

wallets of all sizes

The DePelchin Children's Center serves more than 20,000 children and family members annually through 30 programs including adoption, foster care, autism, counseling services and more.

"The DePelchin relationship is one of the greatest things about the Texas Bowl and is very rewarding. When you ask the players what one of their favorite things about the bowl was, playing with the children is at the top. We donate proceeds from the Bowl each year, last year donating \$100,000. The emotional reward, however, has no price value," Emmons said.

So far, the Texas Bowl has donated \$300,000 and more than \$5 million in promotional support for their charity.

The teams come and visit the day before the game, both individually. They hang out for a couple of hours, the players, cheerleaders and mascots. They play games, hang out, sign autographs bring them things like noisemakers and posters, etc. Then the kids get to go to the game. The kids don't get this kind of opportunity to interact with people that are close to celebrities, the people these children look up to. This helps to boost their self-esteem, knowing that somebody notices them," said De-Pelchin Children Center's marketing and communications manager Jerry Heinold.

The Texas Bowl is not just about the game, but helping out its com-

City of Houston brings food, festivities for every age

Museum, zoo among attractions

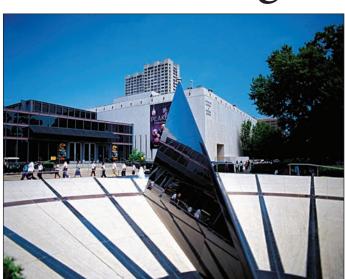
By Sanmai Gbandi Contributor

Driving to Houston to support our Baylor Bears in their first bowl game since 1994 will be an exciting affair. The real question is: What do you do in the down time before and after the game?

Houston is the fourth-largest city in the United States, so as you can imagine, there are a plethora of things to do there that can kill time but also be extremely fun and rewarding.

With more than 24 million visitors, annually, The Galleria is a major tourist attraction to just about anyone who visits Houston. It has an eclectic collection of stores to suit every need and desire of its visitors. The Galleria is located on Westheimer, which is a few west of downtown Houston, one of the liveliest and most exciting places in Texas. Along with 375 stores and restaurants, there is a massive ice rink on the first level of the shopping center. The Cheesecake Factory and Rainforest Café are two of many eateries

located inside of the Galleria. Another place of interest is the Museum District. The Museum of Fine Arts is one of many museums in the district. More than 2.5 million people visit the museum each year, and it is one of the largest art museums in America. The art collection contains more than sion



The Houston Museum of Natural Science includes a butterfly habitat, planetarium, IMAX Theater and a prestigious gem and mineral collection.

adults is \$7. Call ahead before you go to see which exhibitions they have on display.

The Houston Zoo is also located in the Museum District. There are currently 4,500 animals housed in the zoo, and you can see them interact in their habitats. It costs \$11 to get in as an adult, and it is worth it.

The Museum of Natural Science has over a dozen permanent exhibits that deal with topics like Texas wildlife and astronomy. The most amazing thing about this museum is the Wortham IMAX Theater. It is currently showing movies "Harry Potter & The Deathly Hallows: Part 1" and "Wild Ocean 3D." The tickets go from about \$15 to

the Wortham IMAX Theater is a breathtaking experience.

Finally, Discovery Green is another inexpensive site to see in Houston. Discovery Green is the name of the nonprofit organization that developed the park in downtown Houston. The Discovery Green Team has incorporated the latest "green" technology to create an exciting 12 acre park. There are performing and visual art events along with outdoor movies and live performances.

You can check out all of these attractions with your family, friends, or even by yourself. Wherever you decide to go remember one thing: our Baylor Bears need your support, so don't forget to cheer them on

By Molly Dunn Contributor

Around Reliant Stadium and downtown Houston, you can find a multitude of restaurants varying in cuisine, atmosphere and quality. Whether you want to eat close to the stadium or grab a bite on your way in from surrounding cities, you are guaranteed a great meal at these local favorites, including many one-of-a-kind eateries.

In the Upper Kirby area, Beck's Prime at 2902 Kirby Drive offers praiseworthy burgers, fries and shakes to satisfy your fastfood cravings. Whether you are in a hurry or want to have a sitdown meal, Beck's Prime is an excellent, affordable choice for lunch or dinner.

Goode Co. Texas Bar-B-Q, located at 5109 Kirby Drive, is a Texas landmark when it comes to barbecue. From brisket to sweet water duck to barbecue sandwiches and excellent southern desserts, this original Houston barbecue joint will give you all the fixings for a barbecue meal and more.

Check out Goode's Armadillo Place located directly across from Goode Co. Texas Bar-B-Q at 5015 Kirby Drive, for another barbecue restaurant with live music.

Houston's, located at 4848

or dinner if you want a variety of quality food. Before a football game, you may crave a big juicy cheeseburger, or perhaps a tender steak. If so, Houston's is the place for you. Ask anyone about Houston's and vou are bound to here a praise or two about their handcut french fries or their messy

finger-licking barbecue ribs. Star Pizza, located at 77 Harvard, off of Washington Avenue, is home to some of the best pizza in town. Locals rave about the

You are guaranteed a great meal at these local favorites, including many oneof-a-kind eateries.

quality of their pizza. Stop by this local favorite and enjoy a personal slice of pizza, split a whole pie with your friends or chow down on some of their excellent sandwiches and pasta options before heading to the game.

Hickory Hollow BBQ, 101 Heights Blvd., is a Texas style café you don't want to miss. Whatever your comfort food may be, you can find it here. Houston Press names their chicken fried steaks as "Best in Houston." You certainly don't want to pass up this restaurant while in town.

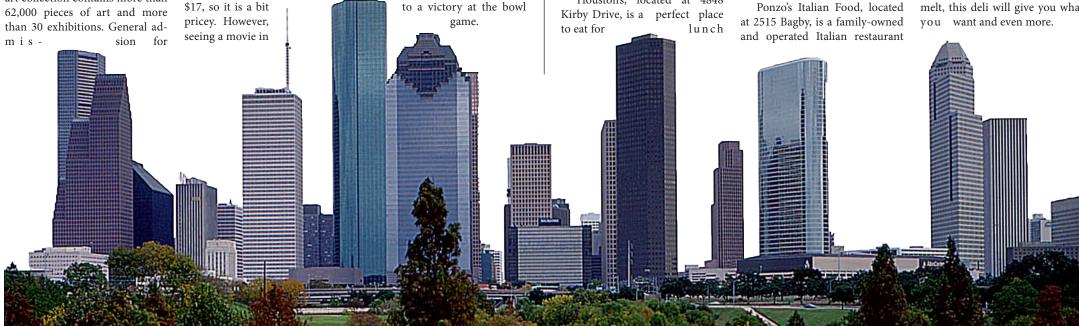
In the Midtown Montrose area of Houston, you can find many unique local restaurants varying in cuisine.

that offers everything from pizza to calzones to cannolis. They are open for lunch and dinner and are closed on Mondays.

Niko Niko's, located at 2520 Montrose Blvd., is a Greek and American café that was featured on Food Network's "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives." Known for their gyro sandwiches and french fries, Niko Niko's has established a name for itself. As an affordable and enjoyable meal, check it out and you won't be disappointed.

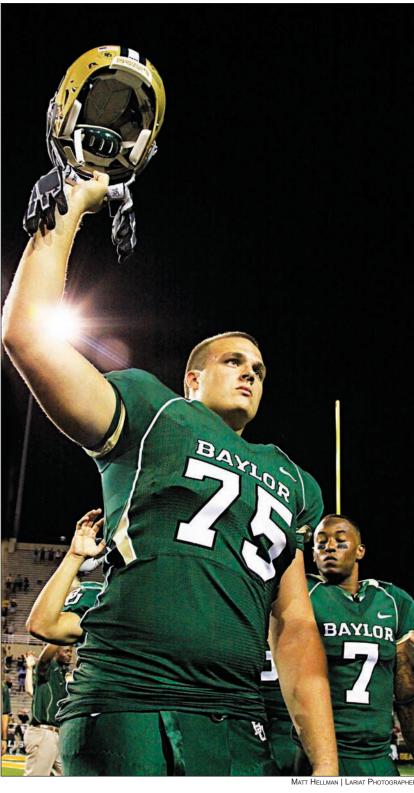
El Tiempo Cantina, located at 1308 Montrose Blvd., has some of the best Tex-Mex food in Houston. El Tiempo Cantina is known for having the best fajitas, guacamole and green salsa. Its lunch and dinner menu consists of various seafood enchiladas, beef fajitas, numerous quesadillas and grilled entrees. El Tiempo Cantina is a town favorite and cannot be missed.

Around the Galleria area in Houston on Post Oak Blvd., there are many chain restaurants and fast-food places. Kenny & Ziggy's Deli, located at 2327 Post Oak Blvd., is a New York delicatessen restaurant known as Houston's best deli. Kenny & Ziggy's Deli was also featured on "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives" and the locals know why. With excellent Zagat ratings, this deli offers the best sandwiches, soups and deli entrees that are compared to original New York delis. Whether you want a triple smoked pastrami sandwich, a cup of matzo ball soup or a Brooklyn style patty melt, this deli will give you what





Fans on opposite sides of the stadium take turns chanting "Baylor" and "Bears" during the game against Kansas State on Oct. 23. The BU win was the team's sixth, making it bowl eligible.



No. 75 left offense tackle Troy Baker lifts his helmet during the singing of "That Good Old

Baylor Line" on Aug. 26 after Baylor defeated Sam Houston State 34-3, at home.

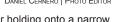
Bruins



No. 12 wide receiver Josh Gordon hauls in a 47-yard touchdown reception, avoiding the tackle of Kansas State's No. 16 defensive back Terrance Sweeney, in the first half at Floyd Casey Stadium.

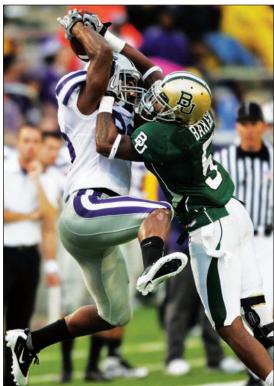








Baylor football players bow their heads during the postgame prayer and a teammate of No. 67 Joe Korbel places a hand on his back.



No. 5 cornerback Mikail Baker breaks up a pass thrown to Kansas State's No. 89 receiver Aubrey Quarles on Oct. 23 at Floyd Casey Stadium.





ABOVE PHOTOS BY DANIEL CERNERO | PHOTO EDIT

(Above) No. 2 wide receiver Terrance Williams goes down the line of fans as he makes his way onto the field. (Right middle) With Baylor holding onto a narrow lead, fans focus on the action of the Baylor vs. UT game in Austin. (Right bottom) A Baylor yell leader runs with the flag while celebrating a Baylor score.



Bruiser, Baylor's mascot, gets the Baylor Line spirit going before a home game at Floyd Casey Stadium in Waco.

Sam Houston 34-3 Sept. 4

Buffalo 34-6 Sept. 11 Rice 30-13 Sept. 25

Kansas 55-7 Oct. 2

Colorado 31-25 Oct. 16 Kansas State 47-42 Oct. 23 (bowl eligible)

Texas 30-22 Oct. 30

Illinois ? Dec. 29



DANIEL CERNERO | PHOTO EDITOR

No. 5 cornerback Mikail Baker is overcome with emotion following Baylor's win over Kansas State on Oct. 23. Baker suffered a season-ending knee injury just three games into the season last year but has recovered and is a major part of the Bears' defense.

