

THE DAILY TEXAN presents

DOUBLE COVERAGE

Monday, August 3, 2015



A tale of two quarterbacks

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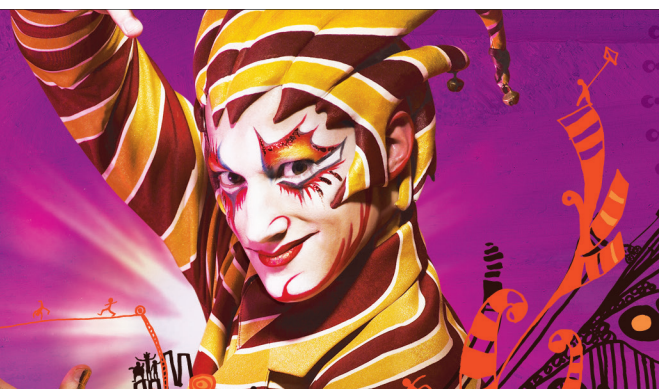
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2015 schedule breakdown

By Jori Epstein

— **Sept. 5** at Notre Dame

This game will truly set the tone for Texas’ season. If Texas upsets Notre Dame — and it would be an upset, as the Fighting Irish slotted No. 11 in preseason rankings — then the Longhorns can ride the momentum through at least a few weeks. They face a dual-threat quarterback in Malik Zaire. But in the wake of quarterback Everett Golson’s transfer to Florida State, Zaire may be shaky as a starter. As Texas’ offense continues its learning curve, its defense better capitalize against a quarterback who’s completed 208 fewer passes in his college career than Tyrone Swoopes. Dylan Haines and Duke Thomas must latch onto receivers to reduce Zaire’s options. This game will also be a good time for highly touted freshman linebacker Malik Jefferson to make a strong debut.

— **Sept. 12** vs. Rice

— **Sept. 19** vs. University of California — Berkeley

— **Sept. 26** vs. Oklahoma State

— **Oct. 3** at TCU

Texas is at risk of entering this matchup with a false sense of security. Its three previous games feature both its easiest rivals of the season and the luxury of home-field advantage. Playing TCU — the No. 2 preseason team — at Fort Worth will require a whole new level of football. The Longhorns will face elite quarterback Trevone Boykin, named Big 12 preseason offensive player of the year, and a team that’sw neither afraid to score nor to chase down the interceptions (TCU averaged 46.5 points per game last year and intercepted 26 passes). After last year’s 48-10 Thanksgiving drubbing, the Longhorns’ best bet is channeling that 2014 embarrassment into motivation to reclaim its statewide football name.

— **Oct. 10** Red River Rivalry vs. OU

Like the Longhorns, the Sooners haven’t settled their quarterback situation for this year. With redshirt junior Trevor Knight and Texas Tech transfer Baker Mayfield in contention, OU’s offensive production will depend on its ability to integrate a playmaker smoothly. Regardless, star running back Samaje Perine — who rushed for more than 1,500 yards last season, including a NCAA-record 427 vs. Kansas — can move the Sooners up the field. On defense, linebacker Eric Striker highlights the attack of a squad whose weakness is pass defense. But when it really comes down to it, the rivalry factors so heavily into this matchup that getting a strong start and excess enthusiasm is Texas’ best bet at the W.

— **Oct. 24** vs. Kansas State

— **Oct. 31** at Iowa State

— **Nov. 7** vs. Kansas

— **Nov. 14** at West Virginia

— **Nov. 26** vs. Texas Tech (Thanksgiving)

For the second time in three years, Texas ends its regular season with a Waco showdown against this year’s No. 4 preseason pick. The competition once had the potential to be a Big 12 title game, although TCU makes that less likely this year. Texas should expect a balanced offensive attack from the Bears. Returning junior running back Shock Linwood as well as receivers Corey Coleman and KD Cannon, Baylor can run the gamut with significant offensive flexibility. Its defense is less surefire but returns multiple recipients of conference and national accolades in 2014. Head coach Art Briles knows what he’s doing, and the Longhorns must be prepared to contend on the Bears’ home field. Then again, by this late in the season, Texas will need to have competed strongly until this point or the game won’t mean more than the difference between low-caliber bowl games.

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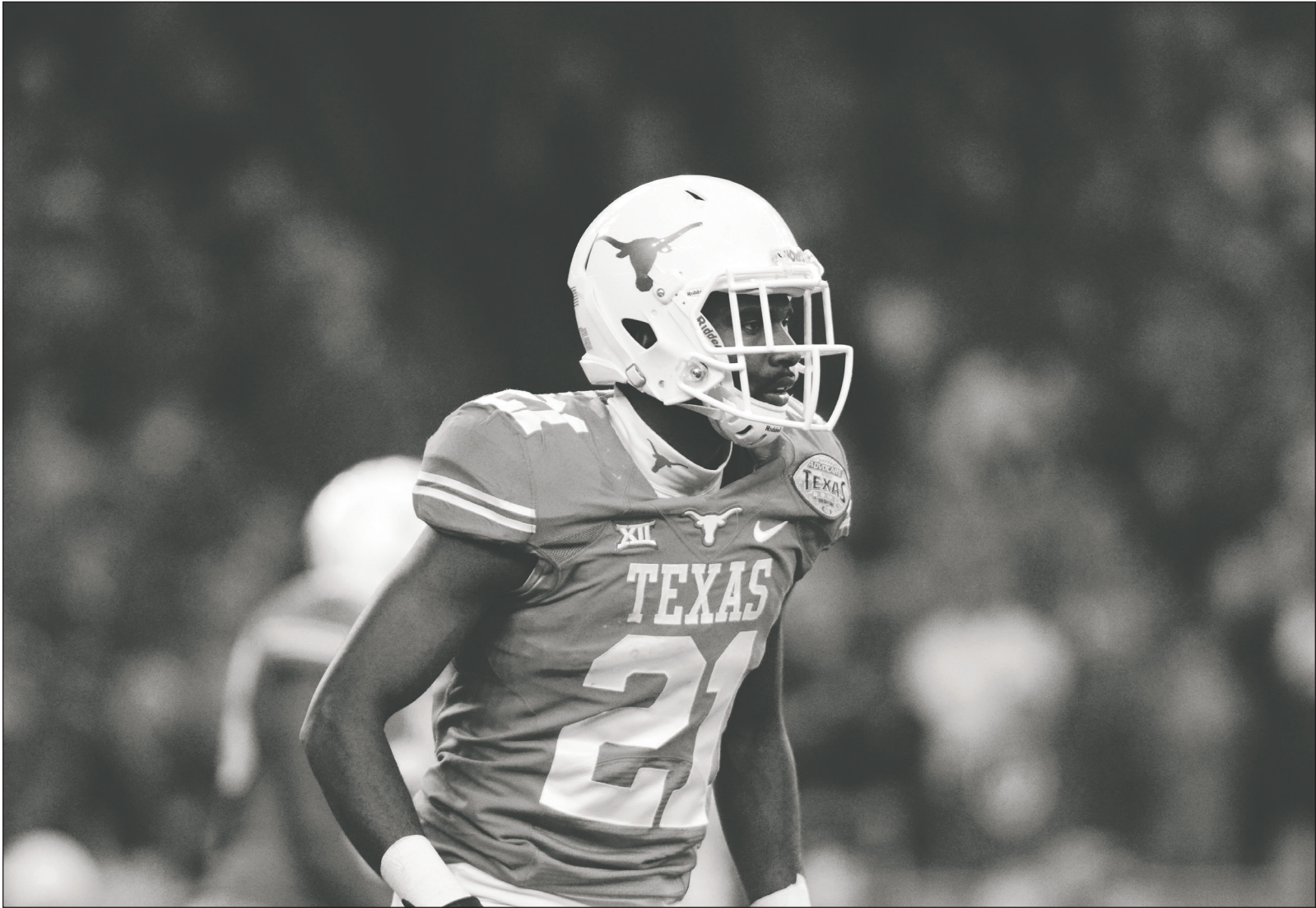
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EDITOR’S NOTE

The boys are back, and they’re hungry. After a not-so-stellar first year at Texas, Head Coach Charlie Strong has said that Texas needs to have a winning season. In order for the season to be deemed a win, Texas will have to do much more than what the numbers show. The season kicks off Sept. 5 in South Bend, Indiana, for a matchup against the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. We wil see if Texas can get off to a winning start.





Amy Zhang | Daily Texan Staff

In last year's game against UCLA, senior cornerback Duke Thomas allowed the game-winning touchdown when he was beat on a double move.

Duke Thomas looks to move on from UCLA

By Nick Castillo

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Duke Thomas doesn't dwell on the moment, but he knows it as the most disappointing play of his collegiate career.

Thomas, a 5-foot-11, 178-pound senior cornerback from Killeen, Texas, didn't think UCLA backup quarterback Jerry Neuheisel would throw a deep ball on him. But, with the Bruins deep in Texas territory late in last year's game at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, wide receiver Jordan Payton blew past Thomas on a double move. Neuheisel would connect with the streaking Payton for the game-winning touchdown.

"I should not have let that happen," Thomas said. "It doesn't bother me to talk about it. Really, I learned from the experience. ... It was really a dumb play I made. First of all, the coverage didn't even call for me to take that route — I got too greedy. It was too greedy of a play. That's what I learned — I need to just play within the defense."

Despite his mistake against UCLA, Thomas still relishes in

the spotlight. He likes to get passes thrown his way, as they're a chance for him to make a play. Most importantly, Thomas' most disappointing collegiate play taught him how to have a short memory.

"You have to have short memory, and that's what [Thomas] realizes now, and he does have a short memory now," head coach Charlie Strong said.

Nearly a year removed from the play, Thomas has put the play behind him and is ready to take over as the leader of the secondary. He may not be as loud as former cornerback Quandre Diggs, but he's still willing to speak his mind. Thomas has played alongside NFL defensive backs Kenny Vaccaro and Carrington Byndom. He's ready to take what he's learned from his former teammates and apply it to the field.

"Sitting on the side of Carrington Byndom and guys like Quandre, it's great to learn from them outside of the game atmosphere — just watching them practice and how their techniques are," Thomas said. "It's elevated my game."

Thomas also considers himself of an old veteran as the only senior cornerback.

As a member of a senior class that hasn't been a part of a double-digit win season in their Texas careers, Thomas is looking to get the Longhorns back to the top.

"Everyone here came here for the big games," Thomas said. "They came here for the championships, and that's what we're fighting towards."

He added that Texas' work ethic has to change if the Longhorns want to get back to winning championships. Thomas said it's about the team's chemistry: Guys buying into the program; guys playing for each other and playing for their coach.

As his senior season draws near, Thomas is owning up to his mistake against UCLA and moving past it as he steps into his role as the secondary's leader.

"It's over and done with — there's no reason to continue to dwell on a play that happened a year ago," Thomas said. "Bad things happen. You got to just move past it."

BIG 12 POWER RANKINGS

By Jacob Martella
@ViewFromTheBox



No. 1 TCU

When TCU came into the conference three years ago, many wondered whether the school that made its name as a “BCS crusher” could hang with the big boys. TCU does lose quite a number of players on the defensive end, but, with senior quarterback Trevone Boykin looking for a Heisman run and head coach Gary Patterson’s knowledge of defense, the Horned Frogs should take the Big 12 title this year.



No. 2 Baylor

The Bears showed last year that 2013 was no fluke, but there’s still one limiting factor that’s keeping Baylor from reaching its full potential — defense. If head coach Art Briles and defensive coordinator Phil Bennett can make the Bears defense good, it might be good enough to get them into the playoffs this year.



No. 3 Oklahoma

This year could be a turnaround season in Norman. With a new offensive coordinator Lincoln Riley, sophomore running back Samaje Perine and a defense that should at least be respectable, the Sooners are a dark horse for the Big 12 crown.



No. 4 Oklahoma State

After nearly taking the conference title two years ago, the Cowboys limped into a bowl last year with a win over Oklahoma. This year looks to be brighter in Stillwater thanks to a combination of a weaker conference and experience gained. With a defense that made it through a rough year last year and last year’s Big 12 defensive lineman of the year winner, the Cowboys should easily slot into right below TCU, Baylor and Oklahoma.



No. 5 Texas

The theme for the Longhorns this year will be “If.” If either quarterbacks Tyrone Swoopes or Jerrod Heard step up at the position and puts in consistent performances. If the offensive line improved over last year. If the defense can put on a repeat performance from last year. If those happen, Texas will be a dangerous team.

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GRADE REPORT

By Michael Shapiro

Quarterback: C

To say that junior Tyrone Swoopes struggled last year is an understatement. In 12 starts for Texas in 2014, Swoopes was the Big 12's least efficient passer and finished ninth among Big 12 quarterbacks in touchdowns. However, with a new spread offense and a full off-season of first team reps, the former four-star recruit could prove to be an asset in the Longhorns offense. But if Swoopes falters early, look for head coach Charlie Strong to replace him with redshirt freshman Jerrod Heard, who impressed coaches in spring practices with his potential and athleticism.

Running Back: B+

Senior Johnathan Gray looks to be the bellwether of a Texas offense that hasn't had a 1,000 yard rusher since Jamaal Charles in 2007. Gray has proved talented enough in the past to reach that mark, specifically late last season, when he averaged 93 yards per game over a three game stretch. If he can stay healthy, Gray could prove to be the one of the best running backs in the Big 12.

NAME: TEXAS LONGHORNS

Wide Receiver: C-

After losing top receivers John Harris and Jaxon Shipley, there are newcomers abound at the wide receiver spot. Senior Marcus Johnson needs to become a down field threat after hauling in 27 passes in 2014, and Texas must get contributions from sophomore speedster Armanti Foreman and spring game standout sophomore Lorenzo Joe.

Offensive Line: B-

Continuity is key for any offensive line, and, for a Texas line that allowed 28 sacks last year, there will be a lot more of it in 2015. Four of the five projected starting linemen played in over 10 games last year, and look for fifth-year senior Marcus Hutchins to make a leap at left tackle.

Defensive Line: A-

This group is poised to be anchor of the Longhorns defense this year despite losing All-American defensive tackle Malcom Brown. Junior Hassan Ridgeway harassed quarterbacks to the tune of six sacks in 2014 and will look to wreak havoc in opposing backfields alongside a pair of talented defensive tackles, junior Paul Boyette Jr. and sophomore Poona Ford.

OVERALL GRADE:

C+

Linebacker: B-

At the linebacker spot, all eyes are on freshman Malik Jefferson. Jefferson was the number four ranked recruit in the nation in 2014 and impressed coaches in the spring game with six tackles and a forced fumble. There will be a steep learning curve for Jefferson and the rest of the Texas linebackers, but there is more than enough talent to make up for it.

Defensive Backs: B

The lone Preseason All-Big 12 player on the Texas roster was senior defensive back Duke Thomas. Thomas, along with junior Dylan Haines and sophomore Jason Hall, will make it tough on receivers throughout the Big 12, but a lack of depth will certainly hurt the Longhorns secondary if any starter gets hurt.

Special Teams: C-

Kicker Nick Rose struggled last year, missing 33 percent of his field goal attempts. However, the senior did show promise on kickoffs, racking up 44 touchbacks. At punter, Texas will start sophomore Mitchell Becker, who averaged 38 yards per attempt in the spring game. This is a unit that needs to show more consistency in 2015.

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FOUR MORE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TEXAS FOOTBALL THIS YEAR

By Jori Epstein
@JoriEpstein

From some angry boosters to the extra bucks in student athletes' pockets, Texas Athletics has been abuzz while students were away for summer. To catch you up, here are four things to know before heading back to the 40 Acres.



Lauren Ussery | Daily Texan file photo

Head coach Charlie Strong has shown in his first year at Texas that he isn't afraid to kick players off his team. In an interview with ESPN, Strong said that if a Texas player hits a woman, that player won't be on the team.

1) Football ticket prices rose by a combined 21 percent.

By some measures, UT has the richest athletic department in the country. But pairing new coaches' salaries with changing NCAA costs, the athletics department actually had a net loss of \$8.1 million in the 2013–2014 fiscal year. To combat these challenges, Men's Athletic Director Steve Patterson and his team raised football ticket prices and will now charge patrons for parking. Expect Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium to still be mostly full come September. Also anticipate the fans filling seats to be slightly bitter and full of high expectations.

2) Five Longhorns were selected in the 2015 NFL Draft, and an additional five signed with teams.

After an embarrassing 2014 season in which Texas snapped its 76-year record of producing NFL draft picks, 10 Longhorns made NFL rosters this year. New England picked **defensive tackle Malcom Brown** to close the first round, and Philadelphia took **linebacker Jordan Hicks** in the third round to up Texas' record of multiple first-day selections to 13 of the last 15 years. Other Longhorns drafted were:

- **Defensive back Mykkel Thompson** — NY Giants, fifth round
- **Cornerback Quandre Diggs** — Detroit, sixth round
- **Tight end Geoff Swaim** — Dallas, seventh round

And these five signed as rookie free agents:

- **Deep snapper Nate Boyer** — Seattle
- **Running back Malcolm Brown** — St. Louis
- **Wide receiver John Harris** — Philadelphia
- **Defensive end Cedric Reed** — Buffalo
- **Wide receiver Jaxon Shipley** — Arizona

Boyer's signing wins as most inspirational — the Green Beret Special forces unit willed himself to pick up football and walk onto Texas' squad. Now, he has inked a contract at age 34.

3) That whole pay-the-athletes rhetoric? Each UT student-athlete now will receive an extra \$4,310 this year.

After years of concern that student-athletes were being exploited, schools in the five major athletic conferences, including the Big 12, are now paying their student-athletes. How much? Well, depends where you go to school. The legislation calls for student-athletes to receive not just academic scholarships but also funds for the "cost of attendance." At UT, the federal calculation leaves athletes with \$4,310 a piece. The goal: Athletes won't be spending recklessly, but they should at least be financially stable. The whole endeavor will cost the University about \$1.5 million. Plus, upwards of \$1 million will now improve athletes' dinners and better snacks.

Think you're a skilled athlete? The time to walk on is now.

4) There aren't second chances. If you hit a woman, Charlie Strong won't put you on his field in his uniform.

As athletes, and particularly football players, around the country continue to make news for domestic violence, coaches have a decision to make: Where do they draw the line? At what point does a player deserve to be kicked off the team? Many coaches claim they believe in second chances and keep athletes on the team — but on a tight leash. Not Strong.

"There is no way a guy should hit a woman — if it happens, you need to find somewhere else to play," Strong said to ESPN in July. "If you see a young man with issues [and] you can't surround him with enough people to help change his life, you can say all you want, but the kid is never going to change."

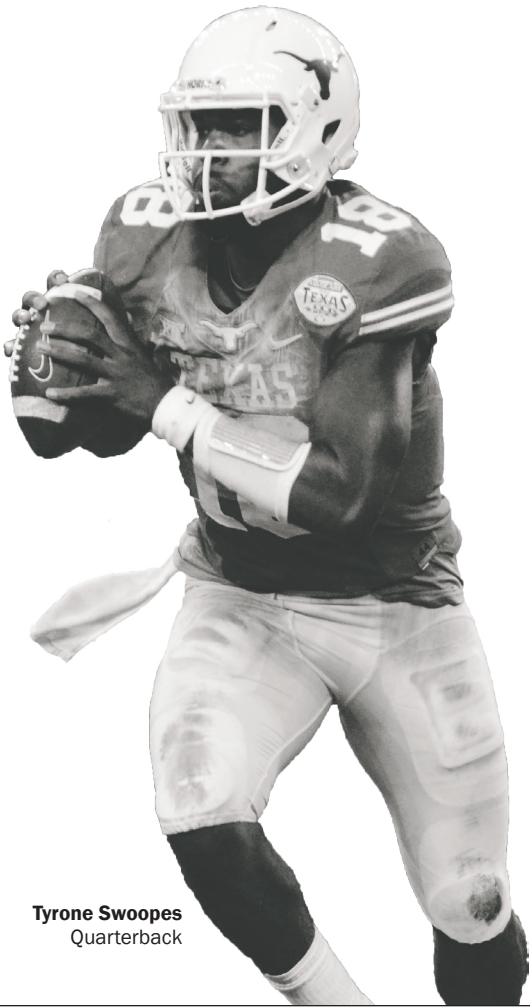
Strong kicked nine players off the team on this premise in 2014. In 2015: so far, so good.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE	First string	Second string
Quarterback	Tyrone Swoopes (Jr.)	Jerrod Heard (RFr.)
Runningback	Johnathan Gray (Sr.)	D'Onta Foreman (So.)
Wide receiver	Marcus Johnson (Sr.)	Armonti Foreman (So.)
Wide receiver	Jacorey Warrick (Jr.)	Daje Johnson (Sr.)
Wide receiver	Lorenzo Joe (So.)	Dorian Leonard (So.)
Tight end	Andrew Beck (So.)	Blake Whiteley (So.)
Left tackle	Marcus Hutchins (Sr.)	Brandon Hodges (Jr.)
Left guard	Sedrick Flowers (Sr.)	Terrell Cuney (RFr.)
Center	Taylor Doyle (Sr.)	Jake Raulerson (So.)
Right guard	Kent Perkins (Jr.)	Elijah Rodriguez (RFr.)
Right tackle	Connor Williams (Fr.)	Tristan Nickelson (So.)

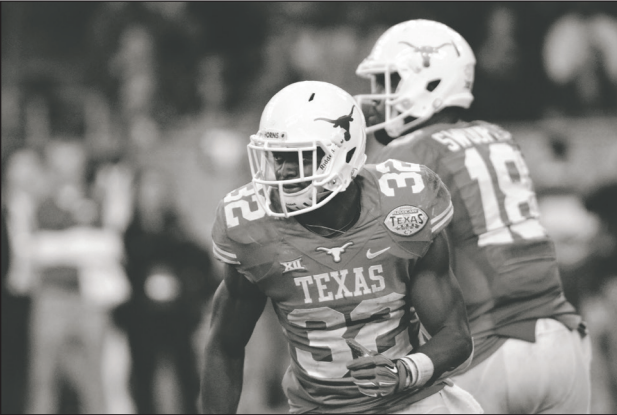
DEFENSE	First string	Second string
Left end	Shiro Davis (Sr.)	Bryce Cottrell (Jr.)
Defensive tackle	Desmond Jackson (Sr.)	Poona Ford (So.)
Defensive tackle	Hassan Ridgeway (Jr.)	Paul Boyette Jr. (Jr.)
Right end	Naashon Hughes (So.)	Caleb Bluiett (Jr.)
Left outside linebacker	Edwin Freeman (RFr.)	Anthony Wheeler (Fr.)
Middle linebacker	Dalton Santos (Sr.)	Timothy Cole (Jr.)
Right outside linebacker	Peter Jinkens (Sr.)	Malik Jefferson (Fr.)
Cornerback	Duke Thomas (Sr.)	John Bonney (RFr.)
Cornerback	Bryson Echols (Jr.)	Sheroid Evans (Sr.)
Safety	Dylan Haines (Jr.)	Adrian Colbert (Jr.)
Safety	Jason Hall (So.)	DeShon Elliot (Fr.)

DEFENSE	First string	Second string
Punter	Michael Dickson (Fr.)	
Kicker	Mitchell Becker (So.)	



Tyrone Swoopes
Quarterback

PLAYERS TO WATCH



Amy Zhang | Daily Texan file photo

Senior running back Johnathan Gray

Plagued by injuries and crowded backfields in his first three seasons, Gray will finally get his opportunity to be Texas' workhorse this fall. After shattering Texas high school yardage and scoring records, including total career touchdowns at Aledo, he is still yet to tap his potential as a Longhorn. With a healthy body and a new, up-tempo offense in place, this could finally be the season where he truly breaks out as an impact player for the Longhorns.



Amy Zhang | Daily Texan file photo

Junior defensive tackle Hassan Ridgeway

Ridgeway exploded onto the scene in his sophomore season recording six sacks and 11 tackles for loss in 10 starts while filling in for injured Desmond Jackson. With several off-season departures on the defensive line, the Longhorns will be counting on him to step up and become the unit's leader. Head Coach Charlie Strong raved about his performance in spring play, and, with heightened expectations, Ridgeway is set to be a critical piece for the Longhorns' defense.



Amy Zhang | Daily Texan file photo

Redshirt freshman quarterback Jerrod Heard

While junior quarterback Tyrone Swoopes is the favorite to win the starting job, Heard is by no means out of the running. After a strong, but inconsistent spring performance, Heard is a solid fall camp away from earning the starting nod. If he doesn't win the job this summer, he may still receive his chance if Swoopes struggles during the season. With all eyes on the Longhorns' quarterback battle, Heard has a legitimate chance for a breakout campaign.



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