

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The Longhorns hit the highway once more to face Houston before returning to the Forty Acres

LORIANNE WILLETT / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

THE DAILY
TEXAN PRESENTS

DOUBLE COVERAGE

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No. 8 Texas @ Houston	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Houston	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas
No. 7 Penn State @ No. 3 Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Penn State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State
Akron @ Bowling Green	Bowling Green	Akron	Bowling Green	Bowling Green	Bowling Greeh	Akron	Bowling Green	Bowling Green	Bowling Green	Bowling Green	Bowling Green	Bowling Green	Bowling Green
No. 17 Tennessee @ No. 11 Alabama	Alabama	Tennessee	Tennessee	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Tennessee	Alabama	Alabama	Alabama	Colorado	Alabama
UTSA @ Florida Atlantic	UTSA	UTSA	Florida Atlantic	UTSA	Florida Atlantic	UTSA	UTSA	Florida Atlantic	UTSA	UTSA	Florida Atlantic	UTSA	UTSA
Minnesota @ No. 24 Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Minnesota	Iowa
Hawai'i @ New Mexico	Hawai'i	New Mexico	Hawai'i	New Mexico	Hawai'i	Hawai'i	New Mexico	New Mexico	Hawai'i	Hawai'i	New Mexico	Hawai'i	Hawai'i
Texas Tech @ BYU	Texas Tech	BYU	Texas Tech	BYU	Texas Tech	BYU	BYU	Texas Tech	Texas Tech	Texas Tech	Texas Tech	Texas Tech	Texas Tech
No. 22 Air Force @ Navy	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Navy	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Air Force	Navy
Virginia @ No. 10 North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina
Overall Standings	42—28	34—36	38—32	47—23	45—25	37—33	34—36	43—27	50—20	41—29	46—24	41—29	44—26

EDITOR'S NOTE

Can we take a moment to realize how ridiculous it is that we are now ranked No. 8 in the AP Polls? I honestly can't even talk about it. After a much-needed bye week, Texas is back, and hopefully better than ever. I've decided to stop stressing about football and leave it in the hands of Sarkisian, who I trust still knows what he's doing. The OU game might not have gone in our favor, but I have a strong feeling we'll meet again in the Big 12 Championship and give them a run for their money. I think that would be cool.

Emma Hutchinson

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notes from the *OPPONENT*

By Lindsey Plotkin
@lindseyplot

The Daily Texan chatted with Starns Leland, the sports editor for The Cougar, to talk about why this week's football game is so important for the University of Houston.

The Daily Texan: This game is sold out, what is the student vibe like around campus and how is everybody feeling about this week's game?

The Cougar: I think it's definitely the biggest UH football game and maybe the biggest sporting event we've had in some years. Obviously, you can see that because (the game) sold out so quickly and student tickets were sold out I think in like 30 minutes. Everyone at UH wants to beat Texas, everyone at every other Texas school wants to beat Texas. There's especially a lot of history there with Texas back in the 90's with the Southwest Conference and Texas, Texas Tech, Texas A&M and Baylor joining the Big 12 and Houston not being a part of that. This game represents that they get one shot at Texas to make things right in their mind.

DT: Houston is coming off of an insane Hail Mary win over West Virginia, how much of a confidence booster is that, especially with the rocky start?

TC: It seemed that they played well enough to win that game, and then West Virginia came back to score that touchdown with 12 seconds left. And then among fans in the building there was this immense amount of dread because it was three Big 12 games, three really bad losses. When (the Hail Mary) happened, all the (dread and disappointment) went away. They needed a win against West Virginia more than anything, or else (the season) was gonna get ugly. They showed that they could win a big game and that they could play a full big tall game.

DT: Houston's quarterback Donovan Smith had a good game against West Virginia, what does he need to do well this week to beat Texas?

TC: He's gonna need to get the ball out quickly against Texas. The left side of the offensive line is solid, but the right side lot line has been tough, and the Texas D-line is usually the toughest challenge that they have faced up to this point and probably will face this year. And so he's going to need to get the ball out quickly and escape with his legs when he can. The last few games against Texas Tech and West Virginia were his two best games as a Cougar and against West Virginia he finished the game 16-for-16, with the last one of

course being a Hail Mary. He's tough to bring down when they do run him, he can consistently get some yards. He struggled early on but over the last few games, he's started to play a lot better and with more confidence.

DT: What has the transition to the Big 12 been like competition-wise?

TC: It's been tough for them and it's very obvious in the first few games that they just didn't have the bodies quite yet and the depth to keep up. The biggest challenge has been playing a complete game of complimentary football and just that lack of consistency has been a huge problem.

DT: What does the Houston defense need to do to stop Quinn Ewers and the rest of the Texas offense?

TC: They need to stop Jonathon Brooks. What teams like TCU, Texas Tech and West Virginia have been able to do against Houston is run on them without much resistance. I think you know, shutting down the Texas defense or offense is unrealistic. Houston needs to play good defense in the red zone. They need to force field goals. They need to get off the field and that of course will allow the offense some more breathing room to keep up, and so it's mostly stopping the run and then playing well.

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HUTCH'S HUDDLE

By Emma Hutchinson
@emmahutch_

Well, I think it's safe to say that all Longhorn fans enjoyed a week off from Texas football after its underwhelming performance against Oklahoma. I do have to pay my respects to the Sooners, they put up a solid fight, seeing as they had to spend an entire past year hearing "49-0" from us. But now having a week to recover, the next question to ask is how Texas will improve moving forward.

While it's easy to look at the loss and say that Texas didn't play to its full capability as an excuse, I truly believe that the Longhorns were facing a rough patch in Dallas and that there's plenty of potential to be uncovered as the season goes on. Head coach Steve Sarkisian looked back on the inconsistencies from the Red River game, but also looked ahead with what went right during the matchup.

"I loved our competitiveness, I loved

our resiliency, our grit, our toughness, our fight," Sarkisian said. "Even when we're not at our best."

Despite the devastation that came with falling to the hands of the Sooners, Texas boasted some impressive statistics. Sophomore quarterback Quinn Ewers threw for a 84% pass completion rate, the best he's thrown so far this season, for nearly 350 yards and a touchdown. Jonathon Brooks recorded his fourth straight game of 100 or more rushing yards. Bert Auburn even completed both a 45-yard and 47-yard kick to help Texas gain the lead.

Oklahoma came in hot on both sides of the ball, showing physicality and stamina, something that Texas was expecting, but seemingly couldn't get past. The Longhorns had all the right tools to win this game, yet penalties and play-calling plagued Texas from the start, as Sarkisian later took the blame for his poor calls and missed opportunities on scoring drives.

Looking ahead at Texas' remaining schedule, the Longhorns don't have any more currently-ranked opponents, with its next best contender being Kansas State, who are also 2-1 in conference play. If things go according to plan, this could allow Sarkisian and his team to cruise right on through to the Big 12 Championship. Even though there's no telling what could happen between now and then, Texas is still very much in the running for the title, and will more than likely face off against Oklahoma again come December.

Regardless of who will make it to the big stage, Texas must seek out how to make itself a more commanding presence on the field if it expects to see itself on it.

"We've got some issues to address collectively and individually," Sarkisian said. "I think we need to create more turnovers from the defensive

perspective ... definitely want to improve our red zone offense."

Texas and Oklahoma both went 5-for-14 in third down conversions, with Texas scoring on three out of four of its fourth down conversion opportunities. However, Oklahoma managed to capitalize on all six of its red zone scoring drives, while Texas only secured a field goal out of its three chances. The Sooners also collected five sacks for 28 yards, as Texas gained one sack.

Both of these factors influenced Texas not being able to gain a comfortable lead, and it just goes to show that the Longhorns need to stop getting in their own way if they want to see consistent success within the program. As they look to play against Houston this upcoming weekend, Sarkisian is faced with an opportunity to reveal a squad that has reflected on what needs to be done in order to make sure that the collective end goal stays within reach.

LORIANNE WILLETT / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

Sarkisian reflects on bye week, looks toward Houston

By Evan Vieth
@evanvieth

After a bye week break to reflect on the Red River Rivalry, head coach Steve Sarkisian is ready to go for Texas football's matchup at Houston on Saturday.

I think, inevitably for us, we're back to game week. We're playing a really good Houston team on the road.

STEVE SARKISIAN
HEAD COACH

Sarkisian and the Longhorns spent the week with a major focus: getting healthy. Injuries were a key in the loss to Oklahoma, with junior offensive lineman Jake Majors suffering an injury early in the game, resulting in redshirt freshman Connor Robertson entering the game. Sophomore Cole Hutson was the original center backup, but he, alongside senior defensive back Ryan Watts, were both out with injury entering the contest.

"We had some guys that were a little banged up after the first half of the season," Sarkisian said. "To get them as healthy as we could get them (last) week was good."

Sarkisian said that Majors, junior tight end Ja'Tavion Sanders and Watts were not playing during the bye week in an effort to get healthy, but as the Houston prep ramps up all players are able to practice. He added that Hutson was the most limited of the group, but seemed confident in others' availability on Saturday.

"I'm gonna have to make that decision later in the week of who is really ready to play," Sarkisian said.

The Longhorns will face a battle-tested Houston team, with many familiar faces. Though the Cougars joined the Big 12 this season, their starting quarterback Donovan Smith led Texas Tech in an upset win over the Longhorns the year prior.

"We're getting ready to play an experienced quarterback which we all know all too well," Sarkisian said. "We know this team presents a lot of challenges."

While Texas was on bye, Houston won a back-and-forth nailbiter against West Virginia, taking the two-point win on a last-second hail mary, something the Longhorns couldn't convert on in their game the week prior.

Sarkisian spent his bye week reflecting on his own team, noting strengths in efficiency on the offense.

"We're moving the ball at a really high clip offensively right now," Sarkisian said. "One area that jumped out to me is how efficient we've been on fourth down, which is something that we knew we wanted to be aggressive (with) this year. But the effectiveness of the aggressiveness is some-

thing that has stood out to me."

Conversely, he admitted he needed to work on the team's red zone offense, a struggle from the loss versus Oklahoma.

Sarkisian additionally noted on the defense, specifically about turnovers. The team is ranked in the bottom thirty of FBS teams in offensive starting field position, an important offensive component that is directly influenced by turnovers.

"We have got to continually as a staff em-

Our red zone execution is an area where, if we want to be the team that we think we're capable of being, we have to take that to another level.

STEVE SARKISIAN
HEAD COACH

phasize getting the ball off of our opponents," Sarkisian said.

The third-year head coach has been through his second Red River defeat, and he now knows what it takes not to collapse after a game like that. In 2021, in his first year as a head coach, Texas entered the Red River Rivalry at 4-1. After their loss to Oklahoma, Texas lost their next five games, finishing the season 1-6 in Big 12 matchups. This season, however, Sarkisian wants to change the narrative and get his team back focused.

"Last week I wanted to make sure that I re-sparked the competitive spirit," Sarkisian said. "Practice remained highly competitive last week."

With six more Big 12 games left in the schedule, Texas has a wide-open path to the Big 12 championship, but the Longhorns need to get focused and ready for the rest of the season, starting with an away game and a sold-out crowd in Houston.

GAMES to WATCH

By JT Bowen
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No. 8 Texas at Houston

Saturday, Oct. 21, 3:00 p.m. CT, FOX

A week removed from heartbreak in the Red River Rivalry, Texas will emerge from its bye week looking to get its season back on track. The Longhorns will likely need to win if they want a chance at making the College Football Playoff, and the road starts with the Houston Cougars coming to town.

Sitting at 3-3, the Cougars have not been a force in their first year as members of the Big 12, but they're far from pushovers. They're riding the high of one of the wildest wins of the college football season, a tip drill Hail Mary on the last play of the game to beat West Virginia at home.

Led by redshirt junior Donovan Smith at

quarterback, who tossed for four touchdowns last week, the Cougars will be hungry and looking to play spoiler. This should be an opportunity for Quinn Ewers and the offense to find the rhythm they struggled to find against Oklahoma.

No. 17 Tennessee at No. 11 Alabama

Saturday, Oct. 21, 2:30 p.m. CT, CBS

Tennessee's victory over third-ranked Alabama last season in Knoxville marked one of the most memorable games of the season and was emblematic of a year in which the Volunteers finally became a team to respect in the SEC. While the wheels started to fall off towards the end, underscored by then-quarterback Hendon Hooker's ACL tear, it was a year of success for head coach Josh Heupel as Tennessee took a major step forward.

This year, with Hooker gone, the Volunteers have still been a competitive team and will face their biggest test of the season as they head to Tuscaloosa looking to make it two straight wins against the Crimson Tide.

Both teams sport inconsistent quarterback play and fearsome defenses. The last time Nick Saban lost to an opponent twice in a row was in 2014-2015 to Ole Miss. Look for a battle this weekend as the teams fight for second fiddle to Geor-

gia in the SEC.

No. 7 Penn State at No. 3 Ohio State

Saturday, Oct. 21, 11:00 a.m. CT, FOX

Two undefeated teams will square off in Columbus on Saturday in a game that will have implications not just for the Big 10, but for the playoffs, too. After the loss of quarterback CJ Stroud, many fans had questions about the Buckeyes this season, but junior Kyle McCord has looked the part. He has no doubt benefitted from throwing to a pair of potential first-round draft picks in Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka, but McCord's play has helped power Ohio State to 6-0.

Penn State head coach James Franklin will enter Columbus with a presentable squad and look to give the Nittany Lions their first win over the Buckeyes since 2016. Penn State has rode on the back of a smothering defense that hasn't allowed more than 15 points to an opponent this season, and sophomore quarterback Drew Allar's 15:0 touchdown to interception ratio deserves recognition. Saturday marks his opportunity to rise to the occasion and thrust himself into the Heisman conversation.

No. 14 Utah at No. 18 USC

Saturday, Oct. 21, 7:00 p.m. CT, FOX

Following a humbling blowout at the hands of Notre Dame last weekend, reigning Heisman winner Caleb Williams and the Trojans will look to right the ship in their last season as members of the Pac-12. They'll have another tough test this weekend, as Utah, who has three straight wins over USC, comes to town.

Caleb Williams had a day to forget against the Fighting Irish, throwing three interceptions in a 48-20 beatdown. A chance to get right against a program that has had USC's number in recent years, though, would certainly add to his resume. However, the Utes have one of the stingiest defenses in all of college football, giving up more than 14 points just once this season. Both schools will fight to stay in the playoff race on Saturday ahead of respective November showdowns versus Washington, the current Pac-12 frontrunner.



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By Bo Espey
@bospey

No. 8 Texas will travel to Houston on Saturday to kick off the second half of their season. The Longhorns had an open week to rest up and correct their mistakes after collapsing late against Oklahoma in a 34-30 loss. Despite the setback, Texas still has a path to reach the Big 12 Championship Game and has an outside shot of making the College Football Playoff.

On the other hand, Houston is coming off a thrilling victory over West Virginia after throwing a game-winning Hail Mary as time expired. The win was their first as members of the Big 12 and revenge for head coach Dana Holgorsen, who was previously with the Mountaineers.

When the former Southwest Conference rivals meet this weekend for the first time in over 20 years, tensions will be riding high. Three factors will be critical for the Longhorns as they look to finish the season strong.

Stop the passing attack

Like any Holgorsen-led team, Houston will try to beat you by passing the ball. The Cougars are currently fifth in the conference in passing yards, averaging 276.5 yards per game. Their quarterback, junior Donovan Smith, is no stranger to the Longhorns. Last year while at Texas Tech, Smith threw for 331 yards and two touchdowns in an upset win against Texas. The Longhorn secondary will also need to look out for sophomore wide receiver Samuel Brown. The dynamic receiver is in the midst of a breakout year for the Cougars, as he has hauled in 37 receptions for 549 yards. By containing the duo of Smith and Brown, the Longhorns' defense will make Houston's offense uncomfortable.

Take care of the football

In the loss against Oklahoma, Texas quarterback Quinn Ewers threw two costly interceptions and lost a fumble while scrambling. The first interception was on the second play from scrimmage and led to a Sooner touchdown. The second occurred in the red zone after a long, promising drive. Both interceptions happened

in the first quarter and shifted the momentum strongly in Oklahoma's favor. Early in the second quarter, Ewers fumbled after taking a hit near midfield. All three of the Longhorns' turnovers from the game played a tremendous part in the loss. Holding onto the ball and winning the turnover battle will be crucial for Texas on Saturday.

Finishing the drive

Last but not least is Texas' red zone offense, or lack thereof. Through six games, the Longhorns rank tied for 70th in red zone conversion rate at 83.3 percent. In 24 attempts, Texas has scored only 11 touchdowns and nine field goals. The lack of touchdowns has been a game changer so far this season. For example, the Longhorns had the ball on Oklahoma's one-yard line with a chance to tie the game early in the fourth quarter, yet failed to score any points in four tries. If Texas wants to prove they are a legitimate contender, they will have to start scoring touchdowns at a higher clip in the red zone than where they are at currently.

LORIANNE WILLETT / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF



LORIANNE WILLET / THE DAILY TEXAN STAFF

Texas football *could still see hopes* of playoff appearance

By Evan Vieth
@evanvieth

For Texas fans, the last thing they wanted to hear on that Saturday afternoon was how Texas is okay. Losing to Oklahoma, both teams undefeated for the first time in over a decade, it felt like the end of the world. But for the greater picture, it's easy to see that Texas football is more than alright.

The Longhorns have had 14 days to think about and overcome the dread of the Oklahoma game thanks to the bye week and it's hard to believe a team this talented won't turn right back around to where they were before Oklahoma. The Longhorns stand at 5-1, ranked No. 8 in the nation, and what all these players are thinking about is their game in Houston on Saturday. For the rest of the world, every pair of eyes is on the College Football Playoff.

There is no set in stone way to qualify for the College Football Playoff, but generally, a team must have no more than one loss and/or be a conference champion of a Power 5 school. After the Oklahoma loss, around 20 teams looked like they had a chance at the playoff. After a week off and two top ten losses, that number is only getting smaller. For Texas, the route is simple: win out or miss the invitation.

Texas has six more regular season games

remaining on their schedule, all against Big 12 opposition. Nothing is guaranteed for a team as volatile as the Longhorns, but as it stands, Texas is favored to win with a 75% chance or higher in every game left on their schedule, according to ESPN Analytics.

If Texas gets the job done, they will be in the Big 12 Championship and will likely face the now No. 6-ranked Oklahoma Sooners. If those two teams hit the gridiron in Dallas, the game will likely decide a spot in the CFP.

It's never easy to just predict a team to win out and run a gauntlet of seven straight games, four of which are hosted away or at a neutral site, but this Texas team is up to the task.

Through six games, this Longhorn roster has looked better than any former team has in fourteen years. 2009 was the last time Texas started the season 5-0, and 2018 is the only other time since that they've started 5-1. Both of those teams finished inside the AP top 10 at the end of the season, with the 2009 team reaching the national championship.

"Ultimately, you kind of do an audit on yourself halfway through the season at different aspects of the game," head coach Steve Sarkisian said on Monday. "We just need to make sure that from a game planning perspective, and what we're asking of our players in game ... everybody has the

utmost confidence in those things."

Texas still boasts one of the most talented teams in the nation, still ranking top ten in EPA/play, according to gameonpaper.com. EPA tallies how efficient a team is on every down of the game, meaning on both sides of the ball, Texas is extremely efficient despite having the second hardest strength of schedule, according to sportsreference.com.

Redshirt sophomore quarterback Quinn Ewers is still top 20 in the nation in many efficiency stats, including completion percentage and yards per attempt, and sophomore running back Jonathon Brooks still stands in the top 10 of yards from scrimmage in the nation, despite the early bye week. The offense also stands as one of the best in yards per play, and yet the defense may be even more impressive, ranking No. 10 in the exact same stat while having faced high powered offenses like Oklahoma and Alabama.

At the end of the day, it's easy to get angry and throw out blame, both for fans and for the team. What's harder is picking yourself up, creating realistic expectations, and then reaching them. This Texas team has all the tools in the world to make a run, but the result lies in the hands of Sarkisian, Ewers and company. There will be a lot learned on Saturday against the Houston Cougars, including if Texas is up to the task that lies ahead.

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CACTUS YEARBOOK

Notes on the coach

By Isa Almeida
@abx_isa

Houston head coach Dana Holgorsen looks to lead the Cougars to another upset win after his maiden Big 12 win over his former team West Virginia. While Houston is currently 3-3 so far this season, Holgorsen is no novice to the coaching scene.

Holgorsen is in his fourth year coaching Houston after leading the Mountaineers for eight years. Since his arrival, the Cougars have become the only team in the nation to boast a punt return touchdown and kickoff return touchdown in four consecutive seasons.

The Houston coach started his coaching career at Texas Tech, where he served in multiple positions, including as an inside receivers coach from 2000 to 2004, co-offensive coordinator from 2005 to 2006 and offensive coordinator in 2007. His first time at Houston was as an offensive coordinator after leaving the Red Raiders. In his first year there, his offense was ranked No. 3 in the country, moving up to No. 1 in his second and final season before moving to Oklahoma State, where he spent one year.

When he arrived in Stillwater, the Oklahoma State total offense ranked No. 61 in the country. In his first and only year, he moved total offense to the No. 1 spot.

Holgorsen's first head coach gig was at West Virginia, where he stayed for seven years. He led the Mountaineers to a Liberty Bowl win in 2014, his third bowl in four seasons with the team. Ultimately, Holgorsen resigned and moved back to Houston in 2019.

Holgorsen is responsible for Houston's third highest total victories in a two-year span, with 20 wins, including two back-to-back bowl victories.

And it's no secret that the experienced coach knows how to bring an offensive line to the best of its game.

"I think one thing I've been impressed with Coach Holgorsen's team and how they've improved throughout the year," Texas head coach Steve Sarkisian told On3. "Obviously, (they) had a great game on Thursday night, a very exciting game which we had a chance to watch."

In the team's last matchup against West Virginia, Holgorsen's wide receiver Stephon Johnson scored a Hail Mary, 49-yard touchdown to give Houston a last minute win.

Holgorsen hasn't played Texas since 2018, and never with his current team. At West Virginia, Holgorsen beat Texas 42-41 in Austin, having a total of four wins against the Longhorns.

"They're in a different place now than when I went there in 2018 — the last time I competed against these guys," Holgorsen told 247Sports. "We came out of there with a win that day, but where they're at now is different. I hope our fans enjoy being able to compete against these guys for a year. The vibe's going to be good. Everybody needs to enjoy it, but it's going to be a challenge."



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OPPONENTS to WATCH

By Lauren Hightower
@lhightower8

Despite only having a 3–3 record, Houston's only conference win occurred last week in a huge upset against West Virginia. The game ended 41-39 with an impressive showing by the Cougar offense, which may prove to test the Longhorn defense. Strolling into their home stadium on Saturday, Houston looks to build off their momentum and chemistry as an offense, utilizing these key players:

Donovan Smith

In his first season at Houston, quarterback and Texas Tech transfer Donovan Smith has started to figure out how the program wants him to play. Smith has cut down his turnovers, giving him a 13:3 touchdown-interception ratio. Throughout his collegiate career, Smith has been fairly consistent with his completion rate, keeping it at 66.2% for the past two years. In his passing game, Smith's comfort zone lies in short or intermediate routes. However, Texas' defense will need to watch out for Smith rushing as he averages 10 carries per game with four touchdowns.

Samuel Brown

Leading the Cougars in receptions and yardage, Samuel Brown is a target for Smith's intermediate passes. Brown spent his 2020-21 season at West Virginia before transferring to Houston, where he made seven starts and was second on the team for receptions. This season, Brown has received a total of 549 yards, running an average of 14.8 yards per catch.

Patrick Paul

Providing coverage for Smith to rush or look downfield to pass, left tackle Patrick Paul is a player to look out for on the offensive line. He shouldn't be too hard to spot, standing at 6-feet-7-inches and 315 lbs, Paul is a force to be reckoned with on the offensive line. Paul's presence on the field led him to become Houston's team captain as a sophomore and has continued to hold the position as a junior. This will most likely be his last year with Houston, as Paul is ranked No. 8 for the 2024 NFL Draft by Pro Football Focus.

Matthew Golden

Another one of Houston's wide receivers, Matthew Golden has been a key component of Houston's offense when he is not injured. In the game against West Virginia, Golden missed the second half of the game with a groin injury. However, he is predicted to be back to play against Texas. Only in his sophomore year, Golden has shown potential for growth in the program and was an honorable mention in the Dave Campbell's Texas Football Best Returning Wide Receivers. Golden is a target for Smith's screens and has received 295 yards this season.



COURTESY OF ANH LE / THE DAILY COUGAR AND REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION

HEAD to HEAD history

By Emmanuel Ramirez
@Ramirez_Reports

The Texas Longhorns are recharged and energized coming out of their bye week and now set their sights on the 3-3 Houston Cougars. The last time these two teams went head-to-head, the current Longhorns starting quarterback wasn't even born yet. Quinn Ewers, born in 2003, came a whole year after the last matchup between the Cougars and the Longhorns.

The two teams met for the first time in 1953, with Houston traveling to the Forty Acres only to be handed a 28-7 loss by the Longhorns. While the opponents saw each other again in 1968 in Austin, ending in a 20-20 tie, it

wasn't until 1976 that the teams would start seeing each other on an annual basis. Out of the 20 games played between then and 1996, the Cougars have only won three times on their own turf.

Texas joined the Big 12 conference in 1996, meaning their yearly matchup with fellow southwest conference member Houston would end. Since the departure, the Longhorns have faced the Cougars a grand total of three times, with the latest being in 2002. That year, Houston traveled to Austin and lost in a 41-11 rout against a then-No. 3 ranked Texas, coached by Mack Brown, who ended up sending the team to their third Big 12 title game.

The last time Texas traveled to H-Town happened a year prior in

2001. The Longhorns took care of business in a game where then-quarterback Chris Simms threw for over 300 yards and accounted for three touchdowns in front of a crowd of nearly 32,000 fans. The final score read 53-26 and the Longhorns went on to finish the season ranked within the AP top 10 at No. 5.

The last seven games have been wins for Texas, making the all-time record between both schools 16-7-2. This season, the Cougars are undefeated at home, however, a No. 8 Texas team will be their toughest test of the season so far.

The largest margin of victory against Houston for the Longhorns came in 1982, where they completed a shutout and won by a score of 50-0. On the

other hand, Houston's largest margin of victory happened in 1988, where the Cougars won 66-15.

With Houston coming off its first Big 12 win, the momentum to overcome a hurdle as big as Texas will definitely be heightened, especially with it being a home game for the Cougars. If Texas hopes to contend for a national championship at the end of the season, the Longhorns will have to win out the rest of the season and claim their first conference championship in 14 years. This is the first year Houston calls the Big 12 home and seeing as Texas will be leaving the conference next year for the SEC, this may be the last matchup for the foreseeable future.



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