TEXAS LONGHORNS

Big 12 Conference

Answering the Age-Old Question

The year is 2009. Colt McCoy looks across the field of the historic Rose Bowl Stadium with a saddened, almost hopeless expression in his eyes. He's wearing a headset and his right shoulder hangs useless and has no choice but to watch Alabama claim the national championship over Texas, their first under Nick Saban. Since that moment fans across college football have been asking the same question year after year: "Is Texas back?" For the most part, with the exception of a Sugar Bowl victory in 2018, the answer has been a resounding "no". However, that could all change this season as Texas bids farewell to the Big 12. Six, count them, six teams have won a Big 12 Championship since Texas last accomplished the feat in 2009. If third year coach Steve Sarkisian doesn't at least get the Longhorns to Dallas at the end of the season, his seat will become uncomfortably warm and he'll be in danger of joining Charlie Strong and Tom Herman in program infamy. However, if he and Texas can live up to the potential and truly compete for a Big 12 title, he'll quickly become a beloved Texas legend. And, if you're wondering, there's really no in between.

Quinn Ewers made his eagerly anticipated debut at quarterback last season with relatively mixed results. He was injured in week two against Alabama which certainly slowed his progression down and he had both moments of brilliance and moments that made Texas fans scratch their head including a four-interception performance against Oklahoma State. He finished strong with a career-best game against Washington in the Alamo Bowl. This offseason he is refocused and business-like in his approach (yes, even the mullet is gone). He needs to be, because freshman quarterbacks **Arch Manning** and **Maalik Murphy** are in the wings and could both be exceptionally talented. The Manning name needs no introduction and Murphy is a physical freak of nature and shouldn't be overlooked.

Ewers has the luxury of throwing to the vast majority of his favorite targets from last season and none more notable than **Xavier Worthy**. Worthy has dominated in each of his first two seasons and while he was technically more productive as a freshman, he'll make a case that he's the best in the conference this season. **Jordan Whittington** added 652 yards on 50 catches and star tight end **Ja'Tavion Sanders** wasn't far behind with 613 yards and 5 touchdowns. The Longhorns also scooped up **Adonai Mitchell** out of the portal from Georgia. Most of last season's offensive production returns with the obvious exception of Bijan Robinson, last year's top running back in the country. It's simply impossible to replace the contributions of Robinson over the past three seasons but Sarkisian has recruited at an elite level and one of his most prized recruits is running back **CJ Baxter** who will have an opportunity to compete for the starting running back role immediately as a freshman. **Jaydon Blue** and **Jonathan Brooks** will gets looks at the position as well. They'll run behind one of the best offensive lines in the country who returns all five starters.

Sarkisian and defensive coordinator Pete Kwiatkowski orchestrated a stark defensive improvement from 2021 to 2022 and this is a talented group in 2023. Even with the loss of Demarion Overshown, the front seven should be very strong with the likes of **Barry Sorrell** and **T'Vondre Sweat** on the line and **Jayland Ford** and **Jahdae Barron** at linebacker. **Jalen Catalon** has been one of the best safeties in the SEC when healthy and transfers in from Arkansas.

The Bottom Line: On paper, Texas has the best roster in the conference, and it may not even be all that close. NFL talent abounds and the Longhorns have one of the best quarterback rooms in the entire country. But, of course, college football games are (thankfully) not played on paper. For the second straight season, every college football eye will be turned to a "rematch" of that fateful championship in 2009 when Texas travels to Tuscaloosa to face Alabama. It's not a difficult to argue that the Longhorns would have won last year's meeting if Ewers had stayed healthy but traveling to Bryant-Denny is an entirely different challenge. If Texas can somehow come away with a victory, the hype behind the Longhorns will be off the charts. November looks to be challenging with games against Kansas State, TCU, and Texas Tech. I personally favor Kansas State to win the Big 12 Championship but believe that Texas will make the championship game. Are they capable of more than that? Sure, but it's hard to trust this team to actually live up or exceed expectations given the past decade of general disappointment.

Projection: 10-2 (2nd in Big 12)

TEXAS BIO

National Championships - **4**

x4

1963
1969
1970
2005

xO

Big 12 Championships: **3**
(Last: **2009**)

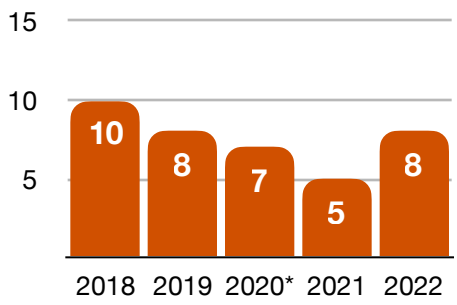
Location: **Austin, TX**

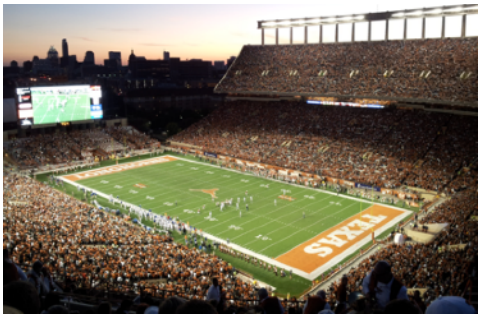
All-Time Record: **886-380-31**

2022 Results: **8-5**
Lost in Alamo Bowl

Head Coach: **Steve Sarkisian**
3rd Year (13-12)

5-YEAR WIN TREND





Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial
(100,119)

2022 Statistics

Points Scored	Rush Yards	Pass Yards	Turnover Margin
34.5	188.2	241.4	+2
25th in FBS	36th in FBS	56th in FBS	T-54th in FBS

Points Allowed	Rush YDS Allowed	Pass YDS Allowed
21.6	125.7	242.7
28th in FBS	33rd in FBS	91st in FBS

2023 Texas Schedule		
Week	**Date**	**Team**
1	Sat, Sept 2	vs. Rice
2	Sat, Sept 9	@ Alabama
3	Sat, Sept 16	vs. Wyoming
4	Sat, Sept 23	**@ Baylor**
5	Sat, Sept 30	**vs. Kansas**
6	Sat, Oct 7	**vs. Oklahoma**
7	Bye Week	
8	Sat, Oct 21	**@ Houston**
9	Sat, Oct 28	**vs. BYU**
10	Sat, Nov 4	**vs. Kansas State**
11	Sat, Nov 11	**@ TCU**
12	Sat, Nov 18	**@ Iowa State**
13	Fri, Nov 24	**vs. Texas Tech**

Conference Games in Bold

KEY GAMES

Sat, Sept 9: @ Alabama - Texas fell ever so short against Saban and the Crimson Tide last season 20-19. The Longhorns must now make an unenviable stop in Tuscaloosa but feel that they have assembled a better team than last year's squad. If Texas wants to be "back", winning this game would go a long way.
Sat, Oct 7: vs. Oklahoma - The Sooners aren't going to simply forget about the 49-0 beatdown that the Longhorns delivered. Like Texas, Oklahoma should be much improved especially with Gabriel at QB.
Sat, Nov 24: vs. Texas Tech - The Red Raiders have spoiled seasons in the past for the Longhorns and upset Texas last year in overtime. This series has been all offense in the past few meetings.

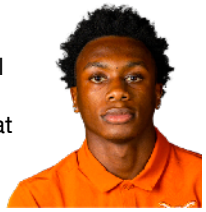
KEY PLAYERS

Quinn Ewers - QB

If the Southlake, Texas native and former five-star recruit can put together a healthy season and turn flashes of brilliance into consistent play, Ewers will become a star and potentially a first-round NFL Draft pick. He'll get another crack against Alabama and face plenty of quality competition to showcase his talent and he might just lead Texas to a Big 12 Championship and beyond in the process.

Xavier Worthy - WR

After nearly arriving at the 1,000-yard receiving mark as a freshman in 2021, Worthy totaled 760 more yards last season. He'll likely have better quarterback play which means he could very well exceed his 2021 campaign and become one of college football's top receivers (if he wasn't at that level already). Against Alabama last season he caught 5 passes for 97 yards including a 46-yard pass which demonstrates he'll go right at even the toughest defenders.



2022 RESULTS (8-5)

ULM (W 52-10)
Alabama (L 19-20)
UTSA (W 41-20)
@ Texas Tech (L 34-37)
West Virginia (W 38-20)
Oklahoma (W 49-0)
Iowa State (W 24-21)
@ Oklahoma State (L 34-41)
@ Kansas State (W 34-27)
TCU (L 10-17)
@ Kansas (W 55-14)
Baylor (W 38-27)
Washington (L 20-27)

TEXAS

RECRUITING

2023 Class Ranking

3rd

(Via 24/7 Sports)