



# MACK BROWN'S 10 MOST SIGNIFICANT WINS & LOSSES AT TEXAS

*by Cory "54b" Davies*

If Texas Longhorns football fans have learned anything over the last 10 years, it's that you can't truly appreciate the thrill of victory without having first felt the agony of defeat. But before taking a bittersweet look back at the most significant wins and losses from the past decade, let's first acknowledge Mack Brown's astonishing record of 103-25 as head coach of the Texas Longhorns. His winning percentage (.805) is the best of any coach in Texas history and the Longhorns are the only team in college football to win nine games in each of the last 10 seasons.

Admittedly, flagging just 20 games from the past decade as "most significant" is a fool's errand, considering no victory can ever be taken for granted and no defeat simply dismissed at a school where the expectation is to win every game without exception.

As you read through the rationale for each of the following wins and losses, keep in mind that I've chosen these particular games based on their significance toward helping or hindering the progress toward accomplishing UT's perennial goal of winning a National Championship.

## **10.** *Benchmarks and setbacks are equally important on the road to success*

**W: #2 Texas 70, Colorado 3**  
**December 3, 2005**

**Highlights:** When you consider the score was actually 70-3 at the end of the third quarter, this win was arguably the most dominating performance by a Texas team under Coach Brown. The Longhorns were equally impressive on both sides of the ball, scoring at will and holding a turnover-prone Buffalos team to less than 200 yards of total offense.

**Significance:** The win punched the Longhorns' ticket to the BCS National Title game, setting up an epic battle against the only other undefeated Division 1 college football team that season, the media darling USC Trojans. It also restored any confidence the players may have lost in a hard-fought 40-29 win over an average Texas A&M team the week previous.

**L: North Carolina State 23, #17 Texas 20**  
**August 28, 1999**

**Lowlights:** Despite racking up two hundred more yards of total offense, the Longhorns fell to the Wolfpack at home thanks in large part to three blocked punts, two of which were returned for touchdowns, with the third resulting in a safety, accounting for all but 7 of NC State's points.

Cory Davies is a former walk-on for the University of Texas and amateur columnist. The nickname "54b" stems from his playing days when he shared the number 54 with another player who was on scholarship.

**Significance:** Dubbed “Orange Jesus” by the pundits after a magical first season coaching at Texas, Mack Brown proved he was indeed fallible and the honeymoon period came to an abrupt end. From this point forward, media members and fans alike would become increasingly critical and impatient as the expectations grew.

**9. In football, you're either getting better or you're getting worse, there is no in between**

**W: #17 Texas 52, #12 Arizona State 34  
December 27, 2007**

**Highlights:** Following a disappointing 9-3 season (by Texas fans' standards) that included losses to both OU and A&M and a myriad of off-the-field distractions, a beleaguered Mack Brown recommitted his players using a boot camp-style approach during the practices leading up to the Holiday Bowl. He was rewarded with a total team effort from the Longhorns, who took full advantage of a turnover-prone Arizona State team on their way to a decisive victory.

**Significance:** Most likely the true significance of this game has yet to be determined, but for now, this convincing win against a BCS-caliber opponent is being viewed as a promising sign that the players may have finally found a post-Vince Young identity and, along with their head coach, are determined as ever to win another championship.



*Mack Brown and Chris Jesse address reporters after Texas' 52-34 2007 Holiday Bowl win. Jesse was flagged in the 2nd quarter for a penalty after officials said he illegally touched a live football.*

**L: #10 Oklahoma 63, #11 Texas 14  
October 7, 2000**

**Lowlights:** Truth be told, all losses to OU probably deserve their own list, but this particular loss cut to the bones of cold and rain-soaked Texas fans as the resurgent Sooners scored 42 unanswered points in the first half alone, on their way to a nine-touchdown, 500-plus total offensive yard performance while an anemic UT offense, reduced to playing “quarterback by committee,” ended the game with a net rushing total of -7 yards.

**Significance:** Even though Mack Brown had a one-year head start in returning the Texas Football program to dominance, Bob Stoops' reclamation project at Oklahoma already seemed to be hitting its stride and beating the Sooners would prove to be the biggest stumbling block between UT and winning titles of any kind for years to come.

**8. Take nothing for granted in a game that thrives on sudden change**

**W: #6 Texas 27, Kansas 23  
November 13, 2004**

**Highlights:** Despite three and a half quarters of uninspired play against an upset-minded Jayhawk team hungry for a program-defining win, the Longhorns managed to escape Lawrence with a victory courtesy of one controversial offensive pass interference call, negating a game-icing KU first down, and two heart-stopping scoring drives in the final seven minutes. The first featured a legendary scramble by Vince Young to convert a 4th and 18, and the second a 22-yard touchdown pass from Young to Tony Jeffery to win the game with 11 seconds remaining.

**Significance:** A loss to Kansas at this point in the 2004 season would have prevented the Longhorns from earning an at-large bid to their first BCS Bowl under Mack Brown, a historic battle with the Michigan Wolverines at the 2005 Rose Bowl. But perhaps the stellar comeback in Lawrence proved to be even more significant in the 2006 Rose Bowl because this team became convinced that as long there was time left on the clock, they could overcome even the most daunting of fourth-quarter deficits with VY under center.

**L: #24 Arkansas 27, #14 Texas 6  
January 1, 2000**

**Lowlights:** Following crushing losses to A&M after the Bonfire Tragedy and Nebraska in the Big 12 Championship, the 1999 season fully collapsed with the news from Mack Brown that two key starters were being suspended for violating team rules just prior to the 2000 Cotton

Bowl. Despite a lackluster offensive performance over the first three quarters, the Longhorns were still in the game midway through the second half when quarterback Major Applewhite added insult to injury, literally, by tearing his ACL with 12 minutes to go in the game.

**Significance:** Normally a loss in a non-BCS bowl game wouldn't be deemed all that significant, but the injury to Applewhite kept him out of spring practice, where backup Chris Simms, who already benefited from a reputation as a quarterback prodigy, would take all the snaps and give rise to the now infamous "co-starter" experiment which would be a source of constant debate and frustration for the next two years.

### 7. Comebacks are heroic until you come back short

**W: #2 Texas 47, Oklahoma State 28**  
**October 29, 2005**

**Highlights:** Texas fans, especially those who had already made air and hotel reservations for the National Championship Game in Pasadena, collectively held their breath as the Longhorns ran off the field at halftime down by 19 points to the Cowboys in Stillwater. But their faith would soon be restored as Vince Young proved his "in-Vincible" moniker once again by sparking the Horns to 35 unanswered second-half points with a jaw-dropping 80-yard touchdown run early in the third quarter.

**Significance:** It's hard to choose one Oklahoma State comeback among the several, but the 2005 comeback still takes the prize as the most significant by virtue of the fact that any loss that season probably would have knocked the Horns out of the national title hunt.

**L: Kansas State 45, #4 Texas 42**  
**November 11, 2006**

**Lowlights:** Facing 3rd down and goal just inches from the end zone on its opening drive, the Longhorns, with a 280-pound fullback on the sidelines, opted to run two quarterback sneaks in a row, scoring on the second attempt. The touchdown would prove costly, though, as



PHOTO: RONALD MARTINEZ, GETTY IMAGES

*Despite Oklahoma State building a 19-point halftime lead, Ramonce Taylor and the Longhorns roared back to rout the Cowboys in 2005.*

starting quarterback Colt McCoy suffered a neck injury that sidelined him the rest of the game. Despite a gallant effort by backup quarterback Jevan Snead, two crippling fumbles, and a mistake-prone secondary would prove to be the Longhorns undoing.

**Significance:** Any hope Texas had for returning to the National Championship game to defend their title was dashed. And despite the loss, the success Jevan Snead experienced probably convinced him he had what it took to play starting quarterback at the D-1 level and if that wasn't possible at Texas, then he needed to take his chances elsewhere.

### 6. One game does not make a season, but one game can break it

**W: Texas 26, #6 Texas A&M 24**  
**November 27, 1998**

**Highlights:** The final score was hardly indicative of how thoroughly Texas dominated an A&M team who had already sewn up the Big 12 South Division title. The Longhorn defense held the Aggies to just 173 yards of total offense, including -7 yards rushing, while UT's Ricky Williams carried the ball 44 times for 259 yards including a historic 60-yard touchdown run in which he surpassed Tony Dorsett for the top spot on the all-time Division 1 rushing list. Unfortunately, Williams also had some trouble holding onto the ball and the Aggies took a