



Darrell Royal

UT's All-Time Winningest Head Coach



The union between The University of Texas football program and Darrell Royal was a Hollywood producer's dream and for 20 years the best match-up since boots and saddles brought unparalleled success, fame and prestige to the Longhorns and the man who guided their destiny.

Royal, who turned 81 on July 6, was 32 years old when he took the head coaching job at Texas in December 1956, and he came to the Austin campus with a folksy sense of humor that produced a phenomenon called "Royalisms" and an innovative style of football that produced almost instant success.

Texas went from a 1-9 season in 1956 to a 6-3-1 regular season in 1957, and with a trip to the Sugar Bowl, Royal's Longhorns were off to the first of 16 bowl trips they would make during the next 20 years.

In 1962, Royal assumed the dual role of athletics director and head football coach, and when he resigned from the football job following the 1976 season, he remained as director of athletics for three years. In January 1980, Royal left the athletics department and became a special assistant on athletics programs to The University President. Though he officially is retired, he still serves in that capacity as a part-time consultant.

Royal's roots came from the dust bowl days in southwest Oklahoma, where the Hollis native began his life in football as a high school star in the early 1940s. He was an All-American quarterback at the University of Oklahoma and came to The University of Texas after head coaching jobs at Mississippi State and the University of Washington.

In 23 years as a head coach, he never had a losing season, and his teams went 167-47-5 in his 20 years at Texas — the best mark in the nation over that period.

Royal's Longhorns teams finished in the Top 10 nationally 11 times. He coached 77 All-Southwest Conference players and 26 All-Americans. His overall coaching record was 184-60-5.

During Royal's tenure, UT won three National Championships, 11 SWC Championships and played in 16 bowl games.

As an innovator, Royal is credited with two major changes in collegiate football. In 1961, he achieved great success and later went on to win a National Championship while applying the "flip-flop" to the winged-T, allowing the offensive picture to flip right or left, so that blocking assignments remained simplified.

Then, in 1968, Royal installed the famed "Wishbone" formation backfield, with the fullback lined up two yards behind the quarterback and a step up from the other backs. With that formation, his teams won 30 consecutive games and a record six SWC Championships in a row.

While winning on the field may have been the most apparent standard of the Royal Era at Texas, his overriding concern with success in the classroom and adherence to the rules could well have been his most significant contribution.

When Royal came to Texas, his first act was to employ the nation's first academic counselor, and over the years, four out of five men who lettered for Royal went on to achieve their degree. Royal set aside a fund for a special "T" ring, which he personally awarded to his lettermen upon their graduation.

In the struggle for honesty in intercollegiate athletics, Royal was a champion in lobbying the cause before the NCAA.

"Integrity has been a key word for Darrell," said Neils Thompson, Royal's athletic council chairman and a past president of the NCAA. "He has run his football team accordingly. He has lived by the rules ... if he didn't like those rules, he would fight to change them, but he would never intentionally break them."

Besides his duties at Texas, Royal parlayed his love of golf and country music into numerous charity benefits which raised thousands of dollars for various needy causes.

The Longhorns' National Championships came in 1963, '69 and '70, and the performance of Royal's teams during the 1960s earned him the honor of Coach of the Decade as chosen by ABC-TV.

Royal's football teams won more SWC games (109) and more overall games (167) than any coach in league history and his six consecutive conference titles and Cotton Bowl trips from 1968-73 were league records.

During Royal's tenure as athletics director, UT won six national titles, three in football, two in golf and one in baseball. Royal was a driving force in the upgrading of basketball when he brought in Abe Lemons as coach, and of swimming, when

UT honored its legendary coach by naming its football stadium — Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium — after him in 1996.

he hired Eddie Reese. Royal served on numerous boards and committees, including the NCAA Television Committee.

His honors include membership in both the Texas and Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame and the Longhorn Hall of Honor. He is past president of the American Football Coaches Association and was twice named Coach of the Year by the AFCA and three times by the Football Writers of Association. Royal was chosen Southwesterner of the Year four times and SWC Coach of the Year on five occasions. He was inducted into the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame in 1983. In '96, Royal earned the prestigious Horatio Alger Award for his lifetime success. He was a member of the Cotton Bowl Hall of Fame's initial class in spring 1998 and was recognized with the first-ever Contribution to College Football Award at the 2002 Home Depot College Football Awards on ESPN.

Royal's teams were marked by a fierce intensity of competition without, as one guest coach put it, "emotional or rah-rah tactics."

"It was," the guest said, "a matter of knowing what had to be done and keeping your head so as to be better able to accomplish it."

Royal's great friend, the late President Lyndon B. Johnson, once wrote him after a particular victory, "You are the finest example of an inspiring world leader I know."

And Johnson's lasting tribute to Royal came late in his life, after his presidency had ended, when he attended all UT games.

"I'm not a football fan, but I am a fan of people and I am a Darrell Royal fan because he is the rarest of human beings," the former President said.

DARRELL ROYAL'S CAREER RECORD

YEAR	RECORD	BOWL GAME
at Mississippi State (12-8, two years)		
1954	6-4	—
1955	6-4	—
at Washington (5-5, one year)		
1956	5-5	—
at Texas (167-47-5, 20 years)		
1957	6-4-1	Sugar
1958	7-3	—
1959	9-2^	Cotton
1960	7-3-1	Bluebonnet
1961	10-1^	Cotton
1962	9-1-1^	Cotton
1963+	11-0^	Cotton
1964	10-1	Orange
1965	6-4	—
1966	7-4	Bluebonnet
1967	6-4	—
1968	9-1-1^	Cotton
1969+	11-0^	Cotton
1970+	10-1^	Cotton
1971	8-3^	Cotton
1972	10-1^	Cotton
1973	8-3^	Cotton
1974	8-4	Gator
1975	10-2^	Bluebonnet
1976	5-5-1	—

OVERALL RECORD _ 184-60-5 (.749)

BOWL GAME RECORD _ 8-7-1 (.531)

+ National Champions // ^ Southwest Conference Champions

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