



UT's Young a legend in Houston

Young looks to relive high school glory - and so do hometown fans

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By CHIP BROWN / The Dallas Morning News

AUSTIN – Tom Nolen has been coaching at Houston Lamar High School for 21 years. He's never seen anyone come through the prep football ranks like Houston Madison's Vince Young.

Nolen suspects that the location of Saturday's Big 12 title game between Young's Texas Longhorns and Colorado – at Reliant Stadium in Houston – could be even more of a disadvantage than the Buffaloes realize.

"Vince Young has put on some shows in big games in Houston. I know first-hand," Nolen said. "The closest we played Houston Madison when Vince Young was the quarterback was his junior year, and they beat us 56-49.

"I had a parent of one of our players come up to me after the game and say, 'That was the best five dollars I ever spent. I'm sorry we lost, but that was incredible.' "

Nolen's program at Lamar is no slouch, either. Lamar is Madison's top rival in District 21-5A and has won the district title all four years since Young left Madison.

Ask any Houston football fans and chances are they have a Vince Young story. The fact that Young gets a chance to make history Saturday in his hometown has him bouncing with anticipation.

"I'm going to be even more pumped in practice than usual this week," Young said Monday. "I'm going home to play in front of my friends and family. I've been thinking about this game since I found out it was in Houston. I promised Coach [Mack] Brown we'd play in this game before the season."

Young feels that destiny, in part, has Texas playing in his hometown for the Big 12 title. With a victory over Colorado, whom Texas defeated, 42-17, in Austin earlier this season, the second-ranked Longhorns would play for the national title in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 4.

"This game means so much to me, to this team, to this program," Young said. "We're so close to our goals, you can smell the roses. We just have to go out and dominate like we did before."



**Big 12 Championship:
Texas vs. Colorado**
Noon Saturday (Ch. 8)
Reliant Stadium, Houston

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[Notebook](#)

First meeting: Oct. 15
[UT 42, CU 17](#) | [Summary](#)

Texas Longhorns:
• [Roster](#) | [Stats](#) | [Results](#)
• [Official site](#)

Colorado Buffaloes:
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• [Official site](#)

Big 12 Championship: [Official](#)

Young's teammates from Houston talk about Young the way New York City basketball fanatics talk about playground legends. [site](#) | [Records](#) (.pdf)

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"You can't turn on a television in Houston without seeing Vince Young," said Texas defensive tackle Rod Wright, a product of Alief Hastings in Houston. "You might see him more than the Texans. He was like LeBron James in Houston when he was coming out of high school."

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Houston Madison coach Ray Seals said Young is, without question, a celebrity in his hometown. But Seals said Young is much more than that.

"To some degree, he helped unify parts of the city that had been at odds for years," Seals said. "When Vince was at Madison, people wanted to come see him play, whether they were black, white, from the north side or the south side, it didn't matter. He just drew people in, and he didn't disappoint anyone."

The game that has taken on legendary status was Madison's 61-58 victory over Galena Park North Shore in the 2001 Class 5A quarterfinals in the Astrodome. There were more than 45,000 on hand – more than double the crowds the Oilers got for some home games during their final season at the Astrodome in 1996.

Young accounted for more than 400 yards of total offense. He scored three touchdowns passing and two more rushing.

"I went to that game because a friend of mine said I had to see this Vince Young play," said Texas redshirt sophomore linebacker Robert Killebrew, a product of Klein High School in Spring. "I had my doubts. But after I left that game, I was converted."

Another spectator in that Astrodome crowd was Houston Jones freshman point guard Daniel Gibson, now a sophomore at Texas. Now together at Texas, Gibson leans on Young for advice.

"I just respect how he's overcome the criticism of people who said he couldn't throw and couldn't be a complete quarterback," said Gibson, a preseason first-team All-American in several publications. "I want to focus and take my game to another level like he has."

Seals, too, has leaned on Young. Seals, who reached the Class 5A state semifinals with Young in 2001, brought Young in last May as part of Madison's annual "Boys' Day." It includes a slate of speakers from the community who advise students about how to succeed.

"There were 600 boys in an auditorium, and I couldn't get them to keep quiet during all the speakers until Vincent walked up," Seals said. "For the 15 or 20 minutes he talked, no one said a word."

Texas safety Michael Griffin is certainly glad that the Big 12 title game is in Young's hometown.

"Going home in front of his friends and family, I think he's going to have his best performance – ever," Griffin said. "That's how much this means to him."

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MICHAEL MULVEY/DMN
Cameras follow quarterback Vince Young off the field after Texas beat Kansas to clinch the Big 12 South. Young says returning home makes Saturday's title game even more special.

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Big 12 championship: No. 2 Texas (11-0, 8-0) vs. Colorado (7-4, 5-3) , noon Saturday, Reliant Stadium, Houston (Ch. 8; KSKY-AM 660; KJON-AM 850 and KFJZ-AM 870 in Spanish)

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