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Texas vs. California (Championship Game)

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California-Texas Preview

Tremendous defensive play has provided Texas a decided advantage so far this season, and another strong performance from [Jonathan Holmes](#) could complete another winning formula.

The No. 10 Longhorns won't have their leading scorer, however, as they face hot-shooting California on Friday night in the championship game of the 2K Classic at Madison Square Garden.

Texas is seeking its second straight 4-0 start, and that would also mean winning the 2K Classic for the first time. The Longhorns dropped the 2010 final to Pittsburgh, but their early season dominance has them poised to avoid a similar fate.

They're outscoring opponents by an average of 27.0 points through the first three games, thanks in large part to limiting teams to 28.9 percent shooting.

While Texas held Iowa to 27 second-half points and 29.6 percent shooting overall Thursday, Holmes scored 17 of his 19 points in the final 20 minutes to help the Longhorns complete a rally from 12 points down and win 71-57.

"I think it starts with me just being the oldest guy on the team," said Holmes, the only scholarship senior on the roster. "I came out and I wasn't as aggressive as I should have been. I started slow and I think it starts with the older guys and we just can't let that happen."

Holmes is averaging 14.3 points, ranking second on the team behind [Isaiah Taylor](#)'s 15.0 mark. Taylor hit his average Thursday while sinking 5 of 11 from the field and 5 of 7 from the line, but he injured his wrist late against the Hawkeyes and could miss several weeks.

The loss of Taylor could be big, as Texas' defense likely will face its stiffest test to date against the Golden Bears (3-0), who are averaging 85.7 points. Cal is shooting 53.0 percent overall and 45.5 percent from 3-point range under first-year coach Cuonzo Martin.

They topped 90 points in their first two games under Martin, and they hadn't done that in back-to-back games since 2002.

Now, Cal is coming off its first big victory for its coach, routing No. 23 Syracuse 73-59 while making 8 of 19 from 3-point range Thursday.

"It's a big win for our program," said guard [Jabari Bird](#), who had 16 points. "We came out here, we're not ranked. We're kind of an underdog team that's going up against a great team in Syracuse. They put up a great fight and we got a great team 'W.'"

[Jordan Mathews](#) leads the Golden Bears with 18.7 points per game while making 19 of 31 field goals (61.3 percent). The sophomore guard had a season-high 22 points versus the Orange, scoring 20 of Cal's 39 second-half points.

Cal's last in-season title came in the eight-team 2012 DirecTV Classic.

This is the first matchup between the Golden Bears and Longhorns since a Texas win on Nov. 15, 2000.

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