

# Texas, No Longer in Panic Mode, Defeats California to Win 2K Classic

By ZACH SCHONBRUN NOV. 21, 2014



California's David Kravish blocking a shot by Demarcus Holland of Texas in the first half. Credit Frank Franklin/Associated Press

Two years ago, almost to the day, Texas lost to Division II Chaminade in the Round of 8 at the Maui Invitational. Panic spread through the Texas fan base, with the vitriol directed namely at Coach Rick Barnes, who once recruited Kevin Durant, LaMarcus Aldridge and D. J. Augustin, and now seemed to be at a crossroads with the program.

For the rest of that 2012-13 season, which ended with more losses (18) than wins (16), and an ignominious exit in the first round of the College Basketball Invitational, disillusionment reigned. The top four scorers left the team, and those who stayed — nicknamed the Chaminade Crew by forward Jonathan Holmes — were a motley mix not expected to do much last season. That is, until Texas won 24 games.

In the off-season, Barnes showed he could still recruit, luring the 6-foot-11 Myles Turner, the No. 2 prospect in the nation, who is coming off the bench now for No. 10 Texas, just one sign of the Longhorns' depth. They also protect the rim better than perhaps any team not named Kentucky. Just ask California, which shot 31.3 percent in a 71-55 loss at Madison Square Garden in the championship game of the 2K Classic benefiting the Wounded Warrior Project.

Fans were anticipating a matchup between Texas (4-0) and No. 23 Syracuse on Friday. But Cal dispatched the Orange with relative ease late Thursday night. The Bears are a veteran bunch, with a new coach, Cuonzo Martin, who led Tennessee into the Round of 16 a year ago.

But the Longhorns' size (they had 10 blocks), interior indefatigability (46 rebounds) and defensive prowess ultimately proved too much for the Bears to handle, even without starting point guard Isaiah Taylor, who missed Friday's game with a left wrist injury and is expected to be out for a significant amount of time, according to Barnes.

Cal started the second half on an 8-4 run, cutting Texas' lead to 35-29, but the Longhorns retained enough of a cushion to make the second half less than dramatic. Holmes, a senior forward, scored 21 points and had 13 rebounds, and Javan Felix, replacing Taylor, finished with 9 points and 4 assists.

Holmes said after the game that he and "the crew" were well aware that it had been two years since the Chaminade defeat. He described the swift makeover of the program.

"Everybody bought in," Holmes said. "Everybody wanted to be part of the solution. People were talking down on us, and we didn't listen to it."

Texas was ranked in the preseason for the first time since 2009, and its depth and size were the main factors. Cal's David Kravish called Texas' big-man rotation a "five- or six-headed monster."

"I don't know if there's another front line that can match that," Kravish said.

Texas jumped out to a 14-4 lead in the first five minutes before the Bears settled themselves. Cal trailed, 31-21, at halftime.

"I thought we looked a little flat," Martin said. "But we managed to fight throughout the game."

Turner, a Dallas-area native, signed with Texas in late April after weighing offers from Duke, Kansas and Oklahoma State. He was quiet offensively, missing six of his first seven shots, struggling with foul trouble, and finishing with 5 points. But he had seven rebounds, a blocked shot and a steal in 17 minutes.

After two games, the Longhorns have as many wins at the Garden as the Knicks.

In the consolation game, No. 23 Syracuse slipped past Iowa, 66-63, after nearly squandering a 15-point second-half lead. The freshman forward Chris McCullough had 20 points and 9

rebounds, and his play Friday was one of the few bright spots for the Orange, who are not so accustomed to looking overmatched in games in November.

Coach Jim Boeheim said Syracuse learned a lot in its games against Cal and Iowa, but there remains a significant amount for the young and inexperienced Orange to soak up in the next month before the Atlantic Coast Conference slate begins.

“We just need time,” Boeheim said. “I hope not too much time, but we need time to get better. There’s a lot more to be done in the next few weeks, to be sure.”