

# 'Tyler Rose' flourished in Akers' offense

By Nick Georgandis  
THE BATTALION

Whenever University of Texas running back Earl Campbell got the ball, he always had to make a decision.

Did he want to use his speed — stunning for a man of his size — and run around the defense, or did he want to use his dominating power, complemented by 36-inch thighs and a vicious stiff arm, and run right through the defense.

He became a legend at Tyler John Tyler High School, delivering that school its first state championship since 1930 in his senior year of 1973.

It did not take long for Campbell to show his stuff to his Longhorn teammates. In the fourth game of his freshman year against the Washington Huskies, Campbell rushed for 125 yards and a touchdown on just 16 carries.

Texas had a productive 1974 season, finishing 8-2 on the year and Campbell set the Southwest Conference freshman record with 928 yards.

The eyes of Texas had begun to stare directly at Earl Campbell.

Change was the talk of the town in 1977. Former Texas coach Darrell Royal moved up to the position of athletic director, and former coach Fred Akers returned to Texas to take the head coaching job.

"Earl needed to adjust to me and to my system, and he did," Akers said. "I was not Darrell Royal, I was Fred Akers."



Courtesy of UT SID

Earl Campbell's Heisman Trophy resides in UT's T-Room in Memorial Stadium.

Akers decided Campbell — if he could shed some of his 240-pound bulk — would be the focal point of the new offensive system.

"Fred Akers called me in to his office and said, 'You want to run the football next year?'" and I said 'Sure,'" Campbell said. "He says, 'You know what the I formation is?' and I told him I had seen it. He told me if I got down to 225 pounds, I would be the man. He said I would get about 35 carries a game."

With those 35 carries a game enticing him, Campbell attacked the weight-loss program with ferocity.

"Every morning, I ran two or three miles, do about 300 situps and then go hit a punching bag," Campbell said. "I would do that in the morning, then go practice with the rest of the team in the afternoon."

Campbell lost the necessary weight and started at halfback for the Longhorns. By midseason, Campbell had become a tradition in Austin. Every week, the Longhorns would bury another opponent and Campbell would rush for over 100 yards.

One of Campbell's most memorable games of his Heisman Trophy season came against the SWC-defending champion Houston Cougars in a game played at Rice Stadium in Houston.

Texas' run at the SWC title seemed in jeopardy when Campbell became severely ill with the flu the week of the game.

"The night before the UH game, he had a 104-degree fever," Akers said. "The next morning, he still had the temperature, he was still nauseous and I was thinking, 'What a time to go without Earl.'"

But Campbell resolved to play, and by day's end, the Cougars were the only ones feeling sick. Campbell rushed for 173 yards and three touchdowns as UT won 35-21.

After his third touchdown, Campbell could not stop himself in time, and became part of Texas history when he bowled over a certain, unsuspecting Longhorn steer.

"I think I'm the only one to ever knock Bevo down," Campbell said.

The Heisman appeared his to win or lose on Thanksgiving Day, 1977, when the Longhorns visited Kyle Field against an Aggie team that still had hopes of forging a three-way tie with UT and Arkansas for the SWC title.

The game was broadcast on national television and as Campbell came down the tunnel, Akers gave him a message.

"Fred Akers came up to me and asked me if I wanted to win the Heisman," Campbell said. "I said sure, and he said, 'You get something over 100 yards, you'll win it. You make those 30 carries today the best 30 of the season.'"

It was actually only 27 carries, but Campbell made them count — much to the Aggies' chagrin. Campbell rushed for 222 yards and four touchdowns as the Longhorns routed the Aggies 57-28.

The victory gave the Longhorns the SWC championship and made Campbell a shoe-in for the coveted Heisman Trophy.

Campbell said he was unsure of its significance into his actual trip to the Downtown Athletic Club in New York City.

"I didn't really understand the Heisman until I got there," Campbell said. "I started reading all the names on the side of the trophy and thought, 'Hey, my name should be on there.'"

Campbell easily outpooled Oklahoma State's Terry Miller for the Heisman, but he could not deliver the No. 1-ranked Longhorns their first national championship since 1969. No. 5 Notre Dame routed the Longhorns 38-10. Campbell finished his UT career with 4,443 yards and 41 touchdowns.

He went on to become the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft by the Houston Oilers, and took his game to an even greater level with them. He was Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player in 1978, rushing for 1,450 yards including a memorable 199-yard performance on Monday Night Football against the Miami Dolphins.

The following season, he again led the league in rushing and won the MVP award.

In 1980, Campbell had his single-greatest season at any level, rushing for 1,934 yards — at the time, the second-highest season total in NFL history. Four times that season he rushed for 200 or more yards in a game.

His career took a downturn from then, as injuries and poor support hurt Campbell's production. He was traded to the New Orleans Saints in 1985, but never regained his former explosive form and retired in 1986.

On July 27, 1991, he was inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame, making him one of just eight players to be elected to both the Collegiate and Professional Football Halls of Fame.

Today, Campbell runs his own business and serves as a special assistant to the athletic director for student affairs at the University of Texas.

Saturday, Campbell's Longhorns will help end the Southwest Conference when they clash with Texas A&M at Kyle Field.

When asked about the end of Southwest Conference football, Campbell was quiet for a minute, and spoke rather softly.

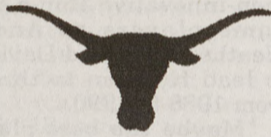
"I'm going to miss the SWC," Campbell said. "You grow up with something, and it really becomes a part of your life. It's something you can count on. It really becomes a part of you."

## University of Texas

Entered SWC: 1915  
SWC Record: 356-150-14  
Total: 703-278-33  
Championships: 1920, 28, 30, 42, 43, 45, 50, 52, 53, 59, 61, 62, 63, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 77, 83, 90, 94  
All-Time Coach: Darrell Royal: 1957-76: 167-47-5, 109-27-2 SWC  
Bowl Record: 17-16-2

### Top 5 Players:

1. Earl Campbell, Running Back
2. Bobby Layne, Quarterback
3. Kenneth Sims, Defensive Tackle
4. Eric Metcalf, Running Back
5. Dick Harris, Offensive Lineman



### Top 5 Games:

1. Dec. 6, 1969: No. 1 Texas 15, No. 2 Arkansas 14: Often referred to as "The Game of the Century." Texas was No. 1 at the time, Arkansas was No. 2, Texas went on to win the national championship.
2. Nov. 26, 1977: No. 1 Texas 57, No. 12 Texas A&M 28: With the SWC championship at stake, Earl Campbell rushes for 222 yards and scores four touchdowns.
3. Jan. 1, 1963: No. 1 Texas 28, No. 2 Navy 6: At the Cotton Bowl, the Texas defense demolishes Roger Staubach's Midshipmen and earns its first national championship.
4. Jan. 1, 1969: No. 1 Texas 21, No. 9 Notre Dame 17: Against a surprisingly tough Fighting Irish squad, Texas wins the national championship.
5. Dec. 1, 1990: No. 5 Texas 28, Texas A&M 27: The Longhorns break an, at the time, uncharacteristic six game losing streak to the Aggies, and return to the Cotton Bowl for the first time since 1983.

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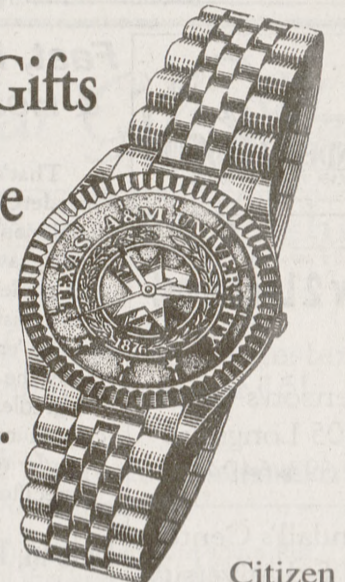
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