



## How It All Started



Growing up in Houston, I was a typical sports fan. I was able to see athletes perform at a high rate with extraordinary skills. I saw them as outstanding as any child would. Like most Houston area kids my age, we had the luck of watching Warren Moon, Hakeem Olajuwon and Nolan Ryan be larger-than-life figures.

What differs from me from others, my sports fandom came from my grandmother Gertha. I would tag along as she took me to high school football games to see my cousin play drums for the Kashmere High School band.

Then on Sundays after church, she would take me to Astrodome to see the Oilers play. We had season tickets, so I enjoyed watching Warren Moon complete passes to Drew Hill, Ernest Givins, Haywood Jeffries and Curtis Duncan. We'd watch "The House of Pain" defense the Oilers have giving

opposing quarterbacks trouble. Sean Jones, William Fuller and Ray Childress harass the quarterback, making them rush throws to receivers. I loved seeing the receivers with fear crossing the middle as Bubba McDowell delivers blow after blow and watching Al Smith run the gap finishing tackles. Chris Dishman was shutting down the top opposing receiver playing aggressive jamming for the line of scrimmage.

I remember celebrating every score as we'd shake our pom-poms or wave our towels to the Houston Oilers fight song. My favorite lyric was "ONE FIVE SEVEN EIGHT WE'RE THE BEST IN THE LONG STAR STATE," as most Oilers fans after celebrating a touchdown or a field goal.

We would also attend Astros games watching Nolan Ryan and Mike Scott pitch masterpieces. She would call out the action before it happened.

"Strike Em Out Nolan," as he sits man after man down with a 98-mph fastball. I'd see Billy Hatcher get on base and steal second base, followed by Billy Doran moving him in up from second to third as "The Big Bopper" Glen Davis and Kevin Bass clear the bases bringing them home. I see Jose Cruz keep the rally going with a double and the Astrodome going wild.

When I got older as a teenager, I would go to my grandparents' house, my grandmother and I would watch the Rockets as she coached the team from her divan couch. "They need to put in that bench," she'd yell as I cracked up laughing. She looks at me and says, "they need to listen."

Hakeem Olajuwon, a master of the pivot, using the dream shake fade away was a work of art. I remember watching Vernon Maxwell get the ball late in games draining a clutch game-winning shot. Sam Cassell exudes energy off the bench bringing instant offense. I'd see Otis Thorpe grabbing a rebound with one hand slinging the ball down the court for an easy Kenny Smith layup. Before getting the moniker "Big Shot Bob," seeing a young Robert Horry, draining a huge three-point shot or rocking the rim after a head fake attacking the basket.

These are the memories as an 80's child growing up in Houston sports. As an adult, I don't know how accurate these memories are to the success of the teams but they're real to me. You're not going to change my mind that they happened. These are the memories that made me a sports fan.

I thank my grandmother for setting up the atmosphere to create this monster which I am a passionate sports fan.

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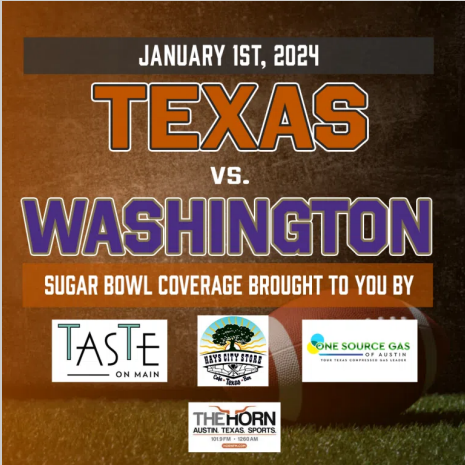
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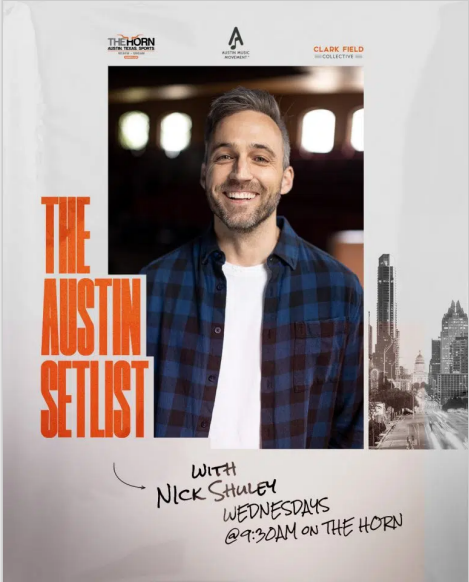
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- 1
- 2
- oh no!
- zero

Voting Ends: Never

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