

# Tough Loss in Texas

## WVU Passes up 2 easy field goals Late, Lose 17-13 Jarret Doege has 3<sup>rd</sup> straight 300 yard passing game

Sam Ehlinger's two touchdown passes and a stingy Texas defense gave the 22<sup>nd</sup>-ranked Longhorns a 17-13 victory over upset-minded West Virginia today at DKR Texas Memorial Stadium.

West Virginia made five trips into the red zone but it resulted in just one touchdown, that coming on the Mountaineers' opening possession of the afternoon.

"Congrats to Texas, I thought they made the winning plays down the stretch," West Virginia coach [Neal Brown](#) said. "I thought our guys played their tails off, they really did. We're getting better, there's a ton of evidence of that, and today was really on me coming down to two fourth-quarter fourth downs in the red zone."

WVU spent a good portion of the fourth quarter in Texas territory, consistently moving the football in four- and five-wide receiver sets between the 20s, but it met a stone wall once it got inside the Longhorn 20.

West Virginia's final three possessions of the game ended at the Texas 17, 16 and 8, and all it could muster was 3 points.

"I don't regret going for it because there is all kind of data that says going for it is the right thing to do, and in this league you better score touchdowns to win and it's proven week in and week out," Brown said. "I think it would have been a mistake to say they would have been stuck at 17. They did, but their approach would have been different (if West Virginia kicked field goals)."

The Mountaineers (4-3) used a 22-yard punt return from [Alec Sinkfield](#) and four [Jarret Doege](#) passes to move the ball to the Texas 9. On second and goal from the 8, Doege fired a what appeared to be a touchdown strike to [Winston Wright Jr.](#) in the back of the end zone.

The ball bounced off the sophomore's shoulder pads, but he was able to grab it out of the air as he was sliding through the back of the end zone. The official on the field signaled touchdown, but it was overruled when the replay official ruled he didn't have possession of the football before he landed out of bounds.

"I thought he got held before they called him out of bounds so it was unfortunate," Brown said.

On the next play, Doege was sacked by DeMarvion Overshown for a loss of 9, requiring [Casey Legg](#) to kick a 34-yard field goal to trim Texas' lead to 17-13.

West Virginia had another replay review go against it later when it appeared Ehlinger threw a pass behind the line of scrimmage that was ruled a fumble and recovered by the Mountaineers at the Longhorn 37. But replay overturned the call on the field as well.

West Virginia's other two fourth-quarter trips deep into Texas territory each ended on downs.

Short Doege aerials moved the ball 59 yards to the Texas 16. Doege's third-and-1 pass to [Sean Ryan](#) fell incomplete, and then his fourth-down pass to tight end [Mike O'Laughlin](#) was a tad late and O'Laughlin was unable to secure the reception in the back corner of the end zone.

"The first one could have gone either way – we could have gone for it or kicked the field goal," Brown said. "I really liked the play there, we had people open, but we just didn't connect."

The defense, which held the nation's eighth-ranked offense 27 points below its season average, forced another punt with the Mountaineers regaining possession of the football at their own 32 with 9:14 to play.

A Doege 29-yard crossing pass to [T.J. Simmons](#) got the ball to the Texas 39, and [Isaiah Esdale's](#) 9-yard reception moved the ball to the 20. Esdale was able to come up with another contested reception to move the sticks on third and 3, and two plays later, [Leddie Brown](#) was knocked out of bounds a yard short on Doege's third-and-8 pass to the far side of the field.

Here, Brown called his second timeout of the drive and his final one of the game to stop the clock with 4:48 remaining. A Doege pass to [Ali Jennings](#) in the end zone fell incomplete with Texas' Chris Brown trailing in tight coverage.

"It was a run-pass (option) and I have to look at it," Brown said. "It was bang-bang. I thought we may have had enough for the run but you never know; we'll look at it."

The Longhorns took possession of the ball at their 20 and were able to run out the clock.

After opening-possession touchdowns by both teams, the game settled into a field-position, defensive struggle.

Texas struck first when Ehlinger completed a seven-play, 75-yard drive by connecting with Brennan Eagles for a 7-yard touchdown. Freshman running back Bijan Robinson, subbing for injured starter Keaontay Ingram, ran 54 yards on the game's first play to set up the score.

West Virginia immediately answered, thanks to Wright Jr.'s 38-yard reception on a third-and-10 play that moved the ball to the Longhorn 12. One play later, [Leddie Brown](#) broke a tackle at the line of scrimmage and ran untouched into the end zone.

It was his 11<sup>th</sup> TD of the season and his ninth on the ground.

Texas retook the lead on Cameron Dicker 34-yard field goal to begin the second quarter. The Longhorns had an opportunity to get more points right before the end of the half, but Dicker's 48-yard field goal try sailed left of the post.

"First half, offensively, it was a struggle," Brown said. "We lost some one-on-ones, and they're good. They're big human beings, and we struggled with their size up front. Leddie wasn't 100% today. He got dinged up early in the game on the first drive."

The Mountaineers tied the game on their opening possession of the second half. Doege did it with the short passing game, moving the ball to the Longhorn 9, but his third-and-2 pass

over the middle was batted down at the line of scrimmage. This forced Legg's 26-yard field goal.

Legg had to kick another field goal after Jake Smith caught a 33-yard touchdown pass from Ehlinger, who finished the afternoon completing just 15-of-31 for 184 yards. It was the eighth time in the last nine games the West Virginia defense has held the opposing quarterback to less than 200 yards in a game.

The run game, as it was in road losses at Oklahoma State and Texas Tech, was also the determining factor in the outcome of this afternoon's game.

Texas (5-2) had a 179-to-43 advantage in rushing yardage, requiring Doege to go predominantly to the air in the second half. The junior completed 35-of-50 for 317 yards – his fourth consecutive 300-yard passing performance of the season and his 35 completions were a career best.

In West Virginia's three defeats this season, it has rushed for an average of just 66.3 yards while allowing its opponents to average 187 yards per game. WVU linebacker [Tony Fields II](#) had a game-high 12 tackles this afternoon.

Ten different receivers caught passes for the Mountaineers with Esdale and [Bryce Ford-Wheaton](#) grabbing six each. Simmons caught four for a team-best 71 yards.

"In the second half, I thought we had a plan and kept them off their feet, up and down the field," Brown said. "We had a difficult time on the interior with those guys. I was a little bit surprised. That was the lowest I've seen those guys play and we struggled to get any kind of run game going."

Robinson led Texas with a game-best 113 yards on 12 carries.

"Other than the opening drives of both halves, for whatever reason, I thought we played quality defense," Brown said.

Brown, who came into the game ranked eighth nationally in rushing yards, was limited to just 47 yards on 15 attempts.

"I didn't think we did anything to win, but we didn't do anything to lose," Brown concluded.

Today's victory keeps Texas' Big 12 championship game hopes alive with regular season contests left against Kansas, Iowa State and Kansas State. WVU, which dropped to 0-3 in league road games this year, will play its fifth game in as many weeks next Saturday against TCU at Milan Puskar Stadium.