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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME PROFILE: Peter Gardere

By Brice Cherry Tribune-Herald staff writer

Saturday May 1, 2010

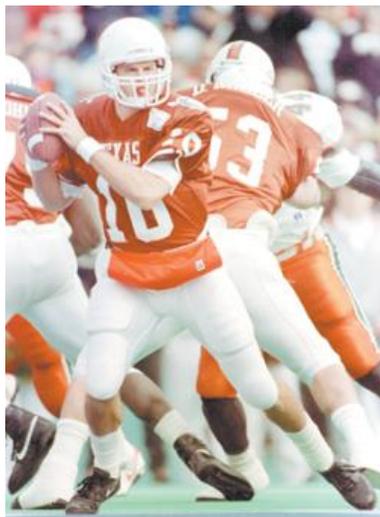
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This is the first in a series of profiles on the inductees to the Texas High School Football Hall of Fame. Other honorees include Sweetwater's Sammy Baugh (pre-1949), Huntsville's Joe Clements (1950s), Denver City's Bill and Bert Gravitt (1960s), San Antonio Jay's Thomas Lott (1970s), Mission's Koy Detmer (1990s), former White Oak and Dallas Skyline coach Theo "Cotton" Miles and Katy High School team doctor Dr. Mark Bing. The class will be inducted May 8.

Long before his archival was the Oklahoma Sooners, Peter Gardere wanted nothing more than to beat Lamar, Worthing and Madison.

Back at Houston's Robert E. Lee High School in the late 1980s, Gardere dazzled at quarterback of a high-powered, run-and-shoot offense that riddled plenty of its Houston rivals with touchdown passes.

"I've probably taken one too many shots to the head, but there really isn't one game that stands out," said Gardere, one of nine gridiron legends who will be inducted into the Texas High School Football Hall of Fame on May 8 in Waco. "We just had a great time. We had some coaches who were really tough on us, but got a lot out of us."



Texas Longhorns quarterback Peter Gardere drops back to pass against Miami in the 1991 Cotton Bowl.

Associated Press file

But more often than not, he didn't. Gardere drew heavy interest from college football programs around the country, and was also drafted as a baseball prospect by the Chicago Cubs. Rather than make a quick decision, Gardere bided his time, taking visits to Michigan, Penn State and Notre Dame before eventually signing with Texas.

"I was a third-generation Longhorn, but I knew I wanted to explore all my options," he said. "I think it's a shame that kids today commit too early, and don't really get out and see some of the campuses around the country."

Gardere said his high school actually benefited when the USFL folded, because a couple of coaches from that fledgling pro league started coaching at Lee.

A natural athlete, Gardere passed for 5,754 yards from 1985-87, yet proved just as dynamic on special teams. He handled all of Lee's kicking and punting duties, earning all-state honors as a punter.

"I think I was actually one kick short of setting a record for consecutive PATs, and I remember that I missed it," Gardere said. "One of my coaches grabbed my neck and said, 'Gardere, you choked, son!'"

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A promotional image for a mug-making service. It shows a white ceramic mug with a photo of a young man and woman. To the left of the mug is a black football helmet. The background is orange.

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At Texas, Gardere became known for his mastery over the rival Sooners. He's the only quarterback in the history of the Red River Rivalry to notch four wins, and he still gets asked about those games regularly.

"At least one week out of the year, for sure," Gardere said, laughing. "It really was a great game, one of the best college football rivalries around."

Following college, Gardere punted in the Canadian Football League for two years before entering the business world. Though he stays busy with his career in commercial real estate in the Austin area, he gets a kick out of reliving those days of high school football glory.

"On a sad front, I was recently with a lot of my old high school friends for the funeral of one of our teammates, Tim Baker," Gardere said. "It was a sad day, but it was also nice seeing all my old friends and coaches, and it brought back some great memories. It kind of gave me goose bumps all over again."

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Brian Bateman

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John Werner: Aggies' rise would serve Big 12 well



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Centex movers hope they reach head of the class



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Jason Orts: Looking ahead to Central Texas' best high school football games each week



I've checked out the schedule. Here are some of the best games the area has to offer, and I've planned out my route ahead of time.

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John Werner: Aggies break UT stranglehold on All-Sports title



Texas A&M certainly knows how to deliver a finishing kick.

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