

Deep in the Heart of
Texas: College
Football, Race, and
Booster Culture
Through the Lens of
the Southwest
Conference

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Thesis and Key Terms

A photograph of college football players at the line of scrimmage during a game. The players are wearing blue and white uniforms on the left and red and white uniforms on the right. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators.

Thesis Statement:

College football is a cultural and political force in the state of Texas, that both reflects and affects Texans' perspectives on booster culture, higher education, and race.

Key Terms:

- Texas-Centrism
- Boosters, Boosterism, and Booster Culture
- Land Speculation
- Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL)
- Power Conference (Big Ten, SEC, and Big XII)

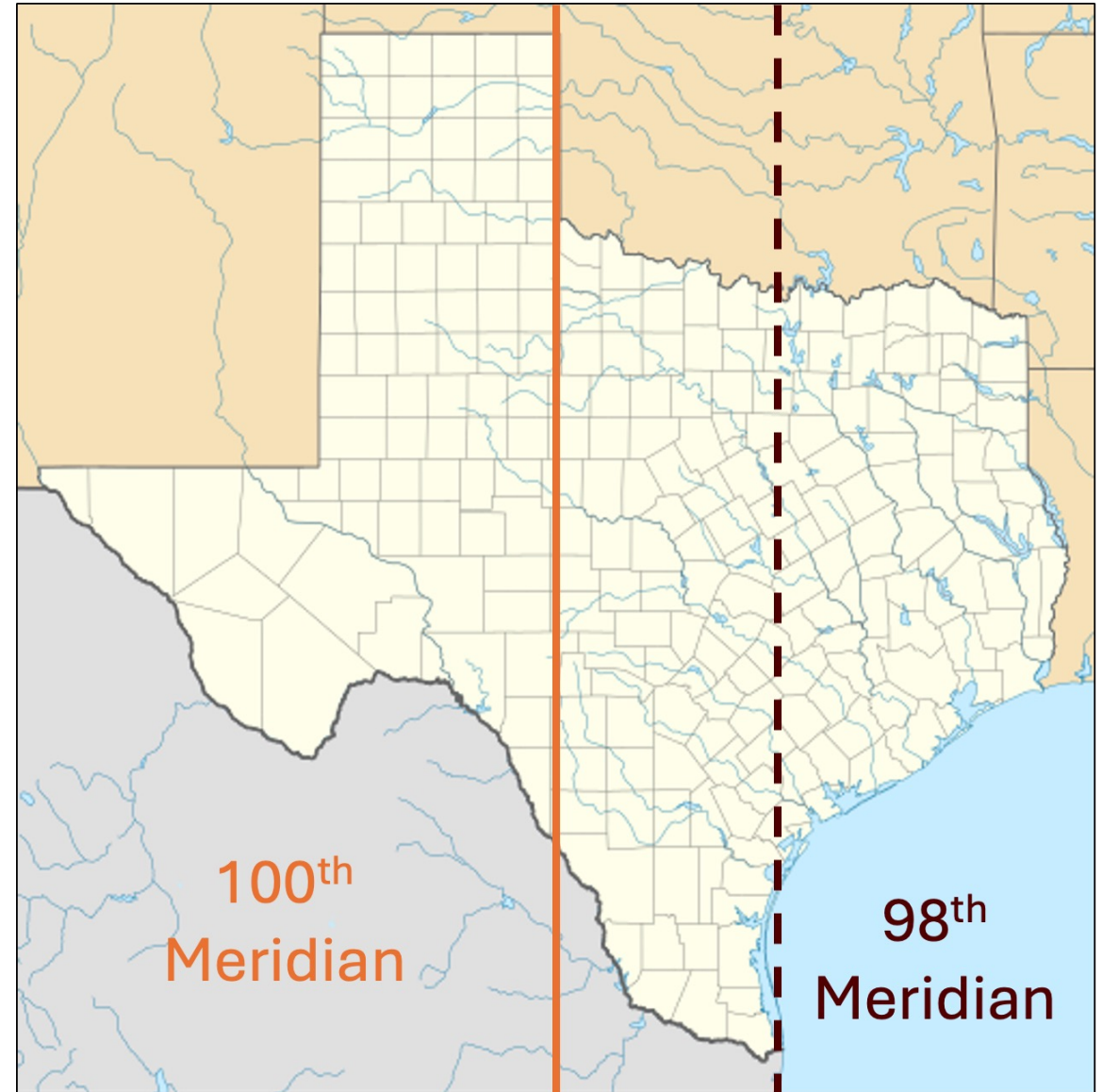


What Was the Southwest Conference (SWC)?

- The Southwest Conference was the largest Texas-centric athletic league in existence
- Founded in 1915 by the University of Texas' inaugural athletic director, L. Theo Bellmont
- Considered a "Power Conference" until its collapse in 1995

Texas as a Southern State

- Founded as a slave-holding territory
- East v. West Texas – 100th meridian
- Sharecropping trapped formerly enslaved individuals in East Texas
- Race affected SWC institutions recruiting and donor practices
- Following Brown v. Board, SWC stubbornly integrated from 1965-1970

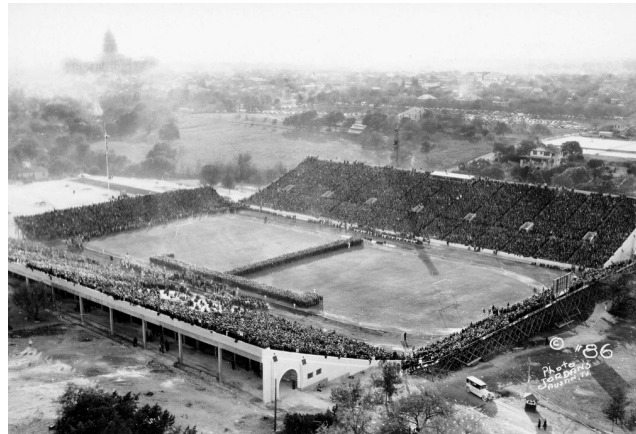


Football as a “College Sport”

- Football follows the spread of higher education across the U.S.
 - Coincides with Muscular Christianity
 - Used by Texan schools as a selling point, making football a commodity
 - Football is used as a tool to integrate universities after *Brown v. Board*
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Booster Culture and College Football



- Texan booster practice was established through land speculation practices and cowboy culture
- Boosters effectively privatize higher education, including college football
- The SWC is reliant on brash Texan boosterism
- Booster practices weaponized integration to poach African American talent in underserved communities

Conclusion

- Booster interference and their continued attempts to commodify college football severely damages the SWC
- The SWC's slow integration doomed the conference
- Texas-Centrism consumed and destroyed the SWC
- The SWC is a story of racism and greed

