

BOWL NEWS

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An Early Texas Shootout at Billy Bob's for Air Force & Houston

By Jim Benton, www.armedforcesbowl.com

Fort Worth, Tex., December 27, 2009 - A Texas shootout is anticipated Thursday in the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** when Houston's top-ranked passing offense goes against the nation's fourth best rushing attack in Air Force.

However on Sunday night there was a preliminary shootout of sorts between the teams at Billy Bob's, the world's largest Honky Tonk in the historic Fort Worth Stockyards.

Billy Bob's is the 127,000-square foot facility where such musical icons as the Gatlin Brothers, Waylon Jennings, Jamie Fricke, Willie Nelson, George Strait, Garth Brooks, Ringo Star, the Beach Boys and Gloria Estefan were among the many headline performers that have performed on the showroom stage.



On Sunday night, Chris Whatley (www.thegunfighters.com/index.html, pictured above to the right with Houston linebacker coach Leon Burtnett) directed a quick draw competition between the schools.

It wasn't like the Shootout At the OK Corral when Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday and Virgil and Morgan Earp took on the Clantons and McLaurys.

It was Houston vs. Air Force and the players from both teams enjoyed watching the reenactment of an 1880's duel.

Defensive line coach Jim Jeffcoat, offensive line coach B.J. Anderson and linebackers coach Leon Burtnett represented Houston while former Air Force players Luke Yeager, Darryl Sumrall and Shea Smith took the stage for the Falcons.

Yeager won the draw over Jeffcoat but Anderson was quicker to get off a shot than Sumrall leaving a sudden death shoot off between Burtnett and Smith.

Smith had trouble getting the gun to fire and a second shootout was staged.

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When Lynn Simmons dropped the red scarf for the final shootoff, Burtnett was the quick gun to give the Cougars a preliminary victory that won't matter when the teams meet on the field Thursday. Once again Smith didn't get his gun to fire.

"I think it's festive and gets the guys out," Air Force coach Troy Calhoun said of Sunday night's get together, in which the teams enjoyed a dinner and collected bowl gifts. "It's fun and this bowl does a great job and they have a bunch of activities that are really great."

Calhoun and Houston coach Kevin Sumlin (pictured above left to right), Houston AD Mack Rhoades, Sumlin and Calhoun) were presented cowboys hats but Calhoun appeared reluctant at times to put the gift on his head despite the encouragement of his team. He said he likes wearing a cap but he still feels uncomfortable wearing one indoors which dates back to what he learned when he was a cadet at the Air Force Academy.



Players from each team received a commemorative bowl watch, Ogio backpack with bowl logo and ESPN zipper tags, a commemorative football highlighting the two schools and bowl logos, a camouflaged knit cap with bowl and ESPN logos, a rubber bowl logo luggage tag and a 2019 Bell Helicopter calendar.



Jim Benton - Jim Benton was a sportswriter for the Rocky Mountain News in Denver for 41 years until the paper folded last February. He started as a high school beat writer four decades ago. Since then, he has covered a variety of sports including college football, basketball and hockey, professional hockey, football, baseball and basketball, tennis, golf, bowling, soccer, horse racing and NASCAR. Benton is a Denver native and a graduate of the University of Denver.