Erik Cassano notes that the tables were turned this year in the big showdown between Texas and Ohio State. It was the Buckeyes that had the very special Heisman trophy candidate at quarterback this time around. Papa Cass hits on Troy Smith's performance versus the Longhorns, the importance of strong quarterback play in big games, and starts talking a little Heisman Trophy this morning in his latest.

Visit the Papa Cass weblog at http://papacass.blogspot.com/

There are tons of complicated ways to break down Ohio State's 24-7 win over Texas Saturday night. There are many ways to compare it to last year's Texas win in Columbus.

But before you break out the slide rule and summon the panel of pundits, focus on the simple.

Last year, the Longhorns came in to Columbus with the advantage at quarterback. This year, Ohio State came in to Austin with the advantage at quarterback.

In a nutshell, that's how the road team goes 2-0 in this series.

Last year, Vince Young was the hard-throwing, quick-scrambling key to a Texas title. This year, he's counting down the days until Titans coach Jeff Fisher inserts him into the starting lineup.

Last year, Troy Smith was embattled with off-the-field problems and Justin Zwick was unimpressive, leaving coach Jim Tressel with some half-baked version of John Cooper's Stanley Jackson-Joe Jermaine tag team from the mid-90s.

This year, Smith is becoming one of the best stories in college football. He is a rare example of a problem player who not only took control of his career, he is becoming a self-made superstar who just might find himself going in the first round of next spring's NFL draft.

Smith's reputation as the man you want under center in the big game was forged in large part by last November's come-from-behind thriller in Ann Arbor. It was further solidified in the Fiesta Bowl win over Notre Dame.

With Saturday's win in Austin, Smith's name now has widespread connection to Heisman Trophy candidacy.

He was every bit as poised, maybe even moreso, than Young was a year ago in Columbus. He spread the ball to three primary targets -- Ted Ginn Jr., Anthony Gonzalez and Brian Robiskie, and exhibitied a feel for the passing game unimaginable 12 months ago, when he tried to solve most problems with his feet instead of his arm and head.

Smith's first-half touchdown pass to Gonzalez was a fastball with mustard that arrived a split-second ahead of the defender in the corner of the end zone. His second-half score to Ginn was a touch pass, lobbed over defenders to Ginn's waiting arms in the end zone.

That's not to say Smith's performance was without flaw. He overshot Robiskie at least once and still has a tendency to scramble when the heat is on. But at least when he scrambles now, he is still looking downfield for a target.

But Smith's poise and experience well overshadowed any mistakes he made. Texas starter Colt McCoy, by contrast, was noticeably behind the curve.

It's not that freshman McCoy was wilting under the spotlight of the biggest nonconference game of the year. He actually did a very good job keeping it together in front of 80,000 fans and millions more on national television. But in the end, his hide wasn't tanned enough to overcome the mistakes of both him and his teammates.

Texas receiver Billy Pittman short-circuited a first-half drive when he fumbled a McCoy pass at the two yard line. In the second half, McCoy overlooked Buckeye linebacker James Laurinaitis on a mid-range pass. Laurinaitis intercepted, setting up the field goal that made it a 10-point game.

McCoy managed a second-quarter touchdown pass to Pittman, but only because of a questionable roughing the passer call on Jay Richardson for helmet-to-helmet contact that set up a first-and-goal situation for Texas. If not for that call, Texas might have been held out of the end zone.

As it is, this is the first time ever that a No. 1 team has held a No. 2 team to less than 10 points on the No. 2 team's home turf.

Last year, Texas' win in Columbus gave them momentum that they never surrendered en route to a national championship. We'll see if this year's measure of revenge does the same for Ohio State.

We know this much: Troy Smith is this year's Vince Young. The quarterback you want out

there to win the big game.