

chicago bears quarterbacks history

Chicago Bears Quarterbacks History: A Deep Dive into the Signal-Callers of the Windy City

chicago bears quarterbacks history is a fascinating journey through the decades of one of the NFL's most storied franchises. From the early days of leather helmets and ground-and-pound offenses to the modern era of complex passing schemes, the quarterbacks who have led the Bears have been as diverse as the city itself. Whether you're a die-hard fan or a casual observer, understanding the evolution of Chicago Bears quarterbacks offers a unique window into the team's identity, struggles, and triumphs.

The Early Years: Foundations of Chicago Bears Quarterback Legacy

When diving into chicago bears quarterbacks history, it's essential to start at the beginning. The Bears, founded in 1919 as the Decatur Staleys before moving to Chicago in 1921, initially relied heavily on a run-first mentality. The quarterback position then wasn't the flashy, high-profile role it is today but was more of a field general managing a rugged, physical style of play.

Johnny Lujack and Sid Luckman: Pioneers of the Position

One of the earliest legendary Bears quarterbacks was Sid Luckman, who played from 1939 to 1950. Luckman revolutionized the quarterback role in Chicago by mastering the T-formation offense. Under his leadership, the Bears won four NFL Championships, and he was known for his strong arm and cerebral approach to the game. His contributions laid the groundwork for the quarterback-centric offenses that would define future Bears teams.

Johnny Lujack, who followed Luckman in the late 1940s and early 1950s, brought a different style. Lujack was more mobile and versatile, reflecting subtle shifts in offensive strategies. While not as celebrated as Luckman, he still made his mark and helped maintain the Bears' competitive edge.

The Mid-Century Struggles and Standouts

Following the Luckman and Lujack era, the Bears experienced mixed success at quarterback. The mid-20th century was a period of transition, with no single quarterback dominating the position for long stretches. This era included a rotating cast of signal-callers who struggled to replicate the success of earlier decades.

Early 1960s to 1970s: Searching for Stability

During this time, the Bears' quarterback position was marked by inconsistency. Notable names like

Rudy Bukich and Jack Concannon had moments of brilliance but rarely sustained peak performance. This instability often mirrored the team's overall difficulties, as Chicago failed to make significant playoff runs.

However, this period wasn't without its bright spots. Bukich, for example, was known for his strong arm and leadership during the late 1960s. Though injuries and team struggles limited his impact, he remains a memorable figure in the franchise's quarterback history.

The Arrival of Mike Phipps and Gary Huff

In the early 1970s, the Bears drafted Mike Phipps, hoping he would become the franchise's long-term answer at quarterback. Unfortunately, Phipps' career in Chicago was marred by inconsistency and injuries. Gary Huff, who played around the same time, also failed to establish himself firmly, contributing to a revolving door at the quarterback spot.

The Walter Payton Era and Quarterback Challenges

The 1970s and early 1980s are often remembered for Walter Payton's greatness at running back, but the quarterback situation remained turbulent. The Bears struggled to find a passer who could consistently complement Payton's rushing prowess, often relying on a conservative, run-heavy offense.

Jim McMahon: The Charismatic Leader

One cannot talk about Chicago Bears quarterbacks history without highlighting Jim McMahon. Drafted in 1982, McMahon brought a new energy and swagger to the Bears. His fearless approach and strong arm energized the offense, culminating in the legendary 1985 season when the Bears won Super Bowl XX.

McMahon's leadership on and off the field was instrumental in that historic championship run. Known for his grit and personality, he became a fan favorite and remains one of the most iconic quarterbacks in franchise history.

The Post-Super Bowl Years: Searching for Consistency

After the 1985 Super Bowl victory, the Bears faced a quarterback carousel throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. Despite drafting promising talent, the team struggled to find a consistent franchise quarterback.

Erik Kramer and Jim Harbaugh

Erik Kramer had some productive seasons in the 1990s, showing flashes of a strong passer capable of moving the offense efficiently. Meanwhile, Jim Harbaugh, who played from 1987 to 1993, brought toughness and leadership but was often hampered by injuries and a lack of supporting talent.

Shifting Offensive Philosophies

This era highlighted the Bears' ongoing struggle to balance their traditional defensive identity with the need for a dynamic quarterback. The team often leaned on defense and a strong running game, which sometimes overshadowed the importance of developing a long-term quarterback solution.

The Turn of the Century: New Faces and Renewed Hope

As the NFL evolved into a more pass-oriented league, the Bears attempted to adapt by investing in quarterback talent. The early 2000s saw a series of attempts to find a franchise quarterback who could lead Chicago back to playoff prominence.

Kordell Stewart and Rex Grossman

Kordell Stewart arrived with high expectations but struggled to find consistency. Rex Grossman, drafted in 2003, had one of the most memorable seasons in recent Bears history, leading the team to Super Bowl XLI in 2006. Despite his erratic play, Grossman's ability to win games and make clutch throws earned him a special place in the hearts of Bears fans.

Jay Cutler: A Decade of Bears Quarterbacking

Arguably the most significant quarterback in recent Bears history is Jay Cutler, who played from 2009 to 2016. Cutler was a polarizing figure – known for his strong arm and toughness, yet criticized for inconsistency and occasional turnovers. Despite his flaws, he set many franchise passing records and was the face of the Bears offense for much of his tenure.

The Modern Era: Looking Ahead and Developing Talent

With the departure of Jay Cutler, the Bears entered a new phase of quarterback evaluation and development. The franchise has been eager to find a long-term starter to lead the team into the future.

Mitchell Trubisky: The High Draft Pick

Selected second overall in the 2017 NFL Draft, Mitchell Trubisky was expected to be the franchise savior. His tenure was marked by ups and downs, flashes of potential, and struggles with consistency. While Trubisky helped the Bears reach the playoffs in 2018, questions about his ceiling ultimately led to his release.

Justin Fields: The Future of Bears Quarterbacks

The Bears' current quarterback, Justin Fields, represents hope and excitement for fans. Drafted in 2021, Fields has demonstrated athleticism, strong arm talent, and a competitive edge. His development is closely watched as Chicago aims to return to playoff contention and build a dynamic offense around him.

Lessons from Chicago Bears Quarterbacks History

Looking back at Chicago Bears quarterbacks history, several themes emerge that offer insights into the franchise's quarterback challenges and successes:

- **Importance of Leadership:** Quarterbacks like Sid Luckman and Jim McMahon showed how leadership can elevate a team beyond individual talent.
- **Adaptation to Change:** The Bears' transition from run-heavy offenses to more balanced attacks reflects the evolving role of quarterbacks in the NFL.
- **Consistency is Key:** Many Bears quarterbacks struggled with consistency, underscoring the difficulty of sustaining success at the position.
- **Fan Expectations:** Chicago's passionate fanbase has always demanded strong quarterback play, making the position one of the most scrutinized in the NFL.

Why Chicago Bears Quarterbacks History Matters Today

Understanding the history of quarterbacks in Chicago helps fans and analysts appreciate the team's current challenges and opportunities. The Bears have long been known for their defense and running game, but the quarterback position remains the key to unlocking sustained success.

With Justin Fields leading the charge, there's a renewed focus on building a strong offensive identity. The lessons from past quarterbacks—both successes and failures—inform coaching

decisions, draft strategies, and player development.

Chicago Bears quarterbacks history is not just a tale of players; it's a story of the team's evolving philosophy, the city's sports culture, and the broader changes in professional football. For anyone interested in the Bears or the NFL, this history offers a rich narrative filled with memorable moments, colorful characters, and the ongoing quest for greatness under center.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first starting quarterback for the Chicago Bears?

The first starting quarterback for the Chicago Bears was Sid Luckman, who played from 1939 to 1950 and is considered one of the greatest quarterbacks in NFL history.

Which Chicago Bears quarterback holds the franchise record for most passing yards in a single season?

Mitchell Trubisky holds the Chicago Bears franchise record for most passing yards in a single season, throwing for 3,223 yards in the 2018 season.

How many Super Bowl championships have the Chicago Bears won with their quarterbacks?

The Chicago Bears have won one Super Bowl championship (Super Bowl XX in 1985) with quarterback Jim McMahon leading the team.

Who is the longest-tenured quarterback in Chicago Bears history?

Jay Cutler is the longest-tenured quarterback in Chicago Bears history, playing for the team from 2009 to 2016.

Have the Chicago Bears ever had a Hall of Fame quarterback?

Yes, Sid Luckman, who played for the Bears from 1939 to 1950, is a Hall of Fame quarterback and one of the pioneers of modern passing in the NFL.

Additional Resources

Chicago Bears Quarterbacks History: An Analytical Review of the Franchise's Signal-Callers

chicago bears quarterbacks history is a tale marked by moments of brilliance, periods of struggle, and a legacy intertwined with one of the NFL's oldest franchises. As one of the charter members of the National Football League, the Chicago Bears have witnessed a diverse array of quarterbacks shaping their offensive identity across decades. From pioneering legends to modern-

day hopefuls, the evolution of the Bears' quarterbacks reflects broader trends in football strategy, organizational philosophy, and talent evaluation.

Overview of Chicago Bears Quarterbacks Legacy

The Bears' quarterback history is unique in that it is often overshadowed by their dominant defenses and running games, hallmarks of the franchise's identity. Unlike teams known for prolific passing attacks, Chicago's quarterbacks have frequently operated within conservative systems emphasizing ball control and defense-first mentality. This contextual backdrop is critical to understanding the statistical outputs and career arcs of Bears signal-callers.

Despite this, the franchise has produced several notable quarterbacks who left indelible marks. Their story is punctuated by Hall of Famers, Pro Bowlers, journeymen, and promising rookies, each contributing to the franchise's complex tapestry.

Early Era and Foundational Years

In the formative years of the NFL, the Bears relied on quarterbacks like Johnny Lujack and Sid Luckman. Sid Luckman, in particular, stands as a pivotal figure in Chicago Bears quarterbacks history. Playing from 1939 to 1950, Luckman was a revolutionary passer for his time, credited with popularizing the T-formation offense under coach George Halas. His career totals of 14,686 passing yards and 137 touchdowns were extraordinary for the period and helped the Bears secure four NFL championships.

Luckman's impact was not only statistical but strategic—he helped transform the quarterback role from a mere field general to an offensive weapon. This early chapter set a precedent for what the Bears sought in their signal-callers: intelligence, leadership, and adaptability.

Mid-Century Quarterbacks: Transition and Challenges

Post-Luckman, the Bears experienced a fluctuating quarterback situation. Players like Bill Wade and Ed Brown attempted to fill the void but rarely reached the heights of success or consistency. Bill Wade, who played in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was noted for his mobility and toughness but never managed to lead the team to a championship.

During this period, the franchise's offensive focus remained heavily skewed toward the running game and defense, limiting the quarterback's opportunities to shine. This conservative approach reflected in the team's performance and the statistical output of its quarterbacks.

Modern Era: From Jim McMahon to Jay Cutler

The 1980s ushered in a new chapter with Jim McMahon, arguably one of the most charismatic and successful quarterbacks in Chicago Bears quarterbacks history. McMahon led the Bears to their last

Super Bowl victory in the 1985 season, becoming a symbol of the team's gritty and colorful identity. His ability to combine toughness with strategic passing made him a fan favorite and a critical component of the Bears' championship run.

Following McMahon, the franchise struggled to find a long-term franchise quarterback. The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a carousel of signal-callers including Erik Kramer and Cade McNown, none of whom consistently met the high expectations set by previous legends.

The Bears' search culminated in the selection of Jay Cutler in 2006. Cutler's tenure was marked by moments of statistical prowess—he ranks among the franchise leaders in passing yards and touchdowns—but also inconsistency and controversy. His strong arm and ability to generate big plays were often overshadowed by turnovers and injuries. Nonetheless, Cutler represents one of the most statistically significant quarterbacks in the Bears' recent history.

Recent Developments and Emerging Talent

In the post-Cutler era, the Bears have continued to experiment with their quarterback position, highlighting the ongoing challenges the franchise faces in stabilizing this critical role. Players like Mitchell Trubisky, drafted in 2017, showed flashes of potential but ultimately failed to develop into a franchise cornerstone, leading to his release in 2021.

Currently, the Bears are in a rebuilding phase, searching for a young quarterback who can combine athleticism, decision-making, and leadership. The franchise's quarterback history underscores the difficulty of finding a consistent passer who fits the Bears' system and culture.

Comparative Analysis: Bears Quarterbacks Versus NFL Counterparts

When analyzing Chicago Bears quarterbacks history in the context of the broader NFL, it becomes obvious that the Bears have lagged behind franchises known for quarterback excellence, such as the New England Patriots, Pittsburgh Steelers, or Green Bay Packers. Unlike these teams, which often have had Hall of Fame or perennial Pro Bowl quarterbacks, Chicago's signal-callers have rarely achieved sustained elite status.

This contrast can be attributed to several factors:

- **Organizational Philosophy:** The Bears' historical emphasis on defense and running limited the quarterback's role.
- **Draft and Development:** Inconsistent scouting and coaching potentially hindered quarterback progression.
- **System Fit:** Frequent changes in offensive coordinators and schemes made it difficult for quarterbacks to find stability.

Despite these challenges, individual Bears quarterbacks have displayed notable skills and resilience, proving that the franchise's quarterback history, while turbulent, is not devoid of success stories.

Key Statistical Milestones

Several quarterbacks stand out in franchise records:

1. **Sid Luckman:** Holds the all-time franchise record for most passing yards and touchdowns from the early NFL era.
2. **Jay Cutler:** Bears' modern leader in passing yards (over 23,000) and passing touchdowns (136), reflecting the highest volume passing era in franchise history.
3. **Jim McMahon:** Renowned for playoff success and leadership during the 1985 championship season.

These data points highlight the evolution of the quarterback role within the Bears organization and the varying offensive philosophies across eras.

Impact of Coaching and Offensive Systems

The quarterback position is often a reflection of the coaching philosophy and offensive system employed. Under legendary coach George Halas, the Bears favored ground-and-pound football, limiting passing attempts but emphasizing efficiency when the quarterback did throw.

In the 1980s, coaches like Mike Ditka encouraged a more balanced attack, allowing quarterbacks like Jim McMahon to showcase their passing skills more prominently. However, inconsistent coaching changes in the 1990s and 2000s often disrupted quarterback development.

Currently, the Bears are attempting to blend modern passing concepts with their traditional defensive mindset, a delicate balance that will influence the success of their quarterbacks moving forward.

Challenges Faced by Bears Quarterbacks

Several recurring obstacles have affected Chicago Bears quarterbacks history:

- **Offensive Line Instability:** Frequent changes and injuries to offensive linemen have exposed quarterbacks to pressure.
- **Inconsistent Receiving Talent:** The lack of elite receiving corps has limited passing options.

- **Franchise Instability:** Changes in management and coaching have led to inconsistent offensive strategies.

These factors have compounded the difficulty of establishing a long-term, successful quarterback in Chicago.

Looking Ahead: The Future of the Bears' Quarterback Position

As the franchise moves forward, the lessons from Chicago Bears quarterbacks history inform the path ahead. The Bears are prioritizing the acquisition and development of young quarterback talent, emphasizing adaptability and leadership qualities suitable for a modern NFL offense.

The success of future Bears quarterbacks will depend heavily on organizational stability, offensive line improvements, and strategic clarity. Finding a quarterback who can thrive within the Bears' unique culture and offensive approach remains a top priority for the franchise.

In summation, the Chicago Bears quarterbacks history is a nuanced chronicle of evolving playing styles, strategic philosophies, and individual talents. While the Bears may not have produced the most statistically dominant quarterbacks in NFL history, their signal-callers have played pivotal roles in some of the franchise's most memorable moments, underscoring the complex interplay between quarterback performance and team success.

Chicago Bears Quarterbacks History

chicago bears quarterbacks history: *Chicago Bears History* Roy Taylor, 2004 Presents a history of the Chicago Bears, from the team's inception to the present day.

chicago bears quarterbacks history: *100 Things Bears Fans Should Know & Do Before They Die* Kent McDill, 2013-10-01 Revealing the most critical moments and important facts about past and present players, coaches, and teams that are part of the storied history that is Bears football, this book has pep talks, records, and Bears lore scattered throughout the pages. The Bears' longtime rivalry with the Green Bay Packers, little-known facts about many of the Bears' record 27 Hall of Famers, and profiles of unforgettable Bears personalities such as Ditka, Payton, Jim McMahon, Brian Urlacher, Jay Cutler, and others are all included. Die-hard fans who know all the words to the Super Bowl Shuffle and new supporters alike will find everything Bears boosters should know, see, and do in their lifetime.

chicago bears quarterbacks history: *Chicago Bears* Todd Kortemeier, 2025-08-01 This title introduces football fans to the history of the Chicago Bears franchise. The book features exciting photos, informative sidebars, a timeline, a map of NFL teams, a glossary, and an index. Aligned to Common Core Standards and correlated to state standards. Abdo & Daughters is an imprint of Abdo Publishing, a division of ABDO.

chicago bears quarterbacks history: *The 50 Greatest Players in Chicago Bears History* Robert W. Cohen, 2020-09-15 In *The 50 Greatest Players in Chicago Bears History*, sports historian

Robert W. Cohen ranks the top 50 players ever to perform for one of the NFL's most historic franchises. This work includes quotes from the subjects themselves and former teammates, photos, recaps of memorable performances and greatest individual seasons, as well as a statistical summary of each player's career with the Bears. The Bears' best are profiled here in what is bound to be a much discussed book among the team's broad fan base. An added bonus are the honorable mentions, the next 25 players who have contributed to the Bears' astounding run as one of America's great sports teams.

chicago bears quarterbacks history: Historical Dictionary of Football John Grasso, 2013-06-13 Gridiron football or American football or just plain football is the most popular sport in the United States in the 21st century. Although attempts have been made to develop the sport outside North America, it is still predominantly a North American sport with similar games (but significant rules differences) played in the United States and Canada. The Historical Dictionary of Football covers the history of American football through a chronology, an introductory essay, appendixes, and an extensive bibliography. The dictionary section has over 600 cross-referenced entries on both amateur (collegiate) and professional players, coaches, teams and executives from all eras. This book is an excellent access point for students, researchers, and anyone wanting to know more about the sport of football.

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on coach Pete Carroll, star quarterback Russell Wilson, the team's vaunted defense, and the Seahawks Super Bowl XLVIII championship.

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Quarterbacks details the remarkable history and contributions of Western Pennsylvania quarterbacks who were the foremost leaders in changing the landscape and dynamics of football into America's premier pastime. About the Author James J. Bogdan is just a football fan that appreciates the contributions of his local quarterbacks.

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chicago bears quarterbacks history: Riddell Presents the Gridiron's Greatest Quarterbacks Jonathan Rand, 2004 NFL coaches love to say that quarterbacks always get too much credit for winning or too much blame for losing. Football fans know better. The great quarterbacks are difference makers. They make the split-second decisions that produce big plays, elevate their teammates, and lead the way to Super Bowl glory. The great quarterback is, in short, the most irreplaceable player on the field. The San Francisco 49ers could not have won their first four Super Bowls without Joe Montana, a genius at picking apart defenses and pulling out last-minute victories. The Pittsburgh Steelers would not have won four Super Bowls in six years without the powerful arm and irrepressible leadership of Terry Bradshaw. The New York Jets could never have pulled off the most famous NFL upset of all time, a Super Bowl III win over the Baltimore Colts, without the swagger and skill of Broadway Joe Namath. He guaranteed a victory, then made good on his guarantee. In Riddell Presents The Gridiron's Greatest Quarterbacks, fans will meet the legendary

field generals who grace the annals of professional football. Author Jonathan Rand ranks the top 25 quarterbacks of all time and recalls the greatest triumphs, extraordinary talents, and powerful personalities that made them and their teams winners. From Sammy Baugh and Sid Luckman, who put the quarterback position on the map, to Bart Starr, John Unitas, Bradshaw. Montana, John Elway, Dan Marino and Brett Favre, these are players of diverse skills, sizes, and temperaments who each arrived at the destination of greatness. Rand also details the rise of the African-American quarterbacks, who overcame decades of racism and cynicism to make their mark, the trade secrets of the great comeback quarterbacks, and how it feels to get buried under enormous defensive players and be the most marked man on the field. Through the words of these great quarterbacks and their teammates, coaches and opponents, readers will gain an understanding as to why the gridiron's greatest quarterbacks and the gridiron's greatest players are so often the same people.

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chicago bears quarterbacks history: Top Ten Quarterbacks Chris W. Sehnert, 1997 Covers the careers and statistics of ten NFL quarterbacks: Steve Young, Johnny Unitas, Bart Starr, Joe Namath, Roger Staubach, Bob Griese, Terry Bradshaw, Jim Plunkett, Joe Montana, and Troy Aikman.

chicago bears quarterbacks history: Blitzed Thomas George, 2017-09-05 In today's NFL, every team has a "win now" mentality. There's no time for rebuilding or down years. You need to compete each and every day, or else you're out; and that goes for the players, coaches, and front office. You either win today or you're gone tomorrow. Because of this trend, struggling teams have forgone the training of old and slowly building from the ground up for the immediate payoff. And when it comes to gaining the interest of the fans and media, there's one go-to decision for every struggling team: the rookie quarterback. Blitzed is an in-depth study as to the reason why teams choose to hand the keys of their franchise over to an unproven rookie. But there are multiple layers as to the odds of success for these athletes. While much has to do with their mental and physical toughness, the coaching, front office, and state of an organization all play a crucial role. In the last two NFL drafts, quarterbacks have been taken as the first two picks (Jameis Winston and Marcus Mariota in 2015; Jared Goff and Carson Wentz in 2016). The face of the franchise can't grow a beard, but is expected to lead his team on the gridiron. Covering the history of this trend with a running timeline of the 2016 NFL season and top draft picks Goff and Wentz, as well as interviews with numerous current and former quarterbacks, coaches, and executives, distinguished journalist Thomas George breaks down how teams decide on starting a rookie quarterback and why the chances of an immediate payoff are such a mixed bag.

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chicago bears quarterbacks history: **Go Huskies!** W. Thomas Porter, 2013 This

comprehensive history of the University of Washington football program focuses on the major eras in Husky football history, featuring the best teams, the greatest games, the biggest comebacks, and the most exciting and unexpected moments, such as when Washington forged its first national championship by defeating Minnesota in 1961. Paying homage to iconic coaches, including Jim Phelan, Jim Owens, and Don James, this keepsake also details the greatest players and fan favorites in Washington history, including NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Warren Moon and NFL Pro Bowlers Lawyer Milloy and Corey Dillon. The book concludes with game day events, the 10 pregame activities that every Husky fan should experience, and a Husky Timeline, making it a well-rounded and must-have for fans both old and new.

chicago bears quarterbacks history: More Distant Memories Danny Jones, 2006-12-12 This book is about Pro Football's best ever players and forgotten heroes from a bygone era. They were the superstars of the NFL and the AFL during the fabulous 50's, the glorious 60's, and the fun-loving 70's. However, none of these legends are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio with the exception of Bob Brown- who was finally selected in 2004 and Gene Hickerson- who was selected in 2007. These exciting players revolutionized the game of Pro Football with their outstanding performances and were the NFL's and AFL's biggest gate attractions. This book is a sequel to my first book, Distant Memories: The NFL's Best Ever Players of the 60's and 70's. I have chronicled the careers of 30 great football players and have provided you a glimpse back at the best seasons, longest touchdowns, and the big plays of their illustrious careers. Most of these men should be in the Hall of Fame. J.D. Hill and Golden Richards will never be selected because they don't have the statistics, but they were 2 of the NFL's most sensational players. All of these players had Hall of Fame talent and most of them also had Hall of Fame like statistics. More Distant Memories is more than a book about great football players. It's about the men who played the game and the humanity behind the facemasks. These legendary heroes and mavericks provided excitement and happiness to millions of football fans across America. These players are lost treasures and have simply been forgotten as time goes by. They were brilliant players and dedicated professionals. Their place in Pro Football history is secure regardless of any Hall of Fame status. It was these trailblazers, legends, and other stars from the glorious past that made Pro Football our national pastime and America's game. Enjoy your trip down memory lane. <http://www.starsofthenfl.com/index.html>

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Big Franks Chicago Style Hot Dogs - Houston Architecture Well, they did have other kinds of dogs at Big Frank's besides the Chicago style ones - IIRC, there was a "Texas-style" one with chili and cheese. I've never been too fond of

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