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Who would have won the Heisman from 1900-1934

By Mike Beacom, Special to
Si.com

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by permission of the author.)*

For nearly a half-century, some of college football's greatest players didn't have the opportunity to vie for what has become the sport's most prestigious piece of hardware: the Heisman Trophy. Of course, the trophy didn't take shape until several years after John Heisman was asked to serve as the athletic director for New York's Downtown Athletic Club. In its first year the selection committee recognized Chicago halfback Jay Berwanger as "the most outstanding college football player in the country." A short time after Heisman's death, in 1936, the award was renamed in his honor.

This article examines who may have won such an award had it been presented in the sport's developmental years. Records and statistics are not well documented from the period, and so comparisons are difficult to make. To offer structure, the Walter Camp first-team All-Americans from the first quarter of the Century, as well as various teams constructed in the years between 1925 and 1934, serve as a list of finalists from which the retrospective Heisman winners were selected.*

Camp was one of the game's most respected scouts of his time, and his eye for football talent was trusted more than that of any other. It should be noted, however, that Camp was at least partly responsible for the general consensus of the time that the best teams and players resided in the Midwest and along the East Coast -- the same regional bias that has brought criticism to the Heisman throughout its existence. For example, arguments could be made for early-era players from the Southwest and Southern Conferences -- the forerunners to

the Big XII and the SEC, respectively -- but history suggests that had the Heisman balloting been conducted in those years many of those players would have been overlooked.

The Heisman Trophy is also not without its faults. The award has too often recognized offensive players only, and rarely has its voters shown respect for the contributions made by linemen. Although many years were dominated by linemen who mastered a different style of football, for the sake of consistency the selection process relied on roughly the same unwritten criteria that has been used for almost three quarters of a century: talent, versatility, team success, big-game performance, leadership and sentimental favoritism (and it wouldn't be fun if there weren't a few surprise selections thrown into the mix).

Based on how history suggests voters may have cast their ballots, here are the Heisman winners for the years 1900 through 1934:

1900 -- T. Truxton Hare, Penn

Few early 20th Century players were as revered as Hare, who played every minute of every game. A starter at left guard on a 12-1 squad, Hare impressed Heisman voters in 1900 by doing

everything a player is capable of doing. At season's end Hare was named to his fourth Walter Camp All-American team -- one of only a few players to accomplish that feat.

1901 -- Charles Daly, Army

Freshly graduated from Harvard, where he earned respect as one of the country's best backs, Daly was appointed to West Point in 1901. In his first season with the Cadets he had a marvelous year, and in the end-of-season clash with Navy the quarterback was a one-man show, scoring all 11 of his team's points in the victory. Army's only loss that season came to Daly's former team.

1902 -- Paul Bunker, Army

In a year in which a number of Yale players split the vote, Bunker helped Army to become the first program to claim back-to-back winners. The tackle-turned-halfback dominated Navy from both sides of the ball, scoring twice in a 22-8 victory

1903 -- William Heston, Michigan

Unfairly overlooked by voters (and Camp) in 1901, Heston made sure they paid attention in 1903. His 15 touchdowns contributed to Fielding Yost's "point-a-minute" cause, and the nation's finest back was the undisputed leader for a team that went 11-0-1.

1904 -- Heston

In a game against Kalamazoo, Heston gained 400 yards, and in a game against Chicago he carried the ball an astounding 38 times. While 1904 may not have been Heston's best year, he was nonetheless worthy of a second Heisman. His four-year totals at Michigan -- during which the Wolverines were 43-0-1 -- were simply too much to ignore.

1905 -- Walter Eckersall, Chicago

The man who helped to end Michigan's 56-game streak without a loss -- that's what was on the minds of voters when they picked Eckersall. The quarterback and valued leg of Amos Alonzo Stagg's 10-0 Chicago squad, Eckersall was idolized by future college football legend Knute Rockne

1906 --Eckersall

Eckersall capped a magical career at Chicago with a senior season in which he was equally valuable as a kicker, passer and rusher, thanks to Stagg's brilliant football mind. When The Associated Press named its all-time team in 1950, Eckersall was part of a backfield quartet that included Jim Thorpe, Red Grange and Ernie Nevers

1907 -- Tad Jones, Yale

Jones quarterbacked a second consecutive 9-0-1 season for the Elis, helping the team to victories over Princeton and rival Harvard.

Yale was simply dominant in 1907, outscoring its opponents 207-10.

1908 -- Bill Hollenback, Penn

As Penn's senior captain, Hollenback helped his team win a national championship with 11 victories in 12 games. (Penn played to a 6-6 tie against Jim Thorpe's Carlisle Indians). A tall back for his time, the 6-2 Hollenback once played a game with a fractured leg and a pair of dislocated shoulders

1909 -- Ted Coy, Yale

Following in the tradition of the fine Yale squads from the era, Coy and his teammates went 10-0, outscoring their opponents 209-0. After missing the first four games of the season due to an appendectomy, Coy returned to lead Yale past Army, Princeton and Harvard

1910 -- Bill Sprackling, Brown

Sprackling had a fine season, but one game won him the Heisman. Brown had not won a game over Yale until Sprackling helped guide his club past the Elis in 1910. Sprackling had more than 200 yards of offense, kicked three field goals and accumulated more than 200 total return yards in the 21-0 drubbing.

1911 -- Jim Thorpe, Carlisle

Upon returning to Carlisle after a two-year hiatus, Thorpe quickly regained his top form. Voters were impressed by how well he ran the ball, punted, returned

kicks and played defense. Thorpe gained 899 yards that season, but it was the 18-15 win over Harvard that earned him the Heisman

1912 -- Thorpe

How's this for an encore: Only months after blazing past the rest of the field at the Stockholm Olympic Games, Thorpe gained 1,869 rushing yards in his final season at Carlisle. One four-game stretch included 200-yard days against Army, Springfield and Brown, and a 362-yard effort against Pennsylvania. Thorpe scored 198 points that season.

1913 -- Charles Brickley, Harvard

The Ivy League dominated the first several decades of college football, and in 1913 Brickley dominated the conference. He accounted for the only points in the win over Princeton, and in the season finale against Yale his five field goals allowed Harvard to complete a 9-0 season.

1914 -- John O'Hearn, Cornell

Under the guidance of its captain, Cornell became the feel-good football story of the year. The first All-America at Cornell since Pop Warner's final year as coach at the school (1906), O'Hearn helped the squad to win its final seven games of the year, including a come-from-behind win over Michigan in Ann Arbor

1915 -- Ed Mahan, Harvard

The three-time All-America scored all nine points in a win over Virginia and he punched in four scores to help Harvard top rival Yale. But the South was justified in crying foul; Oklahoma fullback Forest Geyer helped his undefeated Sooners team lead the country with 370 points.

1916 -- Chic Harley, Ohio State

Voters couldn't help but be intrigued by Ohio State's do-it-all wonder, who in his first year in Columbus elevated the program to new heights. The Buckeyes outscored opponents 258-29, thanks largely to the newcomer who hailed from the neighborhoods nearby. In the season finale against Northwestern, Harley returned a punt 67 yards for a touchdown, then scored from 20 yards out to cap Ohio State's first perfect season.

1917 -- Elmer Oliphant, Army

The runner-up to Harley in 1916, Oliphant edged out Ohio State's top back this time. As a senior, Oliphant set a Cadets record with 125 points. In his final two seasons Oliphant was the key ingredient in Army's 16-1 record.

1918 -- Frank Steketee, Michigan

The versatile Michigan freshman scored all 15 points in the Wolverines' win over Syracuse. Steketee was one of the finest punters of his era, and was the only Michigan player to earn All-

America honors during the shortened 1918 season.

1919 -- Harley

Forget about the yards he gained or all that Harley could do on the field -- in 1919 he gave Ohio State fans what they craved more than anything else: the program's first win over Michigan. In the 13-3 triumph Harley nabbed four interceptions and scored on a long run. In 23 career games as a Buckeye, Harley scored 23 touchdowns.

1920 -- George Gipp, Notre Dame

In the first year of the sport's most transformative decade, Gipp turned in one of the finest seasons by a college player. Gipp passed for 709 yards and gained 100 or more yards rushing in five games. In a 27-17 win over Army he had 273 yards of offense and 157 yards on returns.

1921 -- Brick Muller, Cal

Arguably the finest weapon to play for Andy Smith's stacked Wonder Teams, Muller contributed his fair share to the Bears' 312 points during his junior season. Cal beat Washington and USC with ease and squashed rival Stanford 42-7. The only blemish on Muller's 28-game collegiate career was a 0-0 tie to Washington & Jefferson in the 1922 Rose Bowl

1922 -- Gordon Locke, Iowa

No longer playing in the shadow of Aubrey Devine (the previous year's Heisman runner-up), Locke helped the undefeated Hawkeyes hand Yale its first loss to a school from the West. In five conference games, including close wins over Illinois and Ohio State, the senior fullback scored 12 touchdowns.

1923 -- Red Grange, Illinois

In a year in which no one player produced a convincing argument for the Heisman, the Illinois sophomore who helped guide his club to an 8-0 mark and a national championship gets the award. Grange gained 723 yards that season, and in his collegiate debut against Nebraska he scored three times.

1924 -- Grange

After scoring four touchdowns in 12 minutes against Michigan and returning later to score twice more, Grange left no doubt who the nation's finest athlete was.

1925 -- Ernie Nevers, Stanford

Arguably the most competitive year in the history of the Heisman, the "Big Dog" denied Grange the privilege of being the award's only three-time winner, while also edging Mort Kaer of USC and Andy Oberlander of undefeated Dartmouth. Voters couldn't help but recall Nevers' heroic effort in the loss to the Four Horseman in the Rose Bowl to cap the 1924 season, or his all-out performance in the

Indians' upset win over rival Cal in his final collegiate game.

1926 -- Mort Kaer, USC

This was a true head-scratcher. It became apparent that Michigan teammates Benny Friedman and Bennie Oosterbaan split each other's vote. Kaer won it based on an impressive junior campaign. Kaer gained more than 800 yards rushing for a Trojans team whose only losses (both by the score, 13-12) came to a pair of terrific teams, Notre Dame and Stanford

1927 -- Bennie Oosterbaan, Michigan

Oosterbaan was the choice of many as the greatest college football end of his era. In 1927 he no longer had the arm of Bennie Friedman or the guidance of Fielding Yost, yet Oosterbaan helped his Michigan squad earn a 6-2 mark as he took home a third consecutive All-America nod. He also threw a pair of touchdown passes in the shutout win over rival Ohio State

1928 -- Red Cagle, Army

One of the game's first gifted passers and one of its most accomplished rushers, Cagle had already been a star at Southwestern Louisiana Institute before joining Army in 1926. His contribution toward Army's 8-2 record two years later, including his role in wins over Yale and Nebraska was enough to earn him the trophy.

1929 -- Gene McEver, Tennessee

The winner should have been Minnesota's Bronco Nagurski, whose team was just three points from an undefeated season. But Nagurski was somewhat under-appreciated during his time. McEver helped put Tennessee football on the map by scoring 130 points in the Volunteers' 9-0-1 season. Nine of his touchdowns came from 25-plus yards, and in the finale against South Carolina the halfback found the end zone five times.

1930 -- Frank Carideo, Notre Dame

As the starting quarterback for the Irish in 1929 and '30, Carideo made few mistakes, which is why Rockne's final two teams didn't lose a game. Not only was Carideo a fine field general, but his placement as a punter was superb; against Northwestern, he downed four punts on the one-yard line.

1931 -- Jerry Dalrymple, Tulane

The only player whose name appeared on the first team of every All-American ballot that season, Dalrymple was an unstoppable force for an 11-win Tulane team that shut out nine opponents.

1932 -- Harry Newman, Michigan

Much like Carideo, Newman masterfully managed the best team of the year. The final four games of Michigan's national championship season were decided by an average of fewer than eight points, and it was often Newman who was instrumental in pushing each of those games in Michigan's favor.

1933 -- Beattie Feathers, Tennessee

In a bit of an upset, Feathers narrowly won over Cotton Warburton of top-ranked USC. Feathers grabbed the nation's attention early on with a pair of long touchdown runs in Tennessee's season-opening win over Virginia Tech. During his three years in Knoxville the Vols were 25-3-1. For that reason, the newly formed Southeastern

* * *
**COLLEGE FOOTBALL:
BCS, PLAYOFFS, OR
BOTH?**

By Patrick M. Premo

INTRODUCTION:

Regarding the recently completed college football season, everyone will most certainly agree that, unquestionably, the two best Major College football teams in the country met in January 2009 to determine the undisputed National Champion – or not!

Conference named Feathers its Player of the Year.

1934 -- Don Hutson, Alabama

In leading the Crimson Tide to a 10-0 mark and a national championship, Hutson was honored with the school's first Heisman. Hutson scored the deciding touchdown in a pivotal 13-6 win over Tennessee; three weeks later, in the homecoming game against Clemson, he caught six balls and scored twice.

* Private research was used to select the winners in 1909 and 1917, two years Camp did not release All-American teams. Statistics from a number of sources, including Tex Noel's 2007 book, "Stars of an Earlier Autumn" were also used to help select winners for each year, and some of those statistics have been included in this article.

When the BCS began a few years ago (1998 season), many felt that the tradition of the bowls would be maintained and an undisputed National Champion of Major College Football would finally be crowned. I doubt if many feel that this has really been accomplished, but advocates of the BCS will argue that it is better than the old bowl system. For those who favor a playoff system, the current BCS approach may be a stepping stone in the right direction. Only time will tell.

However, regarding a playoff system (which practically every other pro and collegiate sport has), I think it is important to realize that a playoff will

not necessarily crown the best team of the sport. The best team does not always win the Super Bowl, World Series (MLB or college), Stanley Cup, NBA/WNBA Playoffs, Grey Cup, NCAA College Basketball Tournaments (any divisions, men or women), or World Cup of Soccer, to name a few. Then why have playoffs? In my opinion, it is to see the top teams play more games against other top teams with the hope that “your” team will go all the way (and, lest we forget, for some people to make lots and lots of money!) So why should Major College Football be any different?

College football has had playoffs in its lower divisions since 1956 when the NAIA began with a two team tournament. NCAA Divisions II and III began their tournaments in 1973 and Division I-AA followed suit in 1978. For those who argue that interference with academics is the reason not to have playoffs in Major College Football, this would seem to imply that the lower division schools must be inferior academically! I doubt if their many graduates would buy that argument!

Most college football bowls (and lower division playoff games) are either on the weekends or during mid-semester break when the schools are not in session. The NCAA basketball tournaments, on the other hand, have numerous games during the week when classes are in session, forcing student athletes to miss many, many classes (as a former university teacher, I can tell you that this is inherently unfair to not only the student athletes but to other students as well).

Whether the BCS and/or the NCAA will ever choose to have a true playoff for Major College Football remains to be seen, but in the world of sports simulation gaming it can be done.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN:

Let us turn back time to the early summer of 2008. The BCS and the NCAA have just announced a significant change in Major College Football post-season play. After all the major bowls are played in December 2008 and January 2009, a BCS/NCAA committee will choose the four teams determined to be the cream of the crop (let the lobbying begin!). These teams will be secretly ranked and seeded so that #1 plays #4 and #2 plays #3. The two winners will then meet to determine the National Champion. Three bowls will have a second game each year to host the playoffs; the bowls participating in these mini-tournaments will rotate each year.

Every effort will be made to have neutral bowl sites selected.

Now let us assume that all the bowls at the end of the 2008 season were played with the same results as in real life. The BCS/NCAA committee met and selected, alphabetically, Florida, Southern Cal, Texas, and Utah to participate in the playoff games. The committee then announced the following pairings (the rankings were kept secret and the teams in each pairing are listed alphabetically below):

FIESTA BOWL, Glendale, AZ –
Southern Cal versus Utah

SUGAR BOWL, New Orleans, LA –
Florida versus Texas

The winners will then meet in a neutral bowl to be determined after the first round.

My college football board game, **FAST-ACTION COLLEGE FOOTBALL**, will be used to stage these playoff games. All sites are deemed to be neutral so there is no home field advantage.

FIESTA BOWL:

In a relatively low scoring game pretty much controlled by the defenses, Southern Cal led 14-10 going into the fourth quarter. After a two punts by each team, Utah scored a touchdown late in the fourth quarter to take a 17-14 lead. USC began to march down the field with authority only to have an ill-advised pass intercepted by Utah to seal the victory for the Utes.

SUGAR BOWL:

Unlike the Fiesta Bowl, this was a fairly high scoring game, but Florida held a 3 point lead, 34-31, late in the game with time running out. Texas tried a 23 yard field goal to tie the game and send it into overtime, but Florida blocked the attempt and the game was over.

EPILOGUE:

For those who would like to replay the actual bowl games and/or re-seed the teams above for your own playoffs, you can easily do so with **FAST-ACTION COLLEGE FOOTBALL**. Or you can set up your own playoff with 4, 8, 16, or however many teams you wish. As I have mentioned

The defenses seemed to be the stars in the first two games, but we will see what happens in the Championship Game when Utah and Florida clash. The Rose Bowl in Pasadena, CA, was selected for the final game since it was neutral for both teams.

ROSE BOWL:

This was an extremely exciting game as the lead see-sawed back and forth. With Utah leading 24-17 early in the fourth quarter, Tim Tebow led the Gators right down the field to score the tying touchdown. Utah failed to move the ball and had to punt. Florida was moving again when it lost a fumble and Utah recovered on Florida's 45 yard line.

There were less than three minutes in the game as Utah began to move. On a third and three from the Florida 18 yard line, Utah passed for the go ahead touchdown and took a 31-24 lead. Florida got the ball back with less a minute to go. Tebow completed a couple long passes, but his last pass was incomplete as time expired. The unexpected, unbelievable Utah defeated mighty Florida Gators to finish the season unbeaten and claim the National Championship on the field of play.

previously in this publication, all of my sports simulation games are now half-price. College football is now only \$14.95 postpaid in the US (if you wish priority mail, that would cost \$4 extra; New York state residents must add 8% sales tax). All the top teams every year from 1869 through the present are included in the game. Lower division teams can also be found. There are well over 5,000 teams included in this

realistic and quickly played board game.
You may send PayPal payments directly to
me at mpremo@gmail.com. Or feel free to

visit my web site at
members.tripod.com/newaction where you
have the opportunity to obtain FREE games
with purchase.

I hope you enjoyed this fantasy excursion back into time.

* * *

Bud, Barry, and Bob Through 100 Games

Compiled by Keith Meador, SoonerStats.com

Seasons (last game)	Stoops	Switzer	Wilkinson
	1999-2006 (Texas A&M)	1973-1981 (Oregon State)	1947-1956 (Notre Dame)
All	100	100	100
Record	82-18	86-11-3	89-8-3
Percentage	82.0%	87.5%	90.5%
Scoring Avg	34.9 - 16.6	33.9 - 14.2	32.3 - 9.8
AP Titles	1	2	2
Home	46-2	45-3-1	42-2-1
Away	23-9	32-3-1	35-2-2
Neutral	13-7	9-5-1	12-4
vs Top 25	24-9	29-8-3	19-6
vs Top 10	10-5	15-7-1	7-6
vs Top 5	6-4	8-6-1	4-2
vs Number 1	1-1	0-1-1	1-1
Conference	61*	58	53
Record	51-10	53-4-1	51-0-2

Percentage	83.6%	92.2%	98.1%
Scoring Avg	34.7 - 16.8	35.4 - 13.9	37.2 - 8.5
Titles	3	8	9
Home	26-1	27-2-1	26-0-1
Away	19-6	26-2	25-0-1
Neutral	6-3	0-0	0-0
vs Top 25	19-5	17-2-1	6-0
vs Top 10	6-3	7-1	2-0
vs Top 5	5-2	3-1	0-0
vs Number 1	1-0	0-0	0-0
Non-Conference	28	36	42
Record	24-4	28-6-2	34-7-1
Percentage	85.7%	80.6%	82.1%
Scoring Avg	40.6 - 15.3	33.3 - 14.4	27.9 - 12.1
Home	20-1	18-1	16-2
Away	4-3	6-1-1	10-2-1
Neutral	0-0	4-4-1	8-3
vs Top 25	0-1	8-5-2	9-5
vs Top 10	0-0	4-5-1	1-5
vs Top 5	0-0	2-5-1	1-2

vs Number 1	0-0	0-1-1	0-1
Bowl	7	6	5
Record	4-3	5-1	4-1
Percentage	57.1%	83.3%	80.0%
Scoring Avg	18.9 - 19.4	22.3 - 15.3	16.6 - 5.0
vs Top 25	3-2	4-1	4-1

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Book on Football History at Colorado State University

Just in time for the start of the 2009 college football season, IFRA member John Hirn's book, *Aggies to Rams: The History of Football at Colorado State University*, will be available this coming September.

Pre-orders are now being accepted through CSU bookstore's website:

Any questions, you can email John at football@coloradoaggies.com.

<http://www.bookstore.colostate.edu/gorams>.

Hirn said that his book contains interviews, stories and "and amazing task to undertake--the inclusion of just over 600 photographs.

The book cost \$45 and that 80% of the net sales going to support CSU Athletic Scholarships!

* * *

IFRA Member Creates Online Museum—to honor his alma mater

By Tex Noel, Editor *TCFH*

College football teams and players devote many long hours of practice with hopes that their

efforts will pay-off in the form of a "championship." A trophy will then be presented to the team and each player will usually receive a ring as well.

IFRA member Travis Normand has created an online museum to honor the championship and events of his alma mater, Texas

A&M. There are a few other items featured on the site, as well as a couple significant trophies from other schools, but it is mainly a Texas Aggie Football museum.

As his blog states: A few years ago I noticed that A&M didn't do a very good job of displaying its football history (via its "hardware"). Most of these (other) schools do an amazing job of displaying their trophies and I am personally of the opinion that Texas A&M could do a much better job.

So, Travis set out to do just that. Travis has spent hours researching the football championships that were won by the Aggies. However, he is still searching for what he calls "proof of life" for many trophies that may have never existed. For example, he has spent many hours looking through news clippings and old black and white team photos from the 1921 season, desperately trying to find some "evidence" that a trophy from that season was given out, and what it might have looked like.

The "online" museum is really just a free blog site that allows him to post the photos in an organized manner with some accompanying text. Currently, there is only a small fraction of photos posted (compared to what he wants to post) and he is

getting to the rest as soon as he can. One of the "highlights" of the currently posted material is a photo of the 1927 Southwest Conference Championship Trophy. The photo was taken by Travis and he is pretty sure that it is the only photo of the trophy (at least it's the only photo that is online and available for others to view).

Travis asks that if anyone (especially a fellow IFRA member) has any information on other trophies that Texas A&M has been awarded, to please email him at: normand99@hotmail.com

Other info that is very helpful is information on SWC Trophies that were given to other SWC schools, or even bowl game trophies (such as the Cotton Bowl). Information like this is valuable in figuring out what a "missing" trophy might have looked like.

To view his online blog/museum, IFRA members can go to <http://blogs.texags.com/blogs/campusology>

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In Memory of...

Players: **Jeff Komlo**, (Delaware)...**Gus Cifelli**, (Notre Dame)...**Dwight Hood** and **Kyle Woods**, (Baylor)...**Ken Anderson** (Arkansas)...**Brad Hastings** (Texas Tech)...**Chuck Rylander** (Colorado)...**Ted Keller**, (Randolph Macon)

Coaches: Former Mississippi State head football **Paul Davis...Lou Saban**, who coached a number of college football teams...**Bruce Snyder**, the head football coach at Utah State, California, and Arizona State.

Others: **Donald Swanson**, former United Press International sports editor for bureaus in Kansas City, New Orleans...**Harry Kalas**, who did the voiceover narration for the NFF's College Football Hall of Fame induction videos for nearly two decades and other venues.

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Richard Topp sends this trivia question....with the answer following:

Name four colleges that produced a winning Super Bowl Quarterback and a U.S. President?

Answer:

➤ **NAVY**

Roger Staubach and Jimmy Carter

➤ **STANFORD**

Jim Plunkett/John Elway and Herbert Hoover

➤ **MICHIGAN**

Tom Brady and Gerald Ford

➤ **MIAMI (Ohio)**

Ben Roethlisberger and Benjamin Harrison

* * *

In last month's issue of **TCFH**, University of Colorado Media Relations Director **David Plati** submitted sons who played for their fathers, when the latter was also his head coach.

Three IFRA members, **Woody Woodrun, John Hirm and Bo Carter** have sent-in additions to the original compilation.

✓ **Marshall**

Father/coach: Jim

Donnan...Son/player: Todd Donnan, 1991-94;

✓ **Colorado State University**

Father/Coach: Harry Hughes

Son/player: William Hughes 1935 & 1937;

✓ **Mississippi State**

Father/Coach: Bob Tyler

Son/player: Breck Tyler, 1977-78*

**Transferred to Ole Miss after Bob Tyler was fired in Jan. 1979.*

* * *

1943 GEORGIA BULLDOGS: Johnny and the Miracles

By Patrick Garbin

The University of Georgia's 1942 football squad is still considered even today perhaps the school's greatest ever. The Bulldogs achieved an 11-1 record, including a shutout victory over UCLA in the Rose Bowl, and the first of only two consensus national championships in the football program's rich history.

However, with the season's closing came an expected end to Georgia's winning ways.

With the start of the 1943 season, the personnel demand of World War II had carried off many of college football's players into the draft. Only four of the 12 Southeastern Conference schools would field a team in '43 with the universities being interestingly located in the two states of Georgia and Louisiana—Georgia, Georgia Tech, LSU, and Tulane. Georgia was especially thin. Not only did some Bulldogs join the military, like future All-American and Maxwell Award winner Charley Trippi, but many key players were lost to graduation, namely All-Americans George Poschner and Frank Sinkwich, who had also captured the Heisman Trophy in 1942. In addition, several Bulldogs suffered injuries in the preseason. As Georgia neared the start of the 1943 campaign, Coach Wally Butts' squad returned not a single letterman from the season before but featured all 17-year-old freshmen or players who could not meet the military's physical standards. "We have pretty much of nothing," stated Butts prior to the season's start.

The depletion of players was compounded further when the

U.S. Army decided that six more players in UGA's advanced ROTC would also not be allowed to play. This could have been the straw that broke the Bulldog's back! Coach Butts now came to the realization there was little hope of winning more than one or two games during the year.

One day prior to Georgia's season opener against Presbyterian, Butts decided to ask his team if they wanted to join most of the SEC and cancel football in '43. If the players agreed to do so, Georgia's schedule would be eliminated immediately. "I asked them frankly if they wanted to pay the price in defeats they'll have to take," said Butts.

Georgia players agreed to do so. "So we'll play football as long as eleven men are available to put a team on the field." Butts and his Bulldogs would not join the majority of the conference, who appeared to place the possibility of a poor win-loss record above everything else. Instead, the decision was made by the Georgia team to honor the games that had been scheduled.

Presbyterian's experienced team, filled with seniors, had pummeled Fort Jackson the week before 41-0 and was a heavy favorite over the Bulldogs. Georgia kicked-off against the Blue Hose on September 17th on a Friday night at 8:15 "eastern war time" to begin a season which the *Atlanta Constitution* described, "looms as [Georgia's]

most dismal gridiron campaign in history.”

The Bulldogs not only shocked Presbyterian 25-7 but the victory stunned most of the college football world. In front of only 6,000 spectators at Sanford Stadium, Georgia intercepted nine Blue Hose passes, which still remains tied for an SEC single-game record. Most importantly, it discovered a new set of “Touchdown Twins” in freshmen Johnny Cook and Charles “Rabbit” Smith, replacing Frank Sinkwich and Charley Trippi from the memorable season before.

The Bulldogs lost a heartbreaker the following week in the last minute of play against LSU, the eventual Orange Bowl champion. The setback was followed with victories over Tennessee Tech and Wake Forest by a combined score of 74-0. Georgia, presumed to experience perhaps its worst season in history, was instead 3-1 and ranked 20th in the nation.

The Bulldogs lost their next game to Daniel Field, who was not an individual player or person but a team of former college stars in Augusta, Georgia. Next, LSU defeated Georgia for a second time, but the Dogs rebounded to win their next three contests.

Included during the three-game winning streak was a 46-7 thrashing of the Virginia Military Institute in Atlanta. Johnny Cook scored four touchdowns, all in the first half with the first three occurring within a 10-minute span. His scores included a 78-yard rush and 80-yard punt return. Cook’s four-touchdown performance would not be bettered at Georgia until more than 50 years later (Robert Edwards’ modern-school record of five touchdowns vs. South Carolina in 1995).

Inexperienced, young, and withstanding an ever-changing starting lineup, the Georgia Bulldogs, led by Cook, had miraculously won six of their first nine games and held a scoring margin of nearly 18 points per game heading into the finale against their state rival.

Unlike Georgia but resembling some college teams at the time, Georgia Tech’s football squad was made up of Navy V-12 and other military trainees. Despite 168 yards gained by Cook, the “military” Yellow Jackets hammered the amateur Bulldogs 48-0.

Interestingly, in chronicling the series results between the Dogs and the Jackets, Georgia discredits the two Yellow Jacket victories in 1943 and 1944 (a 44-0 Tech win). However, Georgia Tech considers its two victories despite fielding a squad supplemented by the V-12 Navy

College Training Program during both years.

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The Bulldogs ended the 1943 season with a respectable 6-4 record and the nation's ninth best offense, averaging 330 yards per contest (Georgia finished fourth in the country in passing offense). Johnny Cook, Georgia's 17-year-old, starting tailback, was the school's lone first team All-SEC selection. He led college football in passing, completing 73 of 157 passes for 1,007 yards and eight touchdowns. Cook also added 361 yards and nine scores on the ground. He was tied for fourth in the nation in scoring, tallying 72 points on 12 touchdowns (nine rushing, two on punt returns, and one via a kickoff return). To date, Cook remains the only Bulldog ever to lead the country in passing and, besides the great Sinkwich, the only Georgia player to finish a season in the top ten in both passing and scoring.

Soon after the '43 season, Cook followed the same path as many of the young men of his time as he was drafted into the military. He would not return to the university until just prior to the start of the 1946 football season. However, instead of returning to Georgia's lineup as its star tailback, Cook found himself mostly sitting on the Bulldogs' bench as there was overwhelming depth in the team's backfield. After finishing second in the SEC in scoring as a freshman in 1943,

Cook did not score a single point in his final year as a Bulldog in 1946. He did, however, pass for three touchdowns during a campaign where Georgia finished a perfect 11-0.

It has been said that the '43 Georgia Bulldogs are one of only a few, if any, college football teams that literally started from scratch to complete a season with a winning mark. The Bulldogs came so close to following most of the conference's teams and cancelling the 1943 schedule. However, led by young Johnny Cook, a one-season wonder, the Bulldogs apparent "most dismal gridiron campaign" was miraculously transformed into one of significant success.

A portion of this article is a revision of the "Against All Odds" story from Garbin's book *Then Vince Said to Herschel* (Triumph Books—2007). For more information on Garbin's books, please visit the author's website at **www.patrickgarbin.com**.

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The first football game between Goodnight College and Clarendon (Texas) College on February 21, 1903 was the first football game played in the Texas Panhandle.

--Jack Watson University of North Texas

2005
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 Football
 Historian-*
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25	Jason Campbell	Auburn	QB	4	1976	0.313	Troy Archer	Colorado	DE		
					1976	23	Mark Koncar	Colorado	T	3	16.0
					1991	13	Mike Pritchard	Colorado	WR		
					1991	18	Alfred Williams	Colorado	LB	2	15.5
					1993	23	Deon Figures	Colorado	DB		
11	Del Shofner	Baylor	B		1993	24	Leonard Renfro	Colorado	DT	2	20.5
12	Bill Glass	Baylor	G	2	1995	11.5	Michael Westbrook	Colorado	WR		
16	William Green	Boston College	RB		1995	21	Rashaan Salaam	Colorado	RB	2	12.5
29	Marc Colombo	Boston College	T	2		22.5					
3	Matt Ryan	Boston College	QB								
17	Gosder Cherilus	Boston College	T	2		10.0					
22	Gordon Hudson	Brigham Young	TE		NFL-AFL					Total	
28	Trevor Matich	Brigham Young	C	2	SEC	16					
11	Shawn Knight	Brigham Young	DT		PAC 10	14					
17	Jason Buck	Brigham Young	DE	2	BIG 10	12					
12	Regan Upshaw	California	DE		BIG 12	10					
16	Duane Clemons	California	DE	2	ACC	6					
13	Tony Gonzalez	California	TE		Independents	5					
19	Tarik Glenn	California	T	2	C-USA	4					
19	Kyle Boller	California	QB		Small Colleges	4					
31	Nnamdi Asomugha	California	DB	2	WAC	3					
5	Jerry Butler	Clemson	WR		Mountain West	2					
23	Steve Fuller	Clemson	QB	2	BIG EAST	1					
6	Jeff Bryant	Clemson	DE		No Longer Plays CFB	1					
19	Perry Tuttle	Clemson	WR	2							
11	Kevin Mack	Clemson	RB								
22	William Perry	Clemson	DT	2							
12	Pete Brock	Colorado	C								

❖ **Conferences with Most
 No. 1 Draft Choices—
 through the 2008 draft**

	NFL-AFL	Total
SEC	16	
PAC 10	14	
BIG 10	12	
BIG 12	10	
ACC	6	
Independents	5	
C-USA	4	
Small Colleges	4	
WAC	3	
Mountain West	2	
BIG EAST	1	
No Longer Plays CFB	1	

