

# The Heisman Trophy at 82 years

"I thank God I was born to the gridirons of the middle west and not to the battlefields of Europe... The Heisman award means more to me than all the military crosses of Europe." These words were spoken by Nile Clarke Kinnick, the 1939 winner at the awards dinner December 6, 1939. Sadly, as a Naval aviator, Kinnick would die less than four years later in a training crash off the carrier USS Lexington. He was 24 years old and the first Heisman winner to die. The University of Iowa in 1972 renamed their stadium in his honor.

The trophy was created by Frank Eliscu, who used Ed Smith, a running back at New York University, as a model. Later, he discussed with Fordham coach Jim Crowley how the model should carry the ball, resulting in the trademark "stiff arm" stance often characterized by would-be hopefuls.

Jay Berwanger, a running back at the University of Chicago and coached by Clark Shaughnessy, was the first winner but the award was named the "Downtown Athletic Club Trophy" for the best college football player "East of the Mississippi". John W. Heisman was the first Director of Athletics at the DAC. He died on October 3, 1936, and the Trophy was renamed in his honor. Berwanger died in 2002 at the age of 88. Currently, Johnny Lujack, the 1947 winner from Notre Dame, is the oldest living winner at 94 years old.

Lamar Jackson, the 2016 winner, is the first player from Louisville and coach Bobby Petrino's first winner. Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant did have a Heisman winner, John David Crow, when Bryant was coach at Texas A&M in 1957. In that regard, Frank Leahy at Notre Dame had four players win the award, the most of any coaches. Earl "Red" Blaik at Army, Pete Carroll at Southern California and Woody Hayes at Ohio State each had three players. Bobby Bowden at Florida State, Wayne Hardin at Navy, John McKay and John Robinson at Southern California, Ray Pond at Yale, Nick Saban at Alabama and Bob Stoops at Oklahoma each had two. Tommy Prothro is the only coach to have a player at two different colleges: Terry Baker at Oregon State and Gary Beban at UCLA. Baker is the only winner to also appear in the NCAA basketball Final Four.

During the 1940s, players from Army and Notre Dame dominated the award, winning five of the ten. Army's Glenn Davis would be runnerup in 1944 and 1945 before winning in 1946. Notre Dame's first winner in 1943, Angelo Bertelli, received his trophy January 12, 1944 due to his military service with the Marines. Bertelli played only 6 games in 1943 and rumors at the time were that the Army brass was responsible for his Marine induction before the Army-Notre Dame game to be played November 6<sup>th</sup> at Yankee Stadium. The Irish were 26-0 winners behind backup quarterback Johnny Lujack, who later entered the Navy and returned to become the 1947 Heisman winner.

Notre Dame and Ohio State have 7 players each as Heisman winners. Southern California has 6 with Reggie Bush's 2005 now vacated. Oklahoma has five and Army, Auburn, Florida, Michigan and Nebraska each have three. Army, Ohio State, Southern California and Yale claim back-to-back winners. Ohio State's Archie Griffin is the only two-time winner. Notre Dame had 29 players finish in the Top Five with Ohio State second at 20. Running backs and quarterbacks have dominated with 43 and 33 winners respectively.

In the first year (1935), there were 65 voters. The number grew to 1,324 in 1955 and for 2012, ballots were mailed to 870 media personnel plus 57 Heisman winners and one "fan" ballot for a total of 928 possible voters.

Willard B. Prince, founder and editor of the DAC Journal, was a prime mover of the award. The vote on a 3-2-1 basis was his desire to eliminate any geographical domination and that format remains to this day. The number of voters who actually submit ballots is not disclosed but counting the first place votes (FPV) of the Top Ten finishers is a fair estimate, especially when the tenth place players usually do not receive a FPV. Using available data from the last eight years, Troy Smith in 2006 received points from 876 voters of an estimated 924 while Mark Ingram in 2009 received points from 614 voters of an estimated 898. It is remarkable that 284 voters left Ingram off their ballot.