

The Behrend Beacon

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5 Reasons Why...

Larry Johnson should win the Heisman Trophy this year

Larry Johnson should be the Heisman Trophy winner because of his stats and lack of anyone clearly better. This is a bold statement, but I have compiled the stats to prove it. All stats are based on games as of 11-20.

If you don't know some of the names that I am about to mention, then you know very little about college football and will not enjoy this article. For those of you who enjoy college football (especially Penn State fans), bon appetite.

1. 1,736 Rushing Yards – This is a new Penn State single-season record and a very imposing number. This is good for second in the nation in rushing yards behind only Chris Brown of Colorado. Now on the surface one could argue that Brown should be a better candidate for the award because he currently has eight more yards than Johnson.

If you dig deeper into the stats of these two athletes you will find that it took Brown 43 more rushing attempts to get those eight yards. This shows that Johnson is clearly the better runner of the two.

Another prime candidate for the Heisman at the position of running back is Miami's Willis McGahee. In most current polls of the three running backs he is the closest to being favored for the award.

However, in rushing yardage Johnson is clearly the dominant back. McGahee has only 1,188 yards on a mere 190 carries as opposed to Johnson's 232 attempts and Brown's 275 rushes.

Attempts are only as good as the yardage received from them. In this stat, Johnson stands head and shoulders above the other two players. Johnson is averaging an incredible 7.5 yards per carry, which is 1.2yards more than either

McGahee or Brown. In fact out of all of the runners with more than 140 attempts this season, Johnson is leading the country in yards per carry.

With McGahee's lack of rushes and yards, and Brown's difficulty in keeping up with Johnson's yardage despite many more attempts, it is clear to see that



Scott Soltis

sports editor

LJ is the best yardage back in college football.

2. 116 Points Scored – Johnson's ability to get into the end zone ranks him second nationally in points scored. The only person

with more points is Brock Forsey of mighty Boise State. He is not an option because his team plays against high-school caliber defenses.

Again, we can compare Johnson's numbers with those of the other two major candidates. Chris Brown has scored 108 points and McGahee 102 points, both scored all their points on rushing touchdowns. Larry Johnson has scored three receiving touchdowns, which proves his versatility.

Brown for example, has only caught five passes for a total of 40 yards. McGahee has nearly as many receiving yards as Johnson, but has caught 20 fewer passes. Some wide receivers have not caught as many passes as Johnson.

Whether on the ground or through the air, Johnson is a threat to score. McGahee might pick up some receiving yards, but he has been unable to do the important thing, score. Brown is one dimensional, only running, never

receiving.

With this in mind Johnson should be solidified as the most versatile threat at running back in the country. Also, with his superior ability to run, catch, and importantly score, he is the best running back in the nation.

3. Arguments About Lack of Competition are Unfounded – Every team, I don't care if it is Miami of Florida or Miami of Ohio, is going to have some easy games. People like to use Penn State's schedule against Johnson to try and demean his accomplishments.

This is also how people can say that Brown or McGahee are better players. I say bologna.

Sure Larry put up huge games against Northwestern, Illinois, and most recently Indiana. But people quickly forget that he also had 161 all-purpose yards and two touchdowns against No. 4 Iowa.

He had 124 all-purpose yards and a TD against eighth-ranked Michigan.

Johnson also had what was easily his worst day of the season at No. 2 Ohio State and still managed 98 all-purpose and got into the end zone.

He steps up no matter what the circumstance, making it non-germane

4. There Is No Incredible Quarterback – Now, don't get me wrong Miami's Ken Dorsey, Marshall's Byron Leftwich, and Iowa's Brad Banks are all outstanding athletes and great quarterbacks. I just have doubts that any of them are Heisman worthy.

Leftwich showed a great deal of grit playing banged up several times, but his team plays no one. Central Florida and Virginia Tech were the two toughest teams on the schedule this

year, so it is no surprise that he is putting up big numbers. Also his numbers have dropped off significantly from 2001. He has just as many interceptions thrown as last year, but almost 20 fewer touchdowns.

Iowa's Brad Banks is emerging as a new favorite, for good reason. Banks is second in the country in QB rating, which is the best thing that he has going for him. However, looking deeper into how Banks stacks up we can see some more modest rankings. Banks is 32nd in the nation in passing yards and 22nd in completion percentage. These are not damning stats by any means, but it might plant a seed of doubt.

Finally we have Ken Dorsey. Miami's offense is a lot like the St. Louis Rams, put somebody behind it and it will go far. Dorsey has an incredible supporting cast which allows him to be a serious contender. That, plus the fact that he is on a team that has not lost in a long time, and is currently ranked tops in the nation, and he has a great deal of momentum for the Heisman.

5. The Votes Will Be Highly Divided – With Dorsey, Leftwich, Banks, McGahee, Johnson, and to a lesser extent Brown all neck and neck it will be a tight race. Dorsey, Banks, McGahee, and Johnson all will garnish a decent number of votes. The fact that they are both play Hurricanes will hurt Dorsey and McGahee, with loyal Miami voters not knowing which candidate to select. So, the race is between Banks and Johnson. Both Big Ten teams which might divide loyal Big Ten voters.

The race can go many ways, especially with a week to go. People can pull away; people can have a bad day. The Heisman this year will be down to the wire, but if the season were to end today, Larry Johnson deserves the coveted trophy.

Even if he has a bad day (which is unlikely against once-powerful Michigan State), Johnson still has had a phenomenal season worthy of high acclaim.

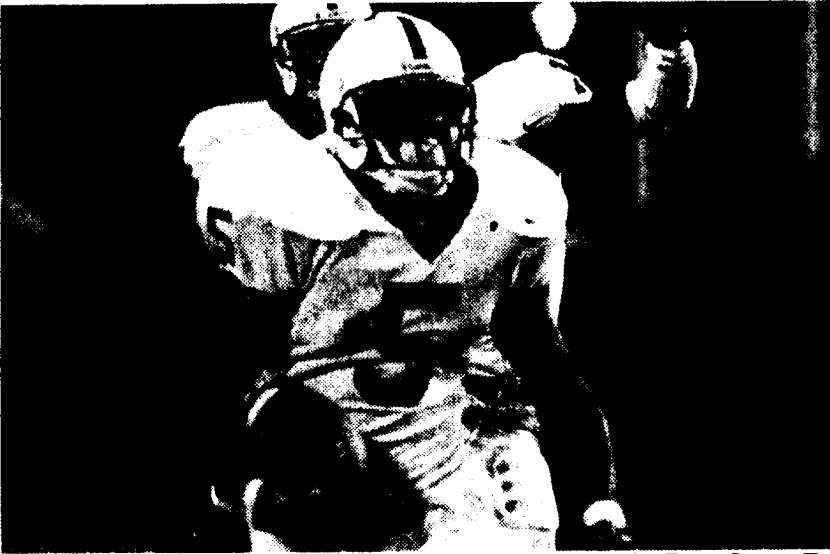


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Senior Larry Johnson has been has had an incredible year for Penn State. To cast an official vote for the Heisman Trophy race go to www.voteheisman.com

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