

# JOHNSON TAKES THIRD PLACE IN HEISMAN TROPHY VOTING

By Peter Strella  
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Predicting the Heisman Trophy winner was like trying to choose between Coors Light twin number one, or Coors Light twin number two. It was just too close to call.

But as the race for the Heisman came closer to the finish, USC Quarterback Carson Palmer pulled ahead. People could not stop talking about the 425 yards and 4 touchdowns he put up against Notre Dame two weeks ago. It was enough to win him the most prestigious individual award in college sports.

Palmer secured 1,328 points and 242 first place votes to beat out Iowa Quarterback Brad Banks. Penn State's own Larry Johnson finished third with 726 points and 108 first place votes. Miami's Willis McGahee and Ken Dorsey rounded out the top five with 660 and 643 points respectively.

Every Heisman winner needs a performance that defines his greatness, and the clinic Palmer put on against the Fightin' Irish was exactly that. Palmer threw for 3,639 yards, 32 touchdowns, only 12 interceptions, and led his team to a 10-2 record this season. The Heisman Trophy will help him forget the three mediocre seasons he had before this year, when Palmer posted a lackluster record of 16-16.

Banks had an incredible season, but couldn't match the numbers that Palmer put up. Johnson became only the ninth running back to rush for over 2,000 yards, but was unspectacular in Penn State's three losses. Dorsey and McGahee, who both play for the Miami Hurricanes, seemed to cancel each other out.

In the end, what appeared to be one of the closest Heisman votes ever was anything but. Palmer beat Banks by 233 points, the biggest margin since 1998. Interestingly, what was already labeled as the most exciting game in the Bowl Championship Series just got better. Brad Banks has a chance to gain revenge on Carson Palmer when Iowa and USC go head to head at the Orange Bowl on January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The biggest surprise of the evening was Ken Dorsey's fifth-place finish. The voters didn't succumb to the East Coast bias, or to the fact that Dorsey plays quarterback for the number one team in the country. It's about time. Palmer was the first West Coast player to win the Heisman since USC's own Marcus Allen won it in 1981.

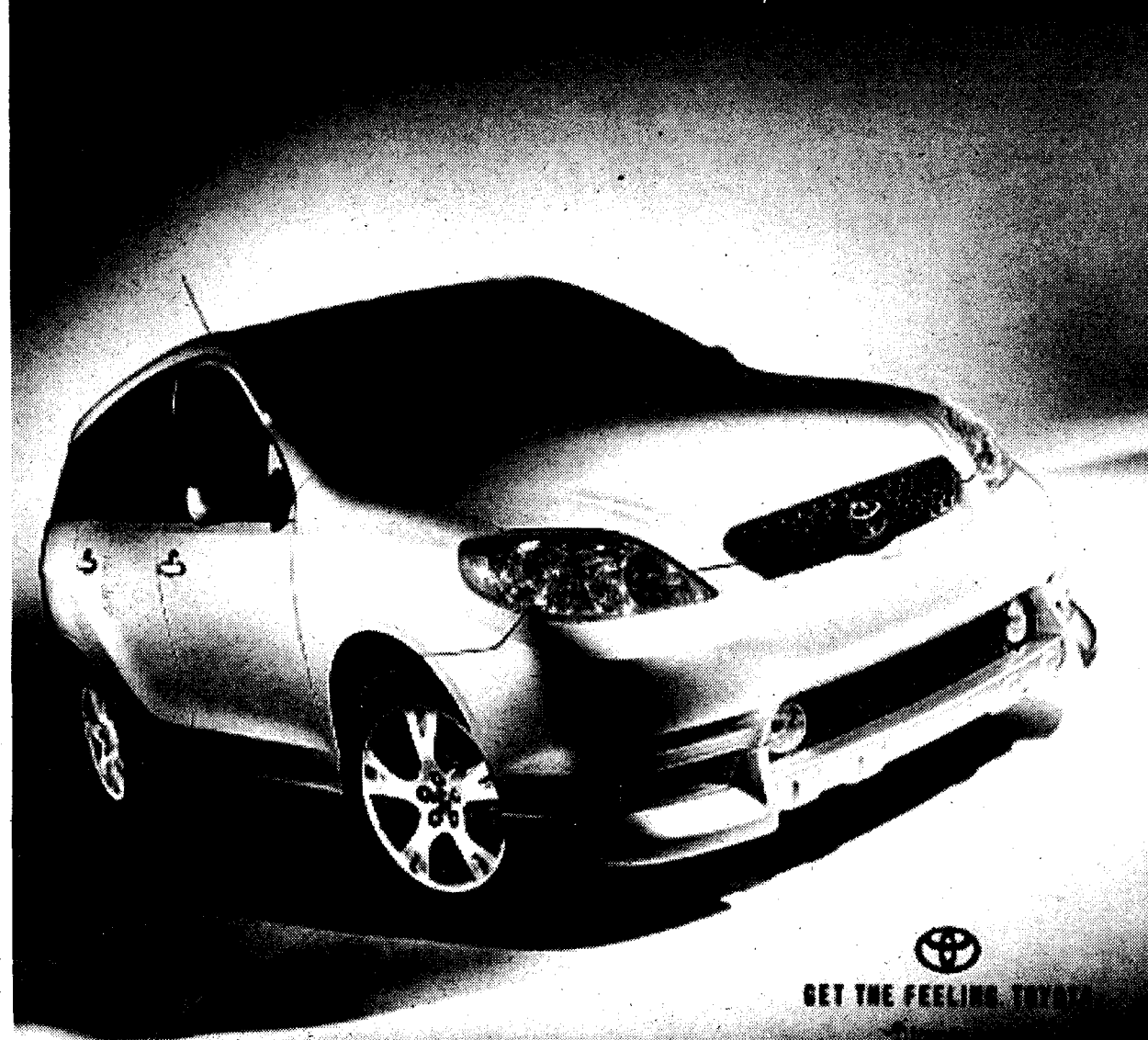
Another big surprise was that Larry Johnson's home region wasn't convinced he was worthy of the Heisman. Palmer won the Northeast region over Johnson by 64 points.

However, Johnson's extraordinary season can't be discarded because he didn't win the Heisman. In addition to his 2,015 yards rushing, Johnson scored 23 rushing touchdowns. His 8.03 yards per carry is the most ever in college football. Johnson also led the nation in total yards per game with 214.

Johnson did not go unrecognized for his accomplishments. He captured the Doak Walker Award, given to the nation's best running back. In addition, he won the Maxwell Award (best all-around player) and the Walter Camp player of the Year Award.

**The Capital One Citrus Bowl: #10 Penn State vs. Auburn on January 1<sup>st</sup> at 1 p.m. on ABC.** I have been undefeated since I started predicting the opposite of what I thought was going to happen. Therefore, Auburn wins over Penn State 34-24.

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