

Johnny R. wins Heisman 'character' contest

Continued from page 1

Trophy early in the season. It was only a longshot hope. His off-the-field exploits still were holding him back.

But as the season progressed, Rodgers' chances for the Heisman brightened. Oklahoma's Greg Pruitt, the leading candidate before the season opened, was not enjoying a record-smashing season as he had the year before.

It became apparent that Rodgers, statistically speaking, was the only candidate. The Heisman Trophy then developed into a character contest instead of an award for the nation's outstanding college football player.

Rodgers received his first big boost from Dan Jenkins of *Sports Illustrated*.

"For his size, which is no more than 5-9 and 173 pounds, Rodgers has to be the most devastating player who ever suited up . . ." Jenkins wrote. "If Johnny Rodgers is not this season's leading Heisman Trophy candidate, then most of the voters must be planning on writing in the name of their cousins. But there happens to be one writer—me—who intends to vote for the best football player in the country, in or out of the courtroom, or in our out of a crowd of tacklers, and that player happens to be Johnny Rodgers."

But there were critics, especially on the East Coast. Gene Ward, *New York Daily News* columnist who

had written that Rodgers should not be considered because of his off-the-field record, wrote:

"The rule of candidacy for the Heisman Award is limited to one word—'outstanding.' I take 'outstanding' to encompass actions on and off the field . . ."

Rodgers himself became obsessed with winning the Heisman Trophy. He couldn't understand why his character should be questioned. He was downright bitter at times.

"If they want to make the Heisman Trophy a character contest then they can keep the damn thing," Rodgers said after the Oklahoma game Thanksgiving Day. "I don't know how people in New York or California can say Johnny Rodgers is a bad person."

"If they give somebody else the Heisman Trophy and say he's a better player, then they're fibbing. Nobody can compare with my statistics over the last three years. But if it's got to be a character contest and people don't think Johnny Rodgers has a good character, then to hell with 'em."

Johnny Rodgers has changed, all right. His fight to gain public acceptance has been a trying experience. "I've learned just how cold-blooded life really is," he said.

But, perhaps now he thinks it was worth it. He was named the 1972 Heisman Trophy winner in New York City Tuesday.

"A lot of things went through my mind when I found out I won," Rodgers said. "I really have a lot of people to thank."



Rodgers . . . I want people to understand me.

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Students interested in officiating intramural basketball second semester are asked to attend an official's clinic Saturday at 10 a.m. in the men's physical education building.

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Southern California was a unanimous selection as national collegiate football champions by the United Press International poll of coaches. Oklahoma finished second and Nebraska was ninth. The Associated Press poll, which conducts its final balloting after the bowl games, also had Nebraska ninth this week.

Iowa State football coach Johnny Majors and Oklahoma assistant coach Barry Switzer will be interviewed Friday for the head coaching post at Michigan State.

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