

Rodgers— no cheap tactics

by Jim Johnston

Oklahoma halfback Greg Pruitt, who finished second in the Heisman Trophy balloting Tuesday, thinks sportswriters across the nation made a mistake.

"I feel I deserved it," Pruitt said. "I feel I'm a better ballplayer."

Pruitt gave two reasons why he thinks Nebraska's Johnny Rodgers was selected for the award which honors the outstanding college football player in the nation.

Jim Johnston

"Johnny won because of two things," Pruitt said. "He does more than one thing on the field and he had more publicity."

Johnny's versatility in returning punts, catching passes and running from scrimmage was definitely an advantage. But it is unfair of Pruitt to charge that Rodgers had more publicity.

Most of the publicity which Rodgers received exploited his bad-guy image. And the University of Nebraska athletic department did not organize a "Rodgers for Heisman"

campaign as other schools with other candidates have done in the past.

Nebraska football coach Bob Devaney and sports information director Don Bryant were in a delicate situation. Rodgers and Cornhusker middle guard Rich Glover, who finished third in the voting, were both solid candidates. They didn't use cheap tactics to sell either one.

Many elements are involved in winning the Heisman Trophy. It takes hard campaigning to win any kind of election these days, even the Heisman race. So when they have candidates to push, the athletic publicity departments of the major colleges unleash promotional blitzes.

In 1967, for example, UCLA mailed out 1,000 four-color brochures extolling the talents of a quarterback it labeled "The Great One," Gary Beban. Beban won. The year before, Florida dispatched long telegrams to major newspapers after each game recounting the exploits of Steve Spurrier.

Sometimes the image-makers go even further. Two years ago, the pronunciation of Notre Dame quarterback Joe Theismann's name was temporarily changed from "Threes-man" to "Thighs-man" (which rhymes with Heisman) so that the Fighting Irish drum-beaters could employ the phrase "Theismann for Heisman." And in Mississippi, they recorded a rock song hailing quarterback Archie Manning.

Those gimmicks didn't help. The 1970 winner was Jim Plunkett of Stanford.

But Johnny Rodgers had to sell himself. He had to erase a bad-guy image that developed with his brushes with the law the past three years.

Devaney always defended Rodgers. "John is really a good guy," Devaney said. "I don't think people should judge him for a mistake he made more than three years ago."

But Devaney, nor the sports information office, could never completely endorse either Rodgers or Glover.

"I'd just have to say that John is the best offensive football player in the nation and Rich is the best defensive player," Devaney said. "If they want to pick an offensive player for the Heisman Trophy, then pick Rodgers. If they want a defensive player, then pick Glover."

Rodgers and Glover both won. Rodgers with the Heisman and Glover with the Outland Trophy, which honors the best lineman in college football.

The big problem now belongs to Devaney. How could Nebraska lose two games and tie another if the Cornhuskers had the best offensive and defensive players in the nation.

"I was afraid people would start asking that question," Devaney grinned.

sports shorts

Nebraska has placed three players on the 1972 United Press International all-American team.

The Cornhuskers placed Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers at wide receiver, Outland Trophy recipient Rich Glover at middle guard and defensive end Willie Harper on the all-American squad as selected by 230 sportswriters and sportscasters across the country.

Other Big Eight players named to the team include Oklahoma center Tom Brahaney and running back Greg Pruitt, and defensive back Cullen Bryant of Colorado.

R & I plans experiment with small fry basketball

A small-fry basketball league is just one of the new ideas the Department of Recreation and Intramurals will experiment with second semester. The intramural basketball season begins Jan. 22.

The small-fry basketball league will be for students 5-10 and under. The players will be measured before each game. A person playing in the small-fry league may also play for a team in the 'A', 'B' or 'C' league because teams in the small-fry league are not eligible for the All-University play-offs. For the first time, 'C' league teams will be eligible for the play-offs.

Playing time will be shortened this season. Teams will play eight minute quarters instead of 10 minute quarters. This means more games could be played each night.

The rule that requires a numeral or name on the back of jerseys will be strictly enforced. Players without identification will receive a technical foul and be ejected from the game. A number made with adhesive tape will not be acceptable.

Basketball officials may now arrange their own schedules instead of being assigned to games. They will be paid \$1.65 per game. There will be an officials clinic at the Men's P.E. Building, Saturday at 10 a.m.

The Recreation and Intramurals Office is now accepting entries for the intramural basketball season. These are due Dec. 14.

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