

DAYNE DEAL

Wisconsin's tailback favored to win Heisman

NEW YORK (AP) — When Peter Warrick stumbled on the road to the Heisman Trophy, Ron Dayne kept going, and going and going.

Dayne, Wisconsin's record-setting tailback, arrives at the Downtown Athletic Club for Saturday's Heisman presentation as the favorite to receive college football's most glamorous individual award.

Even the competition has all but conceded.

"Pretty much everyone is handing it to Dayne, but you never know," said Georgia Tech's Joe Hamilton, one of four quarterbacks who joined him as finalists.

"Ron Dayne broke the rushing record. It's going to be tough to beat him," said Marshall's Chad Pennington.

"I think everyone is deserving in a way, but Ron Dayne has done a lot. What he's meant to his team is beyond anything what a lot of us have done," added Purdue's Drew Brees.

And Virginia Tech's Michael Vick, the first freshman invited to a televised Heisman ceremony, was just happy for the trip to New York.

"It means a lot, but I do feel it's for upperclassmen, and Dayne ... he had a great season," Vick said.

With so much support, counting the 921 Heisman ballots — plus a first-time one vote for fans — appears to be a formality. However, there have been Heisman "upsets," the most recent occurring in 1997 when Michigan cornerback Charles Woodson won over Tennessee quarterback Peyton Manning.

Others included Gino Torretta of Miami winning over Marshall Faulk of San Diego State in 1992, and Pat Sullivan of Auburn beating Ed Marinaro of Cornell in 1971.

Dayne moved into the clear favorite's role when Florida State's Warrick was suspended for two games at midseason after his arrest on charges of felony grand theft.

At the time, Warrick's dazzling play receiving, running, returning punts and even passing, seemed to be more popular than Dayne's assault on the Division I-A rushing record.

But the 5-foot-10, 254-pound Dayne revved up for a final push at Ricky Williams' record. Williams broke Tony Dorsett's 22-year-old mark last season and went on to win the Heisman.

Dayne topped 200 yards in three of the final four games as he led the Badgers (9-2) to the Big 10 Conference title and a second-straight Rose Bowl berth. He ran for 214 yards in an easy win over Michigan State, which entered the game with the

nation's top rushing defense, and broke Williams' record with a 216-yard day in a 41-3 win over Iowa in the regular-season finale.

His career totals are 1,115 carries for 6,397 yards and 63 touchdowns. For the season, Dayne was the nation's second-leading rusher with 1,834 yards — 6.1 yards per carry — and 19 TDs.

Winning the Heisman was not one of the reasons the media-shy Dayne passed on the NFL to stay in school. He wanted another year of being with his 2-year-old daughter, Jada, and his girlfriend, Alia Lester, a senior at Wisconsin. Also, his sister, Onya, was an incoming freshman.

Winning games, not the Heisman, was his first order of football business.

"It would be a great award," said Dayne, from Berlin, N.J. "I'm just happy to be mentioned in the top two or three or four. It would help the program here. You don't get that unless you're doing something good."

Dayne's numbers this season are impressive, especially when he sat out the second halves of blowouts against Murray State, Ball State and Indiana, but so are those of the other finalists.

Hamilton, 5-10 and 189 pounds, was the nation's second-rated passer with 3,060 yards

and 29 TDs in leading the Yellow Jackets to an 8-3 season. He was spectacular even in defeat. In a 41-35 loss to Florida State, he completed 22-of-25 passes for 387 yards and four TDs and ran for another score.

Pennington led the Thundering Herd (12-0) to a perfect regular season by throwing for 3,799 yards and 37 TDs.

Brees threw for 3,531 yards and 21 TDs in leading Purdue to a 7-4 record.

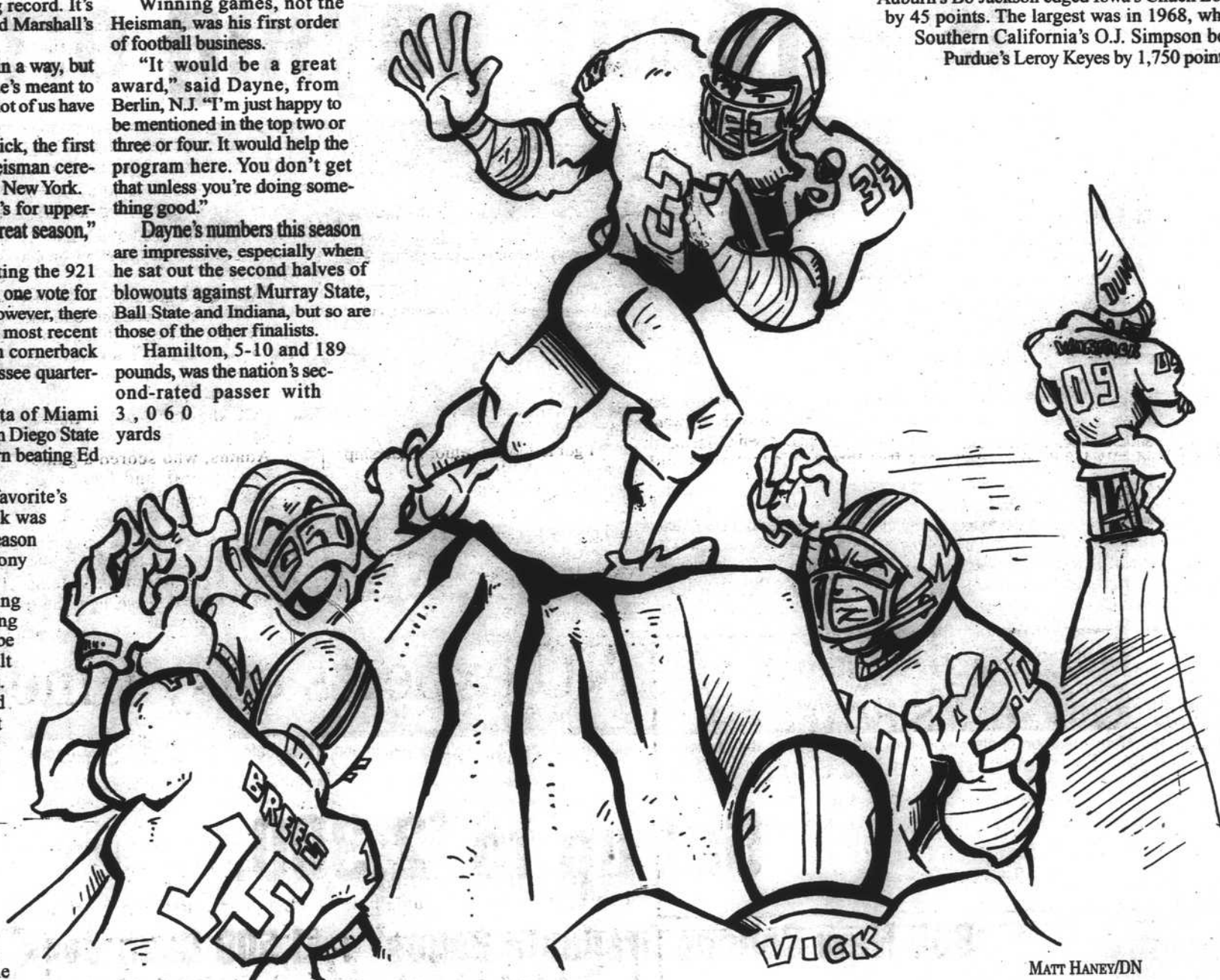
And then there's Vick, who led the nation in passing efficiency and was college football's surprise player of the year. The redshirt fresh-

man threw for 1,840 yards and 12 TDs and ran for 585 yards and eight scores in leading No. 2 Virginia Tech (11-0) to a national championship game against No. 1 Florida State in the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 4.

No freshman or sophomore has won the Heisman, which has been presented since 1935.

The freshman with the most points was Georgia's Herschel Walker, who had 683 in finishing third in 1980 behind George Rogers (1,128 points) and Hugh Green (861). Walker won the Heisman in 1982 as a junior.

The closest Heisman vote was in 1985, when Auburn's Bo Jackson edged Iowa's Chuck Long by 45 points. The largest was in 1968, when Southern California's O.J. Simpson beat Purdue's Leroy Keyes by 1,750 points.



MATT HANEY/DN

NU runs out of gas in loss

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to redshirt. That's absolute. You can put it in your book and stop asking us because it's over," Nee said.

The Huskers held the lead again early in the second half, as Danny Walker's second straight 3-pointer put Nebraska up 46-43. Walker hit four 3-pointers in the contest to account for all of his 12 points.

It was the next five minutes that would prove to be the turning point, though.

Creighton used several 3-pointers of its own to begin a run, and by the 13-minute mark, the Bluejays were in control, 61-52. Although the Huskers attempted to mount several runs late in the contest, Creighton answered and even poured it on in the waning moments, much to the delight of the 9,377 fans that packed the Auditorium.

Nee gave credit to his coaching counterpart Dana Altman and his team.

"Creighton played at an extremely high level tonight, both offensively and defensively," Nee said. "I really liked the way they played. Dana really had his kids ready to go tonight."

Nee said CU freshman Terrell Taylor, who scored a game-high 21 points, including 8-10 from the field and 3-3 from beyond the 3-point line, was a surprising difference for the Bluejays.

"Terrell Taylor — I didn't even know who he was until a little over 24 hours ago, and he just played exceptional for them tonight," Nee said.

The Nebraska coach and his injured star both blamed the Huskers' lack of execution for the loss, too. They both said the Huskers' death knell was exactly what it had

been all year — turnovers. Nebraska committed 24 in the game.

Despite playing at a high level for a half and shooting 54 percent from the floor for the game, Nee wasn't anxious to give any credit to his team, mainly because of the miscues.

"It's hard to evaluate (the first half) without taking the whole game into account," he said. "I thought we sucked. Twenty-four turnovers is never going to beat anyone good."

Belcher put much of the blame on his own shoulders, citing his six turnovers as "the difference in the game." He said he was frustrated with his inability to use his right hand but hoped to be ready to go against Pittsburgh on Saturday.

"I'm probably going to play again," he said. "The wrist is sore as always, but I hope to be ready to play by Saturday. I need to play for the team."

Injured senior a key to Creighton's win

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"I know how much these guys around here wanted it, and I know how much I wanted it," Taylor said. "I could just imagine how much they wanted it being from the Midwest. We really wanted this game because they kind of did us wrong last year. They did a few things that were kind of disrespectful."

Taylor repeatedly took the CU offense under his belt and brought defensive intensity with his four steals and a block of NU guard Cookie Belcher. Taylor made a 3-pointer as time expired in the second half and basked in the moment as CU rushed the court. Altman

likes what he sees in his young phenom.

"The young man doesn't lack for confidence," Altman said. "That was an outstanding performance from a freshman. He is starting to recognize his mistakes, and that shows his progress as a player."

"I don't know if he can have that kind of production all the time, but his athleticism sure does give us a boost."

Taylor said all the right things afterwards and showed maturity in putting the game into perspective.

"There are a lot more things we need to accomplish than beating Nebraska," Taylor said. "I understand it is a big rivalry, but it is just one more game in our book."