

Heisman win emotional for Troy Smith

NEW YORK (AP) - Winning the Heisman Trophy was easy. The hard part for Troy Smith was staying composed.

To the surprise of no one, the Ohio State quarterback was the runaway winner of the award that honors college football's best player.

Seconds after his name was called Saturday night, he hugged everyone important in his life — coaches and family — let out a deep, deep sigh and headed for the podium.

"Normally, I'm pretty cool in pressure situations, but my heart is pounding so fast now," he said.

"I'm at a loss for words. I just can't believe this is happening. ...It means everything. Just to be here in this situation. I love everybody back home in Columbus."

Just two years after nearly derailing his career by taking money from a booster, Smith received 801 first-place votes and won the Heisman by 1,662 points — both the second-best marks in the 71-year history of the award.

Arkansas running back Darren McFadden (878) finished second, Notre Dame quarterback Brady Quinn (782) was third and West Virginia running back Steve Slaton (214) was fourth.

Only O.J. Simpson's 1,750-point victory in 1968 was more lopsided than Smith's.

"I haven't spent that much time dreaming about it," Smith said of winning the Heisman. "But I'll be dream-

ing about it tonight. It's pretty cool."

The senior moved to the front of the Heisman race in September with a flawless performance against Texas and finished off a perfect regular season by throwing four touchdown passes against Michigan.

Now, there's only one thing left for Smith to do: Beat Florida for the national championship on Jan. 8.

A huge smile lit up Smith's face when his name was announced. After getting a hug and handshake from Quinn, Smith headed to the row of chairs directly behind him, where his mother, Tracy, and sister, Brittany, were sitting.

They each took turns giving Smith a big squeeze. But Smith wasn't done with the hugs — one for Ohio State coach Jim Tressel and another for his high school coach, Ted Ginn Sr.

Mom wiped away a tear and his sister shouted "Yeah, Troy!" as Smith ascended the stairs to give his speech and collect his big bronze statue.

"The Smith family is loud. Very emotional all the time," Smith said. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

The 22-year-old Smith is the sixth player from Ohio State to win the Heisman and first since tailback Eddie George in 1995. And it's the school's seventh Heisman — Archie Griffin won two in 1974-75 — tying Notre Dame and Southern California for the most.

"Now I'm part of that elite group," Smith said.

Smith received 86.7 percent of the first-place votes, a record, and his point total of 2,540 places third in Heisman history behind Simpson (2,853) and fellow Southern California tailback Reggie Bush, who had 2,541 last season.

USC had been on a Heisman run, winning two straight and three of the last four, before Smith stepped in.

Just like USC's Bush and Matt Leinart, and Oklahoma's Jason White in '03, Smith will play for the national title as a Heisman

winner.

"I'm still in awe over this situation," he said, sporting dark three-piece suit with red pinstripes and a Buckeyes' scarlet and gray tie.

"I represent these colors to the fullest," he said.

It's been quite a journey.

"I'm proud of him and everything he's accomplished," Quinn, a fellow Ohioan, said of Smith. Knowing his background, knowing where he comes from, I think it's an important thing to understand why he's so driven and so deserving of such an award."

Smith came to Ohio State

as part of a heralded recruiting class in 2002, but his signing was little more than a footnote. His claim to fame was being Ted Ginn Jr.'s quarterback at Glenville High School.

Smith was labeled an "athlete" coming out of high school, the type of player who might ultimately find a home at wide receiver or defensive back.

Even Tressel wasn't sure he'd play quarterback, but he saw potential.

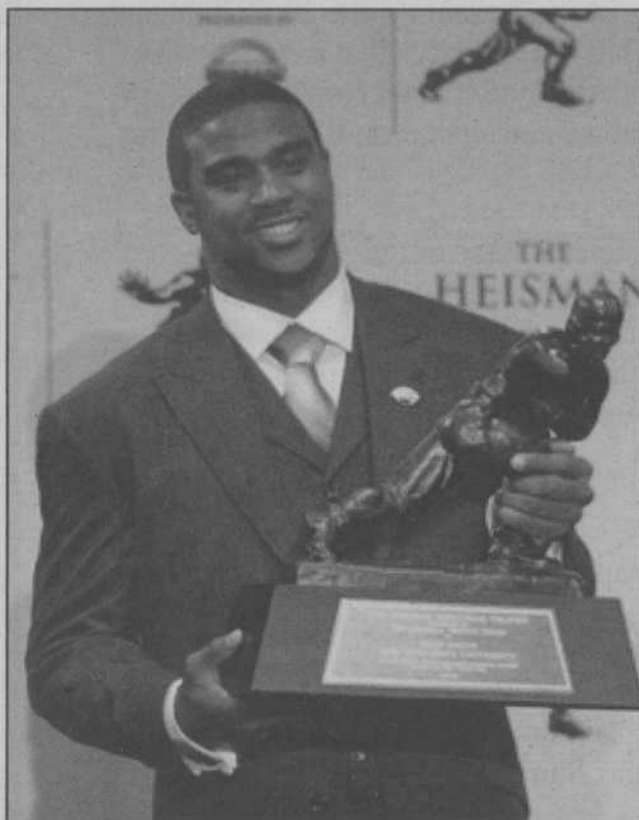
But Smith, a foster child as a teen with a quick temper, also had a penchant for finding trouble. After getting

kicked off the basketball team at a private high school for elbowing an opponent, he transferred out of the suburbs of Cleveland to inner-city Glenville High. Smith, who is Black, said the White opposing player used a racial slur against him.

At Ohio State, Smith was involved in a fight outside a dorm in the fall of 2003 and found guilty of disorderly conduct.

On the field, Smith couldn't beat out Justin Zwick, the highly touted blue-chipper from the '02 class, at the start of the 2004

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Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith holds up the Heisman Trophy after winning the award in a landslide over Arkansas' Darren McFadden and Notre Dame's Brady Quinn on Saturday at Madison Square Garden in New York.

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