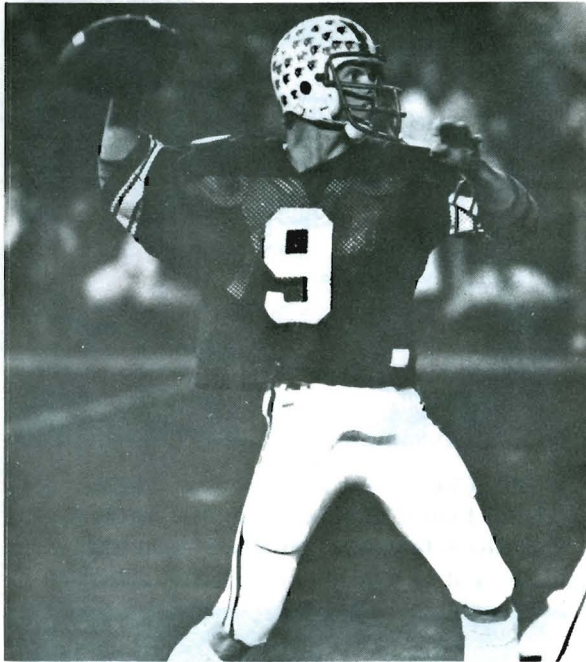


JIM MCMAHON:

HEISMAN CANDIDATE



THE RECORD

- Has set or tied 34 NCAA (Division I) football records... with the 1981 season remaining.
- Led the NCAA in passing efficiency last season (176.9), 27 points ahead of his nearest competitor (149 rating).
- Led the NCAA in total offense in 1980 (385.6 yards per game), 108 yards per game ahead of his nearest competitor, Mark Herrmann (277).
("Being the most prolific *and* most efficient (passer) at the same time has been next to impossible—not only in passing but in other categories"—*NCAA Statistics Service Bulletin*.)
- All-America first team, 1980, American Football Coaches Association (Kodak)
- All-America second team, 1980, United Press International
- All-America second team, 1980, Associated Press
- Western Athletic Conference Offensive Player of the Year, 1980.
- Placed fifth in Heisman Trophy voting, 1980
- All-Western Athletic Conference, first team (unanimous choice)
- *Sports Illustrated* Player of the Week, October 18, 1980 Game
- First player in NCAA history (Division I) to pass for more than 4,000 yards in a season (4,571 in 12 games)
- In seven games last season, including the Holiday Bowl, he had 400 or more yards passing.
- In Holiday Bowl III against Southern Methodist, he threw for 446 yards, including a 41-yard touchdown pass after time had run out. BYU won 46-45.

As one looks at Jim McMahon's records, it is puzzling why he finished only fifth in the Heisman Trophy voting in 1980 as a Junior. Maybe it was because he's small (6' 0", 177) or that he was a junior coming from a sparsely populated area. I believe if he produces similar stats this season he should be the leading candidate for the Heisman Trophy in 1981.

Jim weighed 120 pounds in the 9th grade and his coach in California started him out on free weights. He got up to 120 pounds on the bench and did a lot of tricep work (dips, french presses and tricep pushdowns). This tricep work really helped his throwing. When asked what a young QB should start doing to become great, Jim quickly responded, "He should start lifting weights in high school. You can throw more passes more often. It helps your endurance for throwing and greatly helps in preventing injuries."

Jim moved to Utah for his junior year of high school. He now benched 240 pounds at a body weight of 160. Jim kept up his tricep work religiously and as a senior he weighed 165 pounds. Because of Bench Press Shoulder (see page 26), Jim stopped doing this lift but remained on his tricep routine. Jim was an excellent basketball and baseball player in high school. He lifted weights all year round and admits to sneaking in the weight room at times during the basketball season. However, Jim feels he shot better the next day after lifting. Strangely, Jim was not heavily recruited at all but Brigham Young University, with its awesome and prolific aerial attack, felt Jim McMahon could follow in the footsteps of other BYU QB greats like Marc Wilson and Gifford Nielson. They were so very, very right.

McMahon's rise to greatness is even all the more remarkable when one considers his early life. Jim, at age six, stuck a fork deep into his eye and two prongs severed the retina. The doctors didn't think he'd see, but as the years went by Jim's eye got stronger. Still the doctors advised Jim not to play sports. However, Jim never considered it a handicap and started organized sports at the age of 9. He needed really strong glasses at the time, but now his vision has improved to 20/60. He must wear dark glasses because his eye does not contract and he can't wear contacts because his eye doesn't water properly. Now, on game days, Jim plays without his glasses with 20/60 vision to the tune of nearly 400 yards per game.

From his junior year of high school, Jim had also had knee problems. He just couldn't extend his leg or hold it up. He finally got it operated on in 1979. There was no ligament or cartilage damage, but the doctors took out a lot of dead tissue. McMahon likes the way his leg feels now and is very confident that the operation was a complete success.

BYU's strength coach Chuck Stiggins has a special QB program which is 50% free weights and 50% Nautilus in the off-season and reports that McMahon has 300-pound bench press strength. During the in-season, McMahon has used a 100% Nautilus workout. However, for the 1981-82 year, Stiggins is enthusiastic about a greater percentage of the QB's workout being with free weights.

During the season, Jim gets his arm rubbed down every day before and after practice. He is also stretched in the training room so that his arm is really ready for practice. It has to be because McMahon throws 400 to 500 times per day in practice. He also believes in keeping his arm warm during games when the defense is on the field. He'll wear a jacket and throw on the sideline even on a warm day.

Jim believes you've got the "pay the price" and "when your body starts achin', then is when you start pushin'." "Athletics helps teach you to be successful in life." I nodded in agreement, and then I decided since our interview was about over to call a lineback blitz just to check his reaction. So I said, "Jim, obviously you're too small to play pro football. Are you going into coaching after graduation?" Jim's eyes narrowed for just an instant, but I could see the hair bristle ever so slightly on the back of his neck. He quickly and matter-of-factly declared, "I'm playing Pro Ball. It's always been a dream of mine." He gave me five examples of smaller athletes who are currently playing in the NFL in quick succession. "It's not how big you are, but what's inside. I know a lot of people with all the tools, but they just don't do it," replied McMahon as he looked me right in the eye. Well, McMahon scrambled away from my blitz and scored a TD in my book. That's why I believe Jim McMahon should be a top contender for the Heisman Trophy.