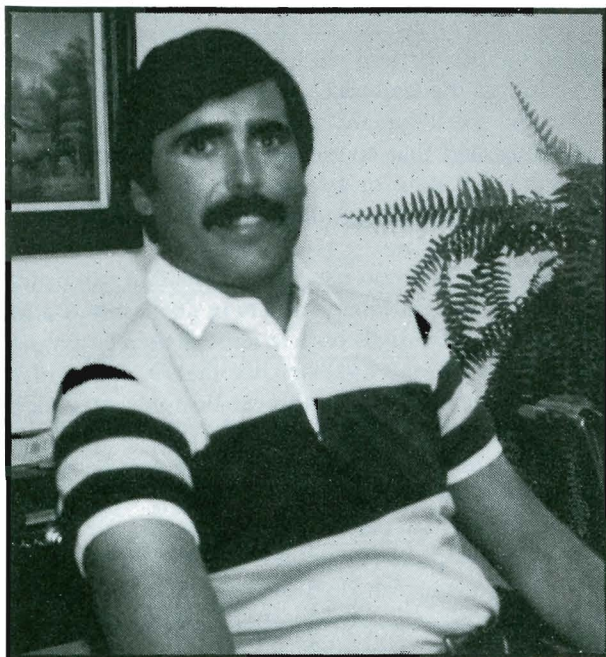


# JAN SMITH

## A COACHING LEGEND



Story by Greg Shepard

This is a very emotional article for me to write. Jan Smith is a very, very special man and is indeed a coaching legend. He has just resigned as head football coach at Morgan High School in Utah. He did not get fired, promoted or move on to another coaching job. Jan was struck down by multiple sclerosis, a crippling disease which retards and progressively deteriorates the use of the muscles.

Coach Smith went to Alameda High School and was an All-Northern California running back at 5-10 180 pounds. He also ran the 440 in track. Forrest Klein was his football coach. Smith could bench press 220 and played in the State All-Star Game while graduating in 1967.

It was then on to Brigham Young University. He once "Porked Up" to 206 and "they had to roll me onto the field" Jan stated with a wry smile. "I even started because the guys ahead of me got hurt" he again said. Smith graduated in 1972.

Then as a fifth year senior when he was running, Jan noticed a stiffness. At this same time, he got the head football job at Morgan High School. The stiffness worsened. Then after specialist examinations and a spinal tap, the diagnosis was clear. Multiple Sclerosis. Jan was told the Monday before his coaching debut. He did not tell anyone; a secret which was kept for nearly four years.

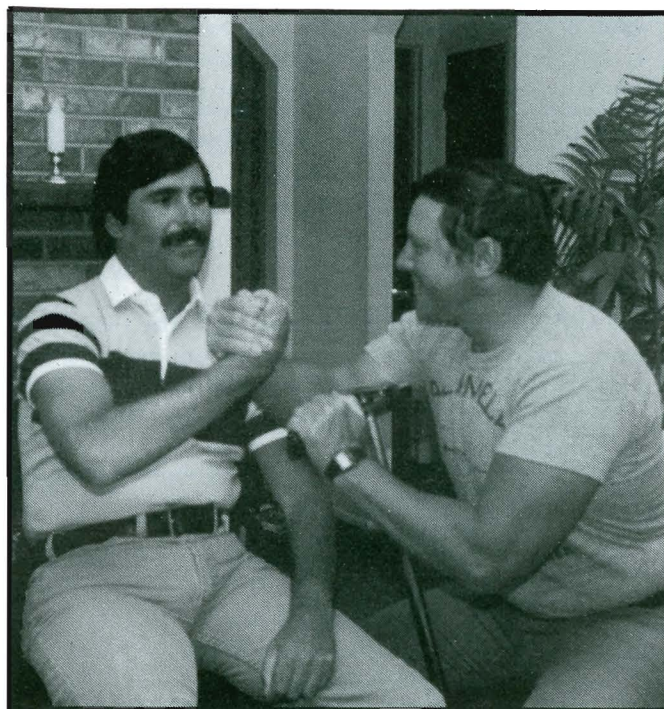
Soon a wheel chair was necessary. However, Jan used a golf cart to coach from and positioned himself on the 50 yard line and won State Championships in 1977, 1979 and again in 1983. His overall record was 98-36-1 and received "Coach of the Year" honors five times.

"I Love It All... the association with the kids, the strategy, the preparation, the game day. But I'm sure there's life beyond coaching."

Smith has been honored by NBC Sports on an NFL pre-game show and again by NBC in 1979 as the subject of a feature film. He was received by President Reagan at the White House as the Multiple Sclerosis Society's Father of the Year in 1981. However, what Jan Smith treasures most are the tributes paid to him by his players. For example, Smith's 1983 State MVP running back, Kyle Wilson, said "This State Championship game was for him, all the way."

Coach Smith tearfully concluded, "Resigning was probably the toughest thing I have ever done. I've quit something I love dearly, but I didn't think it was fair to the kids or myself to continue."

Jan Smith is a special man because he is so positive in the face of adversity. When I call Jan and ask "How are you doing?" He always beams and immediately responds "Great, just great." Coach Smith plans to write an autobiography and speak throughout the country on motivation. I want to wish Coach Jan Smith the best and say thanks for being an inspirational giant in the coaching ranks. My fellow coaches, you can do the same by writing Jan at: P.O. Box 128, Morgan, Utah 84050. Thanks!



Coach Smith and Coach Shepard sharing football coaching memories.