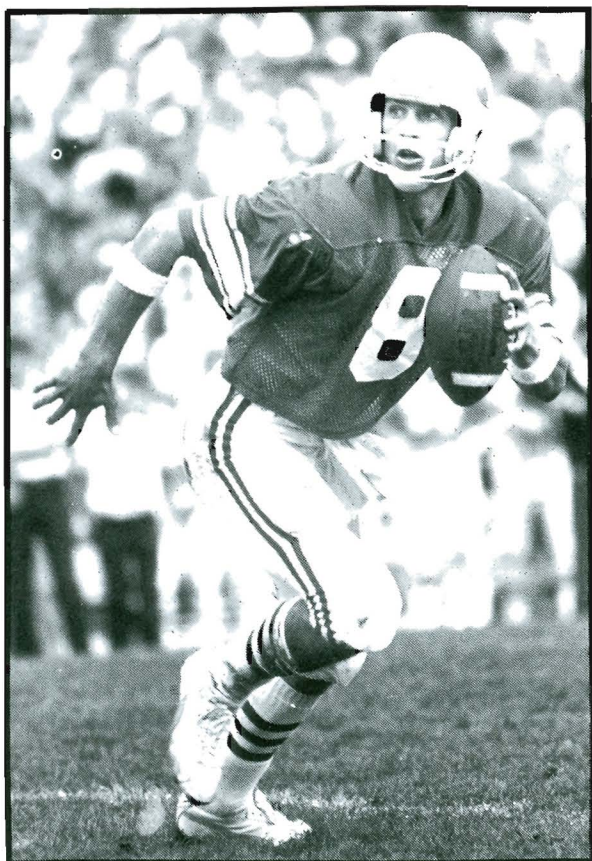


STEVE YOUNG — \$40 MILLION QB

By Greg Shepard



Steve Young, Quarterback
6-2, 196

Steve Young was a unanimous selection for first team All-American Quarterback. He finished second to Mike Rozier of Nebraska in the Heisman Trophy award. He broke all kinds of N.C.A.A. records while at Brigham Young University. Young has also finished his first season with the U.S.F.L.'s Los Angeles Express with his famous \$40 million contract.

However, Steve had many obstacles to overcome on his way to the top. For instance, the first day Steve showed up at a BYU practice session was no bed of roses. The BYU quarterbacks were doing passing drills and Steve young, the shy freshman, introduced himself to Doug Scovil, who at that time was BYU's offensive coordinator and quarterback coaching genius. Scovil told Steve to go ahead and join in. He took a snap, dropped back to pass and fell down. "Everyone laughed" says Young "I was so embarrassed."

Since Steve Young was an option QB at his high school in Greenwich, Connecticut, he was not even considered BYU quarterback material. He was recruited with the idea of moving him to a defensive back or a wide receiver. Dick Felt, BYU's coordinator said "We weren't sure he had the arm to be a BYU type QB." Steve Young did have 4.5 speed and at 6-1, 198 pounds the defensive coaches wanted him in the secondary.

After falling down at his practice debut, Steve was stuck as being BYU's number 8 quarterback. His coaches were seriously considering a position change to defense. Needless to say Steve was really discouraged. Steve recalls "I called home once, saying that I thought I should quit. My father said, you can quit, but you can't come home and live here because I don't live with quitters." Steve decided to stay at BYU.

That was Steve's first goal: To stay at BYU and not quit. His second goal was to be considered a BYU QB and not any other position. Doug Scovil did not recruit Steve, so it was difficult to get attention or coaching. But Steve persisted. He practiced on his own everyday. He would go over every pattern and every play. Just for insurance, he would also practice defensive back-pedaling. Lavell Edwards, BYU's head coach, met with Steve and told him, "I think we have our quarterbacks for the future. We'd like to move you to safety. We need defensive backs. I think you can play QB, but you're too good of an athlete to sit around."

Again Steve was disappointed but continued to practice at quarterback. On the first day of spring practice of his freshman year, Steve looked for his name on the depth chart. He could not find it on the offensive list but there he was on the defensive depth chart as a first team free safety. Also, at this time Doug Scovil had been named as San Diego State's new head football coach and was replaced by Ted Tollner, now USC's head football coach.

Steve decided to go over with the BYU's Quarterbacks and throw. Coach Tollner watched him closely. After practice, Tollner told Coach Edwards "I don't think we should move Steve." The next day Coach Edwards watched him throw and upon close observation a decision was made! Keep Young at QB!!

Now, Steve was ready for goal number three: "Become BYU's starting Quarterback" by the end of spring practice. Steve had jumped from the No. 8 QB to No. 2 behind Jim McMahon. (McMahon set 56 N.C.A.A. records while at BYU and is now the starting QB for the Chicago Bears.) Five months later he was the No. 1 Quarterback as McMahon was injured. Steve Young filled in for the last 2½ games and completed 45 of 60 passes for 579 yards!

Coach Edwards after says "Steve has come along faster and from a greater distance than any of our quarterbacks." Steve reflects back "I don't think we ever practiced throwing the ball in high school. We passed only under duress. I was embarrassed to throw in public. I didn't enjoy throwing because I wasn't very good at it. His high school coach encouraged him to go to a running school like North Carolina which recruited him heavily. However, since Steve Young is LDS (Mormon) and the great-great-grandson of Brigham Young himself, he

decided to go to his last choice football school and attend Brigham Young University.

Steve Young has developed amazingly fast. He is the only BYU quarterback not to be red shirted. During practice when he was playing behind McMahon he would study McMahon's every move. Steve would stand behind the offense for a while then move behind the defense to view McMahon from every angle. "I tried to pick up as much as I could" says Young.

Steve had the ability to pick up the finest details. For example, "Just the way McMahon would take a snap without a center. When I did it, I would cheat a little and place my fingers in the right grip so I wouldn't have to adjust the ball while I was dropping back, like you do when you take a real snap. I wanted to look good for the coaches. But I noticed McMahon wouldn't do that. He shifted the ball from his left hand to his right while dropping back just as he would have in a game. I thought "Why am I cheating myself?"

Steve Young admits "I love practice. I can't wait to go back out each day. It never gets monotonous. It's a constant challenge. I haven't got to the point where I've said 'I'm pretty good, I don't have to work hard.'" "I find passing a great challenge. I have to work every day to get better at my passing" concludes Steve.

Steve really gets unbelievably fired up when you say to him "You can't do it or you're no good." I think this is a trait of winners, and an admirable trait of competitors. Steve had this trait early in life. When he was 13 years old, he went the entire summer without a base hit. Yet at age 14, he set a team record with a .600 batting average. During his sophomore year of high school he quarterbacked a team which was described as the "lousy" bunch because they were winless. When he was a senior, those same athletes played for the Connecticut State Championship. His leadership in high school was evident as he was captain of his football, basketball and baseball team.

This same quest for greatness and leadership continued and infected his teammates at BYU. Steve got together with his receivers everyday in the off season. For 30-45 minutes Steve would throw and run EVERY pattern. In addition, of course, he would lift 3 times per week. Steve also ran sprints and long distance.

"Your attitude is important" states Young, "You should do extra things on your own and be committed." Steve feels that lifting "revitalizes" his arm. He works with the "sport stick" and likes his total conditioning period to be sixty minutes or less, not counting his passing time.

Steve wanted his senior year to be special, so he and his teammates gave up their summers at home to practice. Everyday Steve and a core of 10 receivers could be seen practicing. Steve explained "We went out to work, not just to have fun." "Our practice sessions lasted about 60 minutes."

Since our interview was drawing to a close, I told Steve I had three final questions:

First, do you have any words of wisdom for the high school athlete? "Never Quit! I had a million chances to quit. You must always believe in yourself." Second, what about alcohol and drugs? "I don't want to impose my standards but common sense tells you not to. I've always stayed away from them because I always wanted my mind under control." Third and last question, "How do you feel about girls?" "Great!" Steve quickly quipped. And, that's how I felt about our interview and how I feel about a choice young man by the name of Steve Young.

