

C. JEMAL HORTON

Just hand the Heisman over to Trojans' Bush

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Young would be a shoe-in to win.

Seriously
The truth, though, is this: He's waaaaaaay behind Bush as a contender.

Seriously
Still, Young's 2,769 yards passing, 850 yards rushing and 35 total touchdowns are the statistics of college football legends.

2. LenDale White, running back, Southern California: If he didn't share a backfield with Bush, this kid would be everybody's favorite running back.

He's a true halfback, a throwback. He doesn't dance, he's 6-foot-2, 235 pounds, and he knows that and underrated speed makes him a weapon. But he's not just some glorified fullback. He's scored 23 touchdowns this season - six more than Bush - and averages nearly 7 yards per carry.

If Bush leaves for the NFL this year and White decides to stay for his senior season, White will be next year's Heisman favorite.

Legitimately.
3. Leinart: It's not as if he's

had a miserable follow-up to last year's Heisman-winning season. This year, he's thrown for 3,450 yards and 27 touchdowns with only seven interceptions - while last year, he had 2,990 yards, 26 touchdowns and six interceptions. But again, (say it with me, everyone) he's just not Reggie Bush.

Leinart proved he was worthy of being in the Heisman discussion once again, though, in this year's Game of the Year at Notre Dame, when he made a perfect pass on a late fourth down, then finished off the drive with a rushing touchdown with seconds remaining.

4. Bruce Eugene, QB, Sr., Grambling State: Who is that, you say? Never heard of this guy?

OK, I'll write it again: Bruce Eugene, a rotund quarterback who is listed at 6-foot-1 and a generous 260 pounds.

Each year, I include a player from an historically black college among my Heisman candidates because I'm convinced there always is at least one who should be in the conversation, if not win

the dang trophy outright (remember 1994, when Alcorn State's Steve McNair should have taken the award over winner Rashaan Salaam and runner-up Ki-Jana Carter).

Anyway, this year Eugene is in my mix. He leads NCAA I-AA with 50 touchdown passes, while throwing just six interceptions. For the season, he threw for 3,887 yards, including 618 against Prairie View and 507 against Texas Southern.

Eugene also leads the country in passer rating (172.0), and also is No. 1 in a category called "points responsible for," with (28.91 points per game - the next-closest player is at 22 points per game).

Look, I'm not saying Eugene should win the Heisman. I'm not even saying he is better than Leinart. But if he doesn't have statistics worthy of being on the Heisman list, I don't know who does.

All right, all right. Other than Reggie Bush.

E-mail columnist C. Jemal Horton at sejemalwrite@aol.com.

Clemens, Jeter, Bonds to play for U.S. in World Baseball Classic

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tional level of our sport to heights that we can't even imagine today. And while the World Series to me will always be the World Series, we're moving into a new era today, there's no question about that."

Buck Martinez will manage what should be a strong U.S. squad that already has commitments from other stars such as Derrek Lee, Dontrelle Willis, Andy Pettitte and John Smoltz. Ken Griffey Jr. wants in, and his father, Ken Sr., has signed on as a coach on the American staff.

"I'm ready to play right now. It's a phenomenal honor," said Martinez, who managed the Toronto Blue Jays from 2001-02. "We have put together a staff that we think will be able to put together a 30-man roster that will be as good as any roster ever assembled."

The Dominican lineup is loaded with talent, too, featuring Vladimir Guerrero, David Ortiz, Albert Pujols, Manny Ramirez, Alfonso Soriano and Miguel Tejada - all of whom plan to participate.

MLB expects all 30 big league teams to be represented, and players will be subject to Olympic-style drug testing. But a player testing positive during the tournament for a substance banned under MLB's new drug agreement would not be disciplined by MLB, which starting next year will have a 50-game penalty for a first offense.

While Gene Orza, the MLB players union's chief operating officer, said a positive test could not lead to a player being tested more frequently for "cause" under the drug plan, MLB executive vice president Rob Manfred declined comment.

With so many big league players potentially eligible for dual citizenship, MLB adopted some liberal rules for the event - a player can represent any nation that he, a parent or a grandparent was a citizen of.

That's why Rodriguez, a two-time American League MVP, is still deciding whether to play for the Dominican Republic or the United States. The New York Yankees' third baseman was born in New York and raised in the U.S., but his parents are Dominican.

One of Piazza's grandparents was born in Italy so he had a choice between the U.S. and Italian teams, and Orza said the All-Star catcher asked him which selection would benefit international baseball the most. Orza said

Italy, so Piazza signed on.

Yankees closer Mariano Rivera of Panama is one of the most prominent players who has not committed to play.

Clemens wants to pitch for the United States, even if it's in a limited role. But the 43-year-old ace hasn't decided if he'll return to the Houston Astros for another season or retire, said his agent, Randy Hendricks.

Pedro Martinez (toe) and Eric Gagne (elbow surgery) of Canada hope to be healthy enough to participate.

Each country must submit a list of eligible players by Jan. 17, then cut its roster to 27-30 by the tournament opener on March 3. Teams will carry at least 13 pitchers and three catchers.

Players planning to represent Japan, China, South Korea or Taiwan are expected to be announced later this week at a news conference in Asia.

MLB has also asked the U.S. government for a license to allow Cuba to participate.

"I do not think that is a serious impediment," Orza said, adding he was "very, very confident that the Cubans will play."

Other news and rules:

- Games will be played with a designated hitter and wood bats.

- Pitchers will probably have pitch limits and rest requirements, though the specifics of that are yet to be determined. "Playing in March, obviously we are not going to have complete games," Buck Martinez said.

- No more than 10 players from any major league club's 25-man roster can be picked to participate, and no more than 14 from a team's 40-man roster.

- Hall of Fame manager Tommy Lasorda, who led the U.S. team to the gold medal at 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, is an Ambassador at Large for the event. He will travel to participating countries and be a spokesman to help promote the tournament.

- Smoltz and Craig Biggio decided they want to play for the United States, though they could have been eligible for Italy.

- Most players will report to their major league teams at spring training first, then to their national teams for workouts.

- Tickets go on sale next Monday and are available online at www.worldbaseballclassic.com. Tickets for games in Puerto Rico go on sale this Saturday

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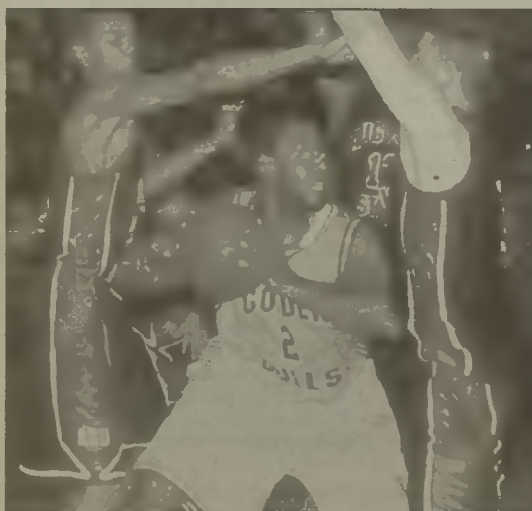
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Johnson C. Smith center Charles Clark (2) leads the 5-1 Golden Bulls into a showdown with crosstown rival Queens Dec. 17 at Queens. After that, Smith will start packing for a game at Bluefield State Dec. 20 and the Southern California Hoops Classic in Los Angeles Dec. 27-29.

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