



# The 'Great Nate Snake' On The Loose Again

Johnson C. Smith University's Nate McDowell came up short by seven receptions of breaking Bill Lide's single-season mark of 54 catches in the 1981 football season. Barring injury, though, there will be no stopping the senior wide receiver in 1982 from shattering a host of Golden Bull records including Stan White's career 132 catches and his JCSU mark of 1,760 yards caught. McDowell moved into the 2nd spot on the career yards list with 1,553 from 114 catches in the past three years, slipping by Lide's 106 receptions and 1,480 yards. The Merrit Island, Fla., native needs only 19 receptions and 208 yards this year to own both career reception marks.

McDowell has been named NAIA all-American honorable mention to go along with three years of being honored all-NAIA district 26 and all-CIAA. Despite being a marked man early in his career, Nate has increased the number of catches and yardage for three straight years even with the extra attention of double coverage. He has also labored under a total of six different quarterbacks until John Henry Thomas took control midway

through the 1980 season.

"Playing with the same quarterback is a tremendous advantage," says McDowell. "He knows your moves, speed and timing. Also you develop a sixth sense of being able to read each other when a play breaks down or to capitalize on a defensive miscue."

Thomas and Johnson C. Smith led the 12-team CIAA (Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association) in passing last year with 170 yards per contest. Along with the senior quarterback, the entire Golden Bull receiving corps returns.

"Having so many good receivers on the team frees me from extra coverage and a lot of pressure," says McDowell.

McDowell's achievement, though, come from hard work. He keeps in excellent physical shape. He's effective more from running precise patterns than outstanding speed.

"He volunteered to run track to improve endurance and speed," pointed out Bulls' Head Coach Wylie Harris. "Nate is a team leader, taking time to develop younger players. He's a solid student and excellent



Nate McDowell just may get his wish and in doing so, it's almost a certainty the Johnson C. Smith University record books will be listing his name many times over. CIAA secondaries have been trying for three years, but so far they've learned that it isn't easy to corral a snake, especially one as determined as "The Great Nate Snake."

example of success through dedication."

"I've enjoyed the individual accomplishments, but there's a large void left when the team isn't winning," reflected McDowell. "As a senior, it's the one thing I want more than anything else."

## Golden Bulls' John Henry Overcame Adversity To Win

"It still beats working in a fertilizer factory," said Johnson C. Smith University quarterback John Henry Thomas after completing a 1-8-1 season his freshman year at quarterback. Thomas should know. The Hartsdale, N.Y., native has taken the long road to becoming a nationally-ranked passer in the NCAA division II by his junior year. Along that road were pitfalls and more than a few stumbles.

Thomas almost never had the chance to demonstrate his ability. He arrived two weeks into the August training camp after enrolling at J.C. Smith.

"Try getting here on time next year," advised Head Coach Wylie Harris. Community college, club football and the fertilizer factory followed. Next year came the 1-8-1 season. The lone victory was a 30-0 shutout of Livingstone, which JCSU achieved on just 43 offensive yards.

"With the opportunities the defense provided on turnovers, I would not have wanted to face them in practice Monday if we didn't convert a few," explained Thomas of the Livingstone win. That quote was the youngster's national in-

roduction as carried by the wire service.

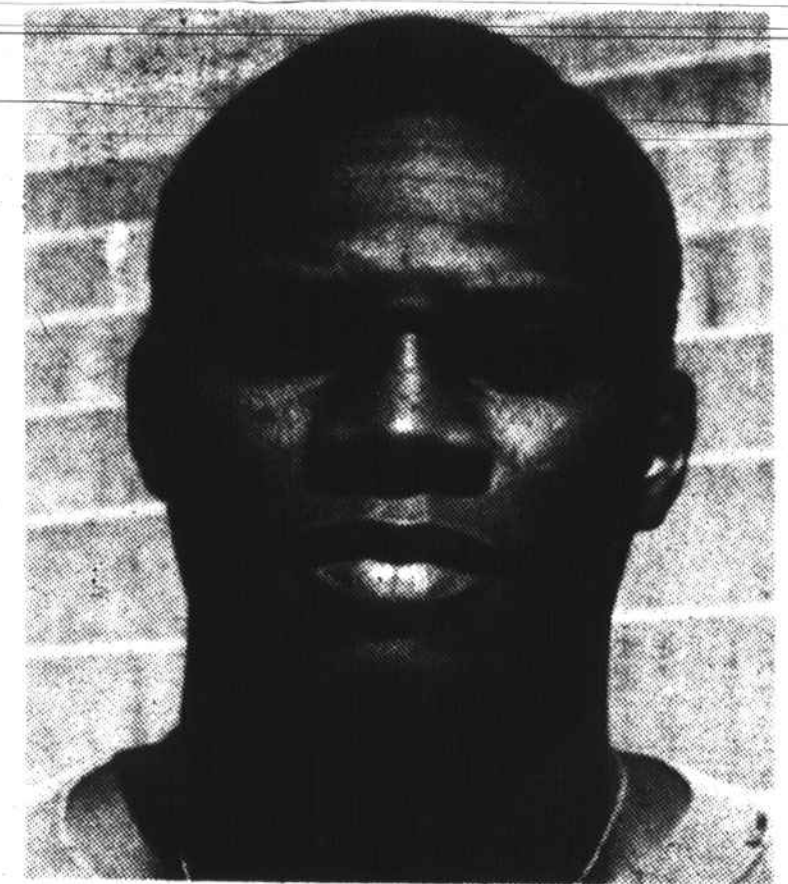
After the season Thomas violated one of coach Harris' cardinal rules. Thomas was dismissed from spring practice and told he could try out next fall as a walk-on. Most athletes would have found an excuse or shifted the blame and faded out of the picture. Not John Henry Thomas. With cleats slung over his shoulder, he reported for duty the following August.

"It was an immature, stupid act on my part," explained Thomas of his dog house status. "Coach Harris was right in his actions and my job was to mature from the experience and earn my position back."

Thomas rose from fourth-string quarterback to lead the Golden Bulls by the fifth game of the season. Under John Henry, J.C. Smith won three of their four games in a 4-7 season.

"Overcoming the adversity was important to me," explained Thomas. "If I quit something I love to do, I couldn't see much success coming my way in the future when I face other problems."

The Golden Bulls ended at 4-6 in 1981, through no fault of Thomas and the Smith



John Henry Thomas

receiving corp, ranked number one in the CIAA conference. Thomas hit 46 percent of his passes for 1,678 yards.

"Unfortunately, injuries wiped out half of our defensive starters," remarked Thomas of the season. "Individual accomplishments just don't compare to the great feeling as when the team shares in a victory."

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