**Previewing the Heisman Race**

Peter Rosston

Over the course of 12 games, a lot can happen. Many things in college football are unpredictable, especially who will walk home with the Heisman Trophy. However, here are 7 frontrunners for the award, and the reasons why they will or will not win it.

**-Nick Chubb (Sophomore RB, Georgia)**

**Why he will win it:** Last year, Chubb finished 2nd in the SEC with 1,547 rushing yards and led the conference with a beastly 7.06 yards per carry (ypc). Through two games this season, he has already accrued 309 yards on the ground, with 8.8 ypc and 2 touchdowns. Georgia is going to rely on Chubb and the ground game to carry them through a tough SEC schedule. If he can continue to put up numbers against proven defenses, this explosive sophomore, who is already well known around the nation, has a great chance to take home the Heisman.

**Why he won’t win it:** Only 2 of the 15 Heisman winners this century have been running backs. One of those, Reggie Bush, doubled as a return man as well. Quite simply, quarterbacks put up gaudier numbers than running backs do. If this hurdle isn’t enough, teams will sell out to stop Chubb and force the unproven Greyson Lambert beat them through the air.

**-Ezekiel Elliot (Junior RB, Ohio State)**

**Why he will win it:** To understand the potential that Elliot has, all you need to do is look at his last 4 games of the 2014-2015 season. In those 4 games, he amassed 717 rushing yards and 10 rushing touchdowns. And these were not cupcake games. This was against Michigan, #13 Wisconsin, #2 Oregon and #1 Alabama. He already has 4 rushing TDs and 3 receiving TDs this season, and doesn’t look to be slowing up any time soon.

**Why he won’t win it:** In addition to the whole running back conundrum, Elliot is simply surrounded by too much talent. Ohio State has 4 players on offense (Cardale Jones, Braxton Miller, JT Barrett and Elliot) who at one point or another have been in the Heisman conversation. Both Jones and Miller figure to steal some of Elliot’s votes. Finally, Ohio State plays one of the easier schedules in a Power 5 conference. Right now, they only have 1 ranked opponent on their schedule, Michigan State, and that game will be played in the Horseshoe. Running all over Rutgers and Minnesota isn’t going to look as good as doing the same to Alabama and Auburn.

**Derrick Henry (Junior RB, Alabama)**

**Why he will win it:** Derrick Henry has been a touchdown machine so far this year. He has 3 rushing touchdowns in both of Alabama’s games and added 2 more receiving in a statement win over then #20 Wisconsin. Alabama figures to be in the Playoff hunt, meaning Henry will have lots of exposure to voters across the nation. If Alabama finishes the season #1, don’t be surprised to see Henry holding the Heisman.

**Why he won’t win it:** Derrick Henry might be the least skilled guy on this list. He benefits from one of the top offensive lines in the nation, but doesn’t tend to create chances for himself. Neither Wisconsin or Middle Tennessee are known for their stout run defense, but there will be plenty of tough games during SEC play where teams will load the box to stop Henry. Quite simply, the numbers Henry has put up so far this year are not sustainable for an entire season.

**-Cody Kessler (Senior QB, Southern California)**

**Why he will win it:** All the hype is surrounding Kessler after games where he and USC dismantled Idaho and Arkansas State. In those two games, he combined for 7 touchdowns through the air and nearly an 80% completion rate. USC is ranked in the top ten and seems poised for a return to the top of the Pac-12. He is coming off a season with 39 touchdowns and only 5 interceptions. The sky is the limit for Kessler, who has a bevy of weapons at his disposal.

**Why he won’t win it:** If you read the first sentence of why he will win it, you will notice that his two games so far this year have been against Idaho and Arkansas State. He essentially hasn’t played a real game so far. Last year against unranked teams, he threw for 35 touchdowns and only 2 interceptions. In 4 games against ranked teams, he managed a measly 4 touchdowns. If he doesn’t show up when the lights shine brightest, he won’t win the Heisman.

**-Jared Goff (Junior QB, California)**

**Why he will win it:** Many scouts are predicting that Goff will be the first quarterback to hear his name called at the NFL draft next Spring. He is an established pocket passer and leads one of the most prolific offenses in the nation, the Bear-Raid. Last season he threw 35 touchdown passes with only 7 interceptions. He has plenty of targets at wide receiver, and head coach Sonny Dykes is not afraid to air it out. At the end of the season, Goff will have some incredible stats.

**Why he won’t win it:** Cal just isn’t that good. No player in recent memory has come close to winning the Heisman on an unranked team, and in 2014, Cal was one of the worst defensive teams in the nation. Sure their defense has improved through 2 games so far this year, but with a string of 4 straight games against ranked opponents (3 on the road) and tough games against Stanford and Arizona State, its too to see Cal finishing the season ranked. Goff is maybe the most talented player in the nation, but unless the defense steps up, his odds of winning the Heisman are slim.

**-Trevone Boykin (Senior QB, Texas Christian)**

**Why he will win it:** Unlike the other quarterbacks on this list, Boykin is not strictly a pocket passer. The last 5 and 8 of the last 9 quarterbacks to win the Heisman have been dual threat quarterbacks. With his great speed, Boykin is able to extend plays and call his own number more often. Head Coach Gary Patterson and Offensive Coordinator Doug Meacham will call on Boykin early and often to air it out. He had more than 35 passing attempts in all but two games last season and more than 10 rushing attempts in over half his games.

**Why he won’t win it:** Boykin suffers from the same problem as Kessler: he simply does not perform up to his potential against ranked teams. In three games last year vs. ranked opponents, he completed under 60% of his passes and had 5 touchdowns to 3 interceptions. Boykin won’t impress voters by torching weak Big-12 defenses, so he can’t have more than one subpar week the rest of the way, as he won’t have the sorts of defensive challenges other candidates face.

**-Leonard Fournette (Sophomore RB, Louisiana State)**

**Why he will win it:** Many college football fans will remember Fournette from last season as the Freshman who celebrated his first career touchdown by striking the Heisman pose in the end zone. With a year of experience under his belt, LSU is going to look to the Sophomore even more to be the bell-cow out of the backfield. In LSU’s only game so far this season against Mississippi State, Fournette scored all three LSU touchdowns and picked up 159 on the ground. He clearly has all the talent and will get plenty of chances to find pay dirt this season.

**Why he won’t win it:** Know one knows which Leonard Fournette will show up on any given week. Last season, through a six game stretch, he alternated between 110+ yard games and 40 yard games. In fact, Fournette probably wasn’t a top-20 running back in the nation last year. He will have to face stingy SEC run defenses every week and hasn’t really done anything to warrant a ton of respect.