Written by Jerry Byrd Sunday, 09 December 2012 19:24 -

Here's a big surprise. Johnny Manziel of Texas A&M is the 2012 Heisman Trophy winner. Who would've ever guessed that one?

The only other time a Texas Aggie won the Heisman Trophy, his name was John David Crow. The Springhill (La.) High product got a big boost for the 1957 award when Texas A&M coach Paul "Bear" Bryant said, "If John David Crow doesn't win the Heisman Trophy, they ought to stop giving it."

But folks in North Louisiana knew about Crow long before he went to Texas A&M. In 1952, his junior year at Springhill High, he led Coach Billy Baucum's Lumberjacks to the Class A (then the second highest class) state football championship. Crow finished his high school career with 51 touchdowns and 353 points, and was All-State in both football and basketball.

Oklahoma coach Bud Wilkinson was also recruiting Crow. So was LSU. But Crow chose the Aggies. "I wanted to play," he recalled later, "and anyone could see my chances to play would be a lot better at A&M." He averaged 8.3 yards per carry for the Aggies' freshman team. A year later, in an early-season duel with LSU at the Dallas Cotton Bowl, Crow had a 77-yard touchdown run that Bryant later called "the greatest run I ever saw" in a 28-0 victory over the Tigers.

Watching Crow play in Springhill game films, Bryant often said, was like watching a grown man play against boys.

In his senior year at Springhill, the Lumberjacks played a Byrd team that was ranked No. 1 in Class 2A (then the top class) at Shreveport's State Fair Stadium. When the Yellow Jackets stopped Crow on the ground, he dropped back into double wing formation to pass as the Lumberjacks erased a 13-point fourth quarter deficit to tie Byrd, 20-20, in what one generation of North Louisiana fans considered the greatest high school game ever played.

At Texas A&M, Crow led Bryant's Aggies to the top of the college football world until they stumbled from No. 1 in the nation to No. 3 in the Southwest Conference in the last two games of the 1957 season. His college statistics weren't overly impressive (1,455 yards rushing in three varsity seasons, only six touchdowns in his Heisman Trophy season), but he went on to score 73 touchdowns in an 11-year National Football League career, with 4,963 yards rushing and 3,699 yards in pass receiving.

"Crow had so much pride," Bryant said, "that he would never let you have a bad practice." Crow, the only Heisman Trophy winner in Bryant's Hall of Fame career, is one of two Louisiana high school products who won the Heisman Trophy. The other was Billy Cannon of Istrouma High (Baton Rouge) and LSU.

Since 2000, the Heisman has become a quarterback award. The only winner in the last 12 years who wasn't a quarterback was running back Mark Ingram of Alabama in 2009. In Cannon's final season at Istrouma High (1955), the Baton Rouge team capped an unbeaten season with a 40-6 romp past Fair Park in the Class 2A (then the top class) championship game. Cannon broke the 2A state scoring record that year with 229 points, scoring three touchdowns and four extra points in the final game.

As for Manziel, the first freshman to win the Heisman Trophy, he was easily the most dominant player in the nation this year and was playing in the toughest conference. Now, he has a chance to join Ohio State's Archie Griffin (1974-75) as the only players to win back-to-back Heismans. And if Johnny Football does that next year, he'll still have a chance for two more.

He completed 68.3 percent of his passes (273 of 400) for 3,419 yards to lead the Aggies to a

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10-2 season. But when he accounted for 345 of his team's 418 yards in the Aggies' 29-24 win over No. 1-ranked Alabama, Johnny Football moved to the front of the Heisman Trophy chase — and stayed there.

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