

The Ten Greatest Buckeyes Of All-Time: #6 Troy Smith

Written by {ga=furls}

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Trudging forward with Furls' countdown of the ten greatest Buckeye football players of all-time, we have a relatively new addition to the list at #6. Troy Smith came to Ohio State almost as an afterthought, and was expected to play receiver or hold the clipboard for Justin Zwick during his career as a Buckeye. What he ended up accomplishing in Columbus was almost unthinkable. Furls takes a look back at the career of the 2006 Heisman Trophy winner, Troy Smith.



[#10 - Rex Kern](#)

[#9 - Jim Stillwagon](#)

[#8 - Randy Gradishar](#)

[#7 - Vic Janowicz](#)

To say that Troy Smith took a long and unlikely road from Glenville to my top ten list of All-Time Buckeyes would be a bit of an understatement. Smith's life is the kind of story that they make after school specials about. It is a well-chronicled story about the rise of a young man, saddled with every imaginable disadvantage, from one of the roughest parts of Cleveland. An absent father and a mother battling her own demons, Smith is largely the product of interested friends and mentors and is as much a testament to the strength of community and positive role models as he is a testament to growth, hard work, and perseverance.

No work on Smith would be complete without mentioning the missteps along the way. In 2004 Smith was at the center of a booster scandal in

which he admitted accepting five-hundred dollars from a booster. This mistake cost Smith a start in the 2004 Alamo Bowl and the opener of the 2005 football season, and was just another black eye to a program that had already suffered enough at the hands of Maurice Clarrett.

This scandal was not Smith's only transgression along the way. During his early years in the program Smith was well on his way to Coach Tressel's doghouse and possibly on his way out of the program. Smith appeared to have little to no chance to adapt to the program, but something happened along the way and Coach Tressel was able to reach him. So much so, that they could not have resembled each other more in post game interviews if Smith was wearing a sweater vest.

Originally recruited as an "athlete" not a quarterback, Smith's role on the team was never clear. No one inside the program or outside was really sure where Smith fit when he was offered Ohio State's last scholarship for 2002. Ohio State had already offered to one of the country's best prospects at the QB position, Justin Zwick, so it appeared as though Smith would be relegated to back up duty at best. There was even talk that he could end up as a specialist on special teams or that he had been recruited to garner some advantage in the pursuit of Tedd Ginn Jr (a close friend and classmate of Smith's), whom was already a highly sought after commodity in the 2003 recruiting class.

Once Smith bought into the entire program and Coach Tressel's philosophy, his rise was meteoric. He went from a player without a

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position to starting quarterback (aided by Zwick's injury in Iowa in 2004) within a year, but the early going was not pretty.

Smith was still unrefined in the pocket in 2004 and early in 2005. He appeared to be more comfortable making plays with legs than with his hands and would often pull the ball in and run if his first or second options were unavailable. While this style of play often lead to exciting, highlight reel material; it severely limited both Smith's game and the entire offense as a whole.

It was not until the summer of 2006, when Smith was reborn as a student of the game, that Smith took the necessary steps to catapult him to Heisman fame. Everyone, fans and opposing teams alike waited for Smith to run with every snap, yet he did not. When the protection broke down and the pocket collapsed Smith demonstrated a new cool and used his scrambling ability to buy time in order to make plays down the field.

Smith will always be remembered in Columbus for his Heisman Trophy and impressive play in 2006, but I will most remember Smith for his accountability. Following a stunning 41-14 defeat in the National Championship Game, Smith stepped to the plate and took responsibility for the loss. While Smith's play was not what he had hoped for in the game, he certainly was not aided by an offensive line that was unable to do anything to help him, yet Smith did not throw them under the bus. In victory Smith was quick to deflect credit and in defeat he was even faster accepting the blame.

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Fortunately for Smith and the entire Buckeye nation, the Wolverines were never able to force Smith accept any blame for any game in which he had played against them. In fact, Smith will go down in Buckeye lore as one of the greatest Wolverine slayers of all time. Tippy Dye was the only Ohio State quarterback to have ever defeated Michigan in three straight seasons (1934-1936). That is, of course, until the Troy Smith run from 2004-2006. Smith made his name as one of the greatest big game quarterbacks in the NCAA in large part due to his play on Ohio State's grandest stage.

In "The Game," Smith had 69 completions in 101 attempts for 857 yards, resulting in seven touchdowns and just ONE interception in 3 wins against Michigan. He complimented these impressive numbers with 33 rushes 194 yards (5.9 ypc) and two touchdowns. An average Troy Smith performance against Michigan, 23 for 33 for 285 yards and two TDs with 0 interceptions and an additional 11 rushes for 65 yards and a TD on the ground.

Over the course of his career, Smith was the most efficient quarterback in the history of the Big Ten, not bad for a kid that was known more for making plays with his legs than his arm. The 2006 Heisman Trophy winner's career statistics:

416 Completions on 656 Attempts (63%) for 5,685 yards for 54 TDs and just 12 Ints.

283 rushes for 1,197 yards (4.2 avg) and 14 TDs.

Career Record as a starter: 25-3 (3-0 vs. Michigan).

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Awards:

2006 Heisman Trophy

2006 Walter Camp Award (NCAA Player of the Year)

2006 O'Brien Award (Top QB in the country)

2006 AP Player of the Year

2006 Big Ten Player of the Year