

CLASSIC STORY: 'Golden Boy' Spurrier wins Heisman **By DICK DENNIS**

November 23, 1966

After leading the UF football team to unprecedented success in the 1990s, it's difficult to think of Steve Spurrier as anything but the ol' ball coach. But for fans that witnessed Gators football in the 1960s, Spurrier was a dominant quarterback that would win at any cost. So what better way to kick off a summer full of classic stories than running the Alligator story - exactly as it appeared in 1966 (minus a few paragraphs for space) - from the day after Spurrier won the Heisman Award. - Andrew Abramson

"Every young boy dreams of winning the Heisman trophy," Steve Spurrier said yesterday at a mid-afternoon press conference in the Athletic Department's lounge.

But Spurrier, growing up in Johnson City, Tenn., was not just any young boy. Just one hour earlier, Spurrier was called to the office of UF President J. Wayne Reitz.

"The telephone call sort of gave it away," Spurrier deadpanned. "Dr. Reitz received a call from Richard Digan at 1 p.m. I told, Dignan, the President of the Heisman Trophy Committee that I considered the honor the highest any amateur athlete could receive.

Spurrier pointed out that the award also speaks well for his teammates, the university, the state, and Southern football as a whole.

The blond senior is only the third gridder at a Southern school to win the award in its 32-year history. The previous winners were Frank Sinkwich, Georgia, in 1932, and Bill Cannon, Louisiana State, 1959.

"My first reaction was one of joy," Spurrier commented. "From reading the newspapers I knew I had a slim lead, and this took some of the shock out of the formal announcement. I knew all along I had a pretty good chance."

The All-American added that he was surprised at the margin of victory. Spurrier was named the winner on 433 of 1,160 ballots, picked up 150 second place votes and 80 for third.

Spurrier compiled a total of 1,679 points, to more than double his nearest rival, Bob Griese of Purdue. Griese totaled 816 votes. Gary Beban, UCLA; Nick Eddy, Notre Dame; Floyd Little, Syracuse; and Clinton Jones, Michigan State, trailed the two front-runners.

Poise, coolness and improvisation, Spurrier's grid trademarks, sparkled at the press conference, and overshadowed his inherent shyness.

The brightness of NBC camera lights glared directly into Spurrier's eyes. Cameramen and reporters edged close around him. At first Spurrier seemed ill at ease, a feeling something akin to the butterflies football players get before a game.

But then, Spurrier began to relax, his eyes smiled and he engaged in repartee with the cameramen who insisted on time consuming retakes. His dark blue UF Blazer and orange knit pleased the cameramen shooting in color.

Spurrier revealed at the start of the conference that his voice was already hoarse from talking to the New York Sportswriters.

"Not because I had to talk loud," Spurrier cautioned. "But it was a matter of talking distinctly. The New Yorkers couldn't understand my southern drawl."

"My wife, (the former Jeri Starr from Ft. Lauderdale), is not the type that gets overly upset or excited," Spurrier related.

"The atmosphere in our house the last few days has not been nervous or strained, and I went to classes as usual this morning. But I talked to Jerri a few minutes ago, and I can tell you she is just as happy about this as I am."

The team graciously praised his fellow athletes, and said they were the biggest influence on his winning the award.

The prep All-America added he thought he'd get a lot of calls soon from Johnson City, where his brother and sister still live.

"That town has done a lot for me," Spurrier said gratefully. "I got a letter from Kermit Tipton, my high school coach, about three weeks ago, saying that he, his staff and the town were all pulling for me to win the award. I'm happy I was able to do it for them."

"It would not have been possibly for me to win the award without them," Spurrier emphasized. "The team feels that its one for all, and all for one another. When a player received an honor this season, we were all happy."

"Everyone has helped tremendously," Spurrier praised. "I can always rely on the line to play well. My success would never have been possible without the blocking of Jim Benson, Bill Carr, John Preston and many others."

Spurrier also mentioned both the running and blocking of backfield mates Larry Smith and Graham McKeel. He described Paul Ewaldsen and Richard Trapp as "the best pair of receivers anyone could ask for."

With just one regular season game remaining, Spurrier observed this award would not do much to scare off Miami.

"You can't let up against a team like Miami," Spurrier maintained. "I'm going to have to play my best, and won't have time to think about the award. No, the award won't upset me; I'll be ready for Miami."

The Orange Bowl game, against Georgia Tech, will be, according to Spurrier, "a great opportunity for the team to prove ourselves before the eyes of the country."

Spurrier's quick wit sparkled when someone mentioned the possibility the "Golden Orr" might be drafted by the New York Giants of the National Football League.

"When I have a chance, I watch the pros on Sunday afternoon," Spurrier began. "From what I've seen, the Giants need more than a quarterback."

The Giants are suffering through a 1-8-1 season, recently lost to the usually punchless Atlanta Falcons, and are starting their third string quarterback whom they purchased from the Brooklyn Dodgers of the Continental Football League.

"There is definitely a fine opportunity for me to step right in and play as a rookie for the Giants. But, of course, I'm not definitely sure I'll sign with the Giants. If I don't, I'll take the situation as it comes. But the more you play as a rookie, the more it will help you."

Spurrier asserted he cannot be approached by the pros until after the Orange Bowl game, whether officially or unofficially.

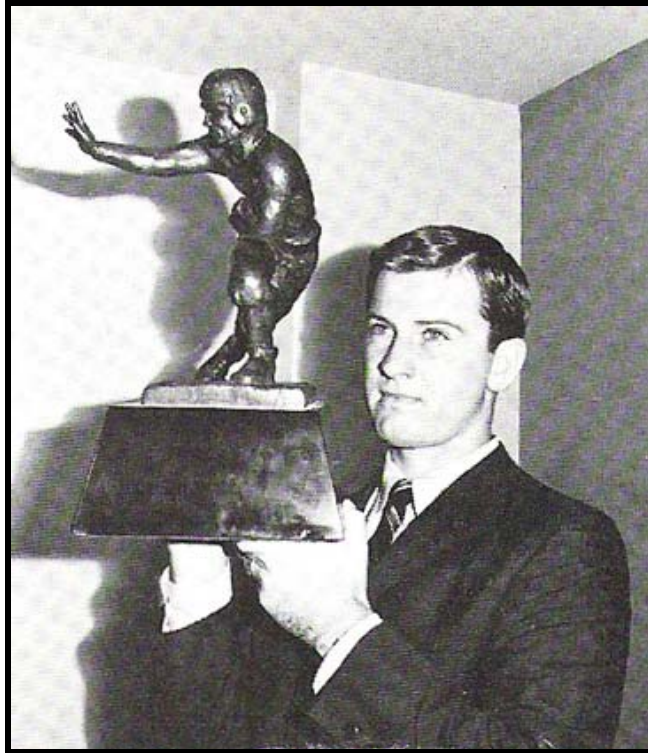
"I've already signed to play in the Hula Bowl," Spurrier said. "Jeri and I will fly out of Miami right after the game for Honolulu."

Coach Ray Graves reported that he, his staff and the team were proud of Spurrier. He said Steve told his teammates he accepted the award for the team, and that he was honored to play alongside them.

Graves stated Spurrier would fly to New York to receive the Heisman trophy on Dec. 1 from the downtown Athletic Club. Graves, Reitz and Gov. Haydon Burns were also invited for the occasion.

Holding up a copy of a local paper showing Spurrier on the first page, Graves said with awe, "This is certainly a front page story, and since the votes from all over the country, Steve must certainly be qualified in order to win this high honor. It's not often a sports story gets on the front page."

No, and it's not often an athlete of Spurrier's caliber plays college football, let alone for Ray Graves and the Gators.



Steve Brings the Heisman Home to Johnson City