

# A&M gets Heisman as Crow flies

## Running back only Aggie to win Trophy

By Nick Georgandis  
THE BATTALION

In the lobby of the Texas A&M Athletic Office, on the second floor of the Koldus Building, one item stands out from everything else in the room. Just to the left of the grand trophy case, on a pedestal about five feet off the ground, rests a statue in that unforgettable pose. It is 37 years old, it is the only one of its kind on campus and it is the most coveted award in all of college football.

It is the Heisman Trophy, awarded to Aggie running back John David Crow in 1957, a man whose dedication to his school began the day he was recruited and continues on through today.

For A&M, Crow was not even a bona fide recruit going into his senior year of high school. Crow grew up in northern Louisiana, but says he made the A&M connection when visiting Magnolia A&M (in southwest Arkansas) to watch his older brother perform on the gridiron.

"The coach there (at Magnolia A&M) was Elmer Smith, and I got to know him well because I pretty much always stood on the sideline," Crow said. "When Bear Bryant took the job at A&M, he hired Elmer Smith, who he had met in the service, as an assistant. Then Elmer started recruiting me."

Playing on both offense and defense was still the norm for college football players during the 1950s, and Crow was known more for his work as a defensive cornerback than as a running back. But NCAA rules of the day stipulated that a player coming out of the game could not return until the end of that quarter, so Crow and his teammates had to play on both sides of the ball to maximize their abilities.

In 1955, Crow began playing regularly on offense, and scored his first collegiate touchdown in explosive fashion. Against Louisiana State in the second game of the season, Crow broke several tackles while rambling for a 77-yard touchdown run, a sprint Bryant would later call "the greatest single run I ever saw".

In his junior year of 1956, Crow was named an All-Southwest Conference performer. The Aggies won the SWC championship for the

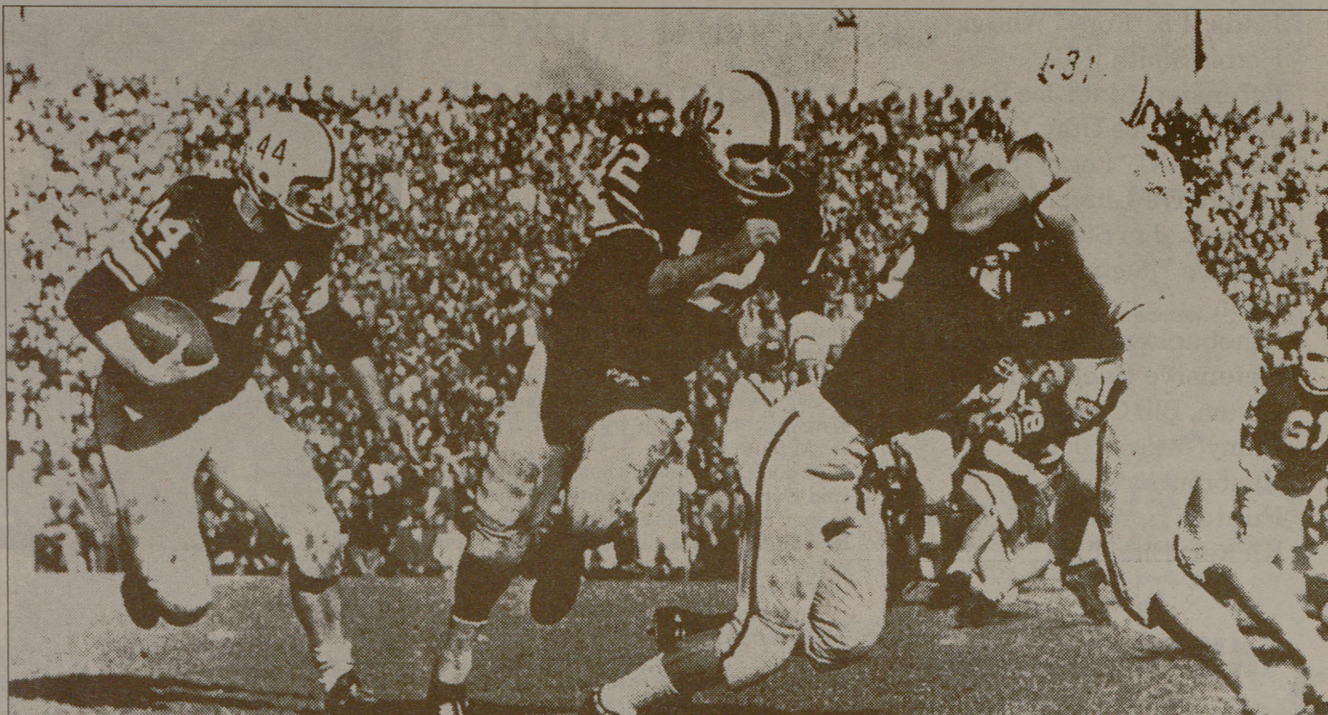


Photo courtesy of the Texas A&M Sports Information Office

Former A&M running back **John David Crow** (left) uses the lead blocks of **Loyd Taylor** (middle) and **Roddy Osborne** (right) to help pave his way to the 1957 Heisman Trophy. Crow, a first round draft choice, went on to play eleven seasons as a defensive back for the Chicago Cardinals.

first time in 15 seasons, with a 9-0-1 record and a final rank of fifth in the nation. The season included the game Crow still remembers as his favorite of his collegiate career.

"I think my best moment was beating t.u. at Memorial Stadium (34-21) in 1956," Crow said. "I ran in the ball for our first touchdown, and it was the first time any Aggie had ever scored in the south end of Memorial Stadium."

Crow entered his senior season as one of the top 11-around players in the country. To complement his individual excellence, the Aggies rocketed out of the starting gate, winning their first eight games. On the 29th of October, A & M entered the No. 1

position in the Associated Press poll for the first time since the end of their 1939 national championship season. The Aggies stayed in the top spot for three weeks, before being stunned by Rice in Houston 7-6.

Despite losing the final three games of the season, Crow was still being lauded as the best player in the country. He racked up 562 yards rushing, scored six touchdowns and intercepted five passes during the campaign. Although he lacked big rushing numbers by today's standards, Crow's former teammates remember him for his total desire to win and for his "north-and-south" style of running.

"He was a great football player, the best we ever had from that period," Dennis Goehring, '56, said. "There is better talent today, guys that are stronger and faster, but he was such a great competitor."

Bobby Joe Conrad, '57, said he thinks Crow's defensive mentality enabled him to punish would-be tacklers when he carried the ball.

"He was more of a bruising back than anything," Conrad said. "He just kept busting into them, and then he'd just take off."

Despite the flamboyance and hype now associated with the annual Heisman race, during Crow's time, the award was not very well-known.

"I had never really heard of it (the Heisman)," Crow said. "One day, Jones Ramsey, who was the sports information director at the time, asked me to stop by his office to ask me some questions for some newspaper. There was a picture of the Heisman Trophy in his office with some little description on it, and I asked Jones what it was."

"He said it was the Heisman Trophy, but I never would have remembered asking that if history didn't take the

turn it did."

Even after being awarded the trophy at the Downtown Athletic Club in New York City, Crow received another award, which at the time, he considered to be a much greater honor.

"At the time the Walter Kemp Memorial Award, which was the award for the best running back in the country, was a lot bigger thing," Crow said. "The Kemp award was at a hotel, it was a black-tie affair, and Vice-President Nixon was there. Tom Harrington was the president of A&M at the time, and he called home to tell my mother about it."

"Right at that time, I walked into the house and she said, 'The president of the University just called,' and I thought to myself, 'Oh god, what have I done now?' because I thought I was in some kind of trouble. My mother was as excited as she could have been."

Unlike many recent Heisman winners, Crow did not peak after winning the award. He was a first-round draft choice of the Chicago Cardinals in 1958, and played 11 seasons as a defensive back, making the Pro Bowl four times. He was named to the 1960s all-decade NFL team, and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1976.

Although he believes the next Heisman trophy winner at A&M may not be too far away, Crow said he is very proud that he is still the only Aggie winner, both for himself and for his old coach.

"I think we'll definitely have another winner, in fact he may be on the team right now, if he doesn't go to the NFL," Crow said. "Coach Bryant only had one Heisman Trophy winner (in 29 years of coaching), and it was me. He'll never have another one, and that's very gratifying for me."

