

# TOP THIRTY: QUARTERBACKS – 1978/2008

By Kent Schmidt, CSN Columnist

*(List: Ranking, Player, Position, School, NFL Draft)*

## **1. Kurt Warner, QB, Northern Iowa, Undrafted, Last College-1996**

At UNI, Warner was third on the Panthers' depth chart until his senior year. When Warner was finally given the chance to start, he was named the Gateway Conference's Offensive Player of the Year. He is a two-time NFL MVP (1999 and 2001); was also named Super Bowl XXXIV MVP after leading the Rams to a victory over the Tennessee Titans (1/30/00). A three-time Pro Bowler, has led the NFL in passing yardage, completion percentage and average gain per attempt three times each, has had the highest quarterback rating and led the league in touchdown passes twice.

## **2. Rich Gannon, QB, Delaware, 4th Rnd-1987**

Gannon played under Tubby Raymond and ran Raymond's Wing-T offense for the Blue Hens. When he led the Raiders to Super Bowl XXXVII in 2003, he was the first player from Delaware to go to the Super Bowl. He was the NFL's MVP in 2002 and was a four time Pro Bowl selection (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002). 2005, Gannon officially retired from football and joined CBS television as an NFL analyst. He retired as an Oakland Raider and was inducted into the Delaware athletics hall of fame the same year. In his NFL career, he threw for 28,743 yards and 180 touchdowns.

## **3. Phil Simms, QB, Morehead State, 1st Rnd--1979**

Had just one season at the FCS level--the first season ever but he won the OVC Player of the Year in his one and only FCS season of 1978. Simms played his entire professional career with the Giants and was named Most Valuable Player (MVP) of Super Bowl XXI, after he led the Giants to a 39–20 victory over the Denver Broncos and set a record for highest completion percentage in the Super Bowl, going 22 for 25. He also was named to the Pro Bowl for his performances in the 1985 and 1993 seasons. He finished his career with 33,462 passing yards and has since gone on to a career as a broadcaster of NFL games—first with NBC and currently with CBS.

## **4. Steve McNair, QB, Alcorn State, 1st Rnd--1995**

Nicknamed Air McNair, he was the Baltimore Ravens quarterback until he retired this past offseason. He was originally drafted by the Houston Oilers third overall in the 1995 NFL Draft and played for the Oilers/Tennessee Titans organization until he left for the Ravens after the 2005 season. Many FBS colleges recruited McNair to play defensive back, but Alcorn State was one of the few institutions that recruited McNair to play quarterback. Steve followed the footsteps of his older brother, Fred McNair (who played at Alcorn 1986-1989). In his senior season (1994) at ASU, he amassed incredible statistics - throwing for 4,863 yards with 44 touchdowns and rushing for 936 yards.

## **5. Stan Humphries, QB, Louisiana-Monroe, 6th Rnd-1988**

At Northeast Louisiana (now Louisiana-Monroe), Humphries was quarterback on a team that won the FCS National Championship in 1987. In two seasons, Humphries passed for 4,395 yards and 29 touchdowns. He still holds the school record for 300-yard passing games with eight. He played in the NFL until 1997--beginning his career with the Washington Redskins and later was traded to the San Diego Chargers. He threw for 1,015 yards and three touchdowns in seven games in 1990 as a backup for Mark Rypien in the Redskins Super Bowl season of 1990 and later guided the Chargers to their first and only Super Bowl (loss to 49ers) in 1994. In total, Humphries threw for 17,191 yards and 89 touchdowns in his career.

## **6. Dave Dickenson, QB, Montana, Undrafted, Last college-1995**

Led the Grizzlies to two Big Sky Conference title in three years, and first-ever FCS national championship in 1995. He was named Big Sky offensive MVP for three straight years, after going 309-455 for 4,176 yards with 38 touchdowns and just nine interceptions in final season. Led the nation in passing yards per game (379.6 yards), touchdowns (38), and total offence per game (382.6 yards). Currently, playing in the CFL for the Calgary Stampeders and has won two Grey Cup championships in his 11 CFL seasons.

## **7. Kerry Joseph, QB, McNeese State, Undrafted, Last college-1995**

Named MVP of McNeese State in his senior year of 1995 ... Also named to the All-Southland Conference team and named the conference player of the year ... Named to the All-Louisiana college team in 1995 and selected the state's offensive football player of the year by the Louisiana Sports Writers Association ... Led the team to a 42-11 record during four seasons as the McNeese State starting quarterback ... Led the team to two Southland Conference titles ... In his senior year, the team advanced to the FCS semi-finals. He played in NFL and NFL Europe before finding his calling in the CFL in 2003. He won the CFL Outstanding Player award a year ago, as well as his first Grey Cup with Saskatchewan. This season, he is playing for Toronto.

#### **8. Tony Romo, QB, Eastern Illinois, Undrafted, Last College-2003**

Romo passed for 2,950 yards and 33 touchdowns in 2002, completing 237 of 363 passes (65.3 percent) in leading Eastern Illinois to an 8-3 record, the Ohio Valley Conference co-title, and a FCS playoff berth his senior season. Currently, he is the starting quarterback for the NFL's Dallas Cowboys and has led them to the playoffs the past two seasons.

#### **9. Daunte Culpepper, QB, Central Florida, 1st Rnd-1999**

Central Florida moved up to FBS in 1996 so Culpepper saw just one season as a FCS player but made it memorable as a true freshman. Culpepper went on to earn FCS All-America honors, completing 168-of-294 passes for 2,071 yards and 12 touchdowns, with five more touchdowns coming on the ground. He is currently a NFL free agent but hopes to continue playing more. He has played for the Minnesota Vikings, Miami Dolphins, and Oakland Raiders. Thus far, he has thrown for 21,091 yards and 137 touchdowns and has rushed for 2,496 Rushing yards and 30 more touchdowns.

#### **10. Chad Pennington, QB, Marshall, 1st Rnd-2000**

Like Culpepper, Pennington saw just one FCS season but made it a memorable one as well. In 1995, he led the Thundering Herd to the national championship game but lost to Montana 22-20. In that season, he threw for 2,445 yards and 15 touchdowns. Pennington is known for not having great arm strength, but making up for it with accuracy and his awareness and knowledge of the game. Among NFL quarterbacks with at least 1,500 pass attempts, Chad Pennington's 65.6 career completion percentage ranks best all-time and has played his entire NFL career thus far with the NY Jets.

#### **11. Ricky Santos, QB, New Hampshire, Undrafted, Last College-2007**

He set New Hampshire team records with 13,212 passing yards, 123 passing touchdowns, 1,636 pass attempts and 1,122 completions in leading the Wildcats to four playoff seasons in his four year college career. In 2007, he played 11 games in an injury plagued season, completing 256 passes for 2,971 yards and 24 touchdowns. In 2006, he won the Walter Payton Award after completing 293 passes for 3,125 yards and 29 touchdowns. He is currently playing for the CFL's Montreal Alouettes.

#### **12. Tracy Ham, QB, Georgia Southern, Undrafted, Last college-1986**

In his college career with Georgia Southern he became the only quarterback to rush for 3,000 yards and pass for 5,000 yards in a career. In his CFL career from 1987 to 1999 Ham accumulated 40,534 passing yards which currently ranks seventh all-time. He threw 4943 times with 2670 completions, 164 interceptions and 284 touchdowns. His 8043 rushing yards presently puts him in tenth all time and second among quarterbacks, behind only Damon Allen. He tallied 1059 carries with 62 touchdowns. In 2007 he was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

#### **13. Russ Michna, QB, Western Illinois, Undrafted, Last College-2003**

Michna played in 39 games with the Leathernecks in his career. He completed 418 of 733 passes for 6,434 yards (second most in team history) and 44 touchdowns (also second most in team history). He rushed for another 279 yards and eight TDs with the Leathernecks. His collegiate career also included twice being named the Gateway Conference Offensive Player of the Year. He also received all-conference first-team honours and was an all-conference first-team All Academic. Currently playing with the Arena Football League's Chicago Rush after spending two seasons for the CFL's Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

#### **14. Bubby Brister, QB, Louisiana-Monroe, 3rd Rnd-1986**

Played 14-seasons in the NFL with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Philadelphia Eagles, New York Jets, Denver Broncos, and Minnesota Vikings. He played in three conference championship games and two Super Bowls and won the two Super Bowls with the Broncos. At Northeast Louisiana, he led the SLC in passing with 2880 yards his senior season with 17 touchdowns and seventh nationally that year. He played just two seasons with the then Indians as he transferred from Tulane.

#### **15. Neil Lomax, QB, Portland State, 2nd Rnd-1981**

The Vikings had a short stint of FCS play in 1978 through 1980 before moving down to DII until they moved back up to FCS in 1996. Neil was the quarterback for the new run and gun offense of Mouse Davis. He went from being a fifth-string freshman quarterback on partial scholarship to emergency starter to NCAA legend. As a senior, he led the FCS in total yards (4,094), touchdown passes (37) and completions (296), and was seventh in the Heisman Trophy balloting. By the end of his college career, Neil Lomax held 90 NCAA records. He had a nine-year NFL career for some very mediocre St. Louis/Phoenix Cardinals teams, displaying brilliance in his two Pro Bowl years (1984 and 1987).

#### **16. Erik Meyer, QB, Eastern Washington, Last College-2005**

Meyer threw for 3,616 passing yards in the regular season, and directed an Eastern Washington offense that finished second nationally in passing yardage (337.6 ypg) and third in total offense (477.7 ypg). Meyer threw for 26 touchdowns and five interceptions, and added four touchdowns in a playoff loss to Northern Iowa to finish with a 169.3 passer rating. That rating helped Meyer finish with a 166.47 career passer rating, which broke the FCS record of 166.27 set by 1995 Payton Award winner Dave Dickenson. Meyer also helped the Eagles to the playoffs his final two seasons in Cheney.

#### **17. Josh McCown, QB, Sam Houston State, 3rd Rnd-2002**

McCown played three collegiate seasons at SMU, passing for 4,022 yards and 24 touchdowns and a subpar TD:INT ratio of 9:16. McCown left the SMU program to prove that he could lead an aerial attack and did so, surpassing his 3-year SMU TD total in just one season at Sam Houston State--passing for 3,481 yards and 32 touchdowns as a senior. His passing yardage total was the best in Bearkat history and ranks him 8th all-time in career passing yards. He is currently playing for the Miami Dolphins after stints with Arizona, Detroit, and Oakland previously in his current six NFL seasons.

#### **18. Tarvaris Jackson, QB, Alabama State, 2nd Rnd-2006**

Jackson played in FCS ball during the 2001 season and part of 2002 while attending Arkansas. A shoulder injury kept him from starting full time and when it was decided Matt Jones would start at quarterback instead of him, he transferred to Alabama State in his hometown of Montgomery. During Jackson's senior year, he amassed 2,655 yards, 25 touchdowns, and only 5 interceptions with a 61.1% completion rate. In three seasons for the Hornets, Jackson completed 537 of 985 attempts for 7,838 yards, with 67 touchdown passes and 27 interceptions. He is the current starting quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, the only NFL team he has played for his two pro seasons.

#### **19. Joe Flacco, QB, Delaware, 1st Rnd-2008**

Flacco was unable to get out of his scholarship at FBS Pittsburgh, so he was ineligible for action in the 2005 season with his transfer team of Delaware. Flacco saw his first full time action during the 2006 season (his junior season) and put up good numbers with nearly 3,000 yards and 18 touchdowns. His senior season a year ago proved to be his most successful. He led Delaware to an 8-3 regular season record while compiling over 3,300 yards, 18 touchdowns and only 5 interceptions. He had one of his best games against in an upset win over FBS Navy where he threw for 434 yards and four touchdowns. Flacco showed another solid performance in the first ever in-state meeting against Delaware State in the first round of the playoffs. Flacco continued the Blue Hens' playoff run by upsetting top seeded Northern Iowa 39-27 in the FCS quarterfinals and upsetting fourth seeded Southern Illinois the next weekend in the semifinals. Delaware fell to Appalachian State in the national championship game 49-21. He was selected with the 18th overall selection in the 2008 NFL draft by the Baltimore Ravens.

#### **20. Jeff Lewis, QB, Northern Arizona, 4th Rnd-1996**

Lewis was a four-year starter for the Lumberjacks. He ranks fourth on the all-time NAU passing list with 9,639 yards in his career and was named as an All-American after the 1994 and 1995 seasons. He had a memorable senior season, throwing for 3,355 yards and 26 touchdowns. He had a seven year NFL career with Denver, Carolina, and New Orleans--playing in 12 games in his career. He won two Super Bowl championships as a backup for the Broncos after the 1997 and 1998 seasons.

#### **21. Mike Buck, QB, Maine, 6th Rnd-1990**

Buck was a four-year starter at Maine, establishing 27 school passing records, including completions, attempts, touchdowns and yardage. He played in eight games over the his first four NFL seasons before being released in 1994. After sitting out that season, he played with the Arizona Cardinals in 1995 and went to the Miami Dolphins' camp in 1996. He also played as a backup in the 2001 season for the now defunct XFL's Las Vegas Outlaws.

#### **22. Josh Johnson, QB, San Diego, 5th Rnd-2008**

Johnson was a four time All-American with the Toreros and was twice named the Pioneer Football League's Player of the Year (2006, 2007). He also led San Diego to two Sports Network Cup National championships (2005, 2006) and another runner's up (2007). In total, he finished as the school's record-holder in career touchdown passes, completions, and passing yards. Johnson was invited to play in the 2008 East-West Shrine Game and was named the game's Offensive MVP after finishing the game with 5 completions out of 11 pass attempts for 78 yards and a touchdown and 103 rushing yards on three attempts. He was selected in the fifth round of the NFL draft by Tampa Bay this past year.

#### **23. Ricky Ray, QB, Sacramento State, Undrafted, Last college-2000**

In two seasons at Sacramento State, Ray posted impressive numbers. In 2000, he completed 168 of 270 passes for 2,200 yards, 13 TDs and 6 INTs. Ray enjoyed his best season in 1999 when he completed 179 of 291 passes for 2,422 yards, 20 TDs. Ray is listed in 5 Sacramento State career passing record categories: 1st in completion percentage (.619), 3rd in completions (347), 3rd in yards and 4th in attempts (516). Currently playing in the CFL for Edmonton. He has won two Grey Cups (2003, 2005) and was the league's All-Star in 2006.

#### **24. Casey Printers, QB, Florida A&M, Undrafted, Last college-2002**

Spent his senior year at Florida A&M after playing the previous three years for Texas Christian. Led the Rattlers to a 7-5 record in the Mid Eastern Athletic Conference, completing 123 of 218 passes for 1,517 yards with 12 touchdowns and five interceptions. Also rushed for three touchdowns. Tried out with Kansas City in the NFL but has spent majority of professional career with BC Lions in CFL but is currently with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

#### **25. Richie Williams, QB, Appalachian State, Undrafted, Last College-2005**

Had an outstanding four-year (2002-05) career with the Appalachian State Mountaineers...set every single-game, single-season and career record for a passer including total offence, passing yards, touchdowns, completions and attempts at Appalachian during his four years in the Black and Gold...started 37 of 43 career games at quarterback, completing 589 of 947 pass attempts for 7,759 yards, 59 touchdowns and 22 interceptions...had 464 carries for 1,911 yards and 22 touchdowns. Currently playing for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats of CFL.

#### **26. Jayson Foster, QB, Georgia Southern, Undrafted, Last College-2007**

Foster rushed for an NCAA all-divisions quarterback record of 1,844 yards (7.1 yards per carry) with 24 touchdowns during the 2007 season. The senior also completed 109-of-170 passes for 1,203 yards and six touchdowns. He was last year's Walter Payton Award winner. After going undrafted in the 2008 NFL Draft, Foster was signed by the Miami Dolphins as an undrafted free agent.

#### **27. John Friesz, QB, Idaho, 6th Rnd-1990**

Friesz was the first quarterback to claim the Walter Payton Award while throwing for 4,041 yards and 31 touchdowns in his senior season. That same season, he led his Vandals to the 1989 Big Sky title and a berth in the FCS playoffs. The Idaho native threw for an incredible 367.4 yards per game, went over the 300-yard mark 10 straight times, and at one stretch completed 173 consecutive passes without an interception. The signal-caller's 10,187 career passing yards still rank in the NCAA Top 15, and his 305.6 career per game average is the best mark in school history. Friesz enjoyed

an 11-year NFL career with the Chargers, Redskins, Seahawks, and Patriots. In August 2006, Friesz was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

**28. Jamie Martin, QB, Weber State, Undrafted, Last College-1992**

Martin was the second quarterback and Big Sky player to bring home the Payton Award, and was also the first player to claim the honor during his junior season. The signal-caller threw for 4,125 yards and 37 touchdowns during the 1991 campaign, leading the Wildcats to an 8-4 mark and a berth in the FCS playoffs. Martin's 643-yard, four-touchdown effort in a 60-41 win over Idaho State helped seal the Payton, and the single-game yardage total still stands as a FCS record. Martin's career total offense mark of 12,287 yards ranks fifth in FCS history. Martin is currently with the New Orleans Saints and in his 14th NFL season. He has also spent time with the Redskins, Jaguars, Browns, Jets and Rams.

**29. Michael Payton, QB, Marshall, Undrafted, Last College-1992**

Payton was the first-ever Southern Conference player to win the Walter Payton Award, and was also the first-ever Payton winner to claim a FCS championship the same year. Payton threw for 3,610 yards and 31 TDs for the Thundering Herd, winning SoCon Player of the Year honors for the second straight season. Among the quarterback's prime targets was current NFL standout Troy Brown, who was on the receiving end of 101 completions, 1,654 yards, and 16 touchdowns in 1992. Payton's top accomplishment, however, was leading the Herd to their first-ever national title, defeating Youngstown State, 31-28, in the 1992 championship game. Payton went on to play professionally with the Florida Bobcats of the Arena Football League.

**30. Lang Campbell, QB, William & Mary, Undrafted, Last College-2004**

Campbell completed a remarkable 66% of his passes (215-of-326) for 3,037 yards in his senior season of 2004. He tossed 21 touchdowns while throwing just one interception in the regular season. Campbell was also effective on the ground, finishing with 201 yards rushing and seven touchdowns. He helped William & Mary to a share of the Atlantic 10 title with a 9-2 record, and the Tribe earned the conference's automatic berth to the playoffs. William & Mary qualified for the postseason for the first time since 2001 and the 9-2 mark was the best regular season finish since 1996. He won the Walter Payton Award after the 2004 season.