In 1944, Les Horvath made Ohio State history by becoming the school’s first Heisman Trophy winner. With Horvath at the controls, the Buckeyes posted a perfect 9-0 record and won the Big Ten championship. The Parma, Ohio, native ran for a Big Ten-best 924 yards on 163 carries while finding the end zone 12 times. In addition, Horvath threw for 344 yards and six touchdowns.

Horvath, who played both quarterback and halfback on offense and safety on defense, was the Big Ten’s MVP in 1944. Horvath entered dental school in 1943 and almost did not play during the 1944 campaign but was persuaded by head coach Carroll Widdoes.

How good was Vic Janowicz? Good enough to win the 1950 Heisman Trophy as a junior on a team that posted a modest 6-3 record. And good enough that to this day most historians consider him among the greatest athletes ever to play football at Ohio State.

Janowicz enjoyed his finest year in 1950, accounting for 16 touchdowns and 875 yards in total offense. The Elyria, Ohio, native also led the Buckeyes in scoring with 65 points. In an 83-21 win over Iowa, he ran for two touchdowns, passed for four more and set a Big Ten record with 10 extra points.

Janowicz, who was a consensus All-American in 1950, also set two more records in the Snow Bowl, punting 21 times for 685 yards.

It didn’t take Ohio State fans long to realize why Howard “Hopalong” Cassady was something special. In his first collegiate game, the season opener against Indiana in 1952, the 150-pound freshman came off the bench to score three touchdowns and lead the Buckeyes to a 33-13 victory. From then on, “Hop” was a regular in the OSU lineup, playing in 36 of a possible 37 games and leading the Buckeyes to a combined record of 29-8 during the next four years.

Cassady won All-America acclaim in 1954 and again in 1955, when he rushed for 958 yards and 15 touchdowns. At the end of the year, Cassady’s list of accolades included the Heisman Trophy and recognition by the Associated Press as the 1955 Athlete of the Year.
In 1974, Ohio State tailback Archie Griffin became just the fifth junior ever to win the Heisman Trophy. In 1975, Griffin became the first player ever to win a second Heisman. He is still the only player to have two of the coveted bronze statues, which go annually to the nation’s top college football player.

But though more than four decades have passed, honors continue to befall Griffin.

Griffin was selected to the National High School Hall of Fame in 1996. He also is a member of the National Football Foundation and the Rose Bowl halls of fame and, of course, belongs to the Ohio State University Athletics Hall of Fame.

Following his senior year, Griffin, who graduated a quarter early with a degree in industrial relations, received the NCAA’s prestigious Top Five Award for combined excellence in athletics, academics and leadership.

After graduation, Griffin was a first-round draft choice of the Cincinnati Bengals. He played eight years of professional football before returning to Columbus and joining the staff at Ohio State.

His jersey number “45” was retired Oct. 30, 1999.

At the start of the 1995 season, Eddie George was, at best, a long-shot contender for the Heisman Trophy. By season’s end, he was a runaway choice.

As Ohio State’s sixth Heisman recipient, George rushed for a school-record 1,927 yards and 24 touchdowns. Included in that yardage total were three 200-yard games, one of which was an Ohio State record 314 yards against Illinois Nov. 11, 1995.

George’s other honors in 1995 included the Doak Walker Award, the Maxwell Award, the Walter Camp Player of the Year Award and Big Ten MVP. He also was a team co-captain.

After leading Ohio State to a 12-0 regular season and a successful defense of its Big Ten crown, Troy Smith was the runaway winner of the 2006 Heisman Trophy. He secured a record 86.7 percent of the first-place votes and his 1,662-point margin over second-place finisher Darren McFadden of Arkansas was the second-most lopsided Heisman vote.

With one remarkable performance after another, he set the school single-season record with 30 touchdowns and became just the second quarterback in Ohio State history to post a 3-0 record against Michigan as a starter.

Smith also won the Walter Camp and Davey O’Brien awards in 2006.