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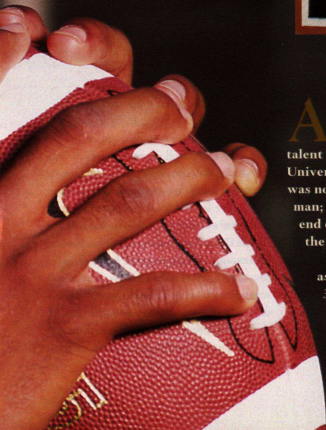
STORY BY JAYNA RUST
PHOTO BY ROB HILL

QUARTERBACK
BRADLEY SMITH
POSES A DOUBLE
THREAT WITH HIS
PASSING AND
RUNNING GAMES.
ALTHOUGH HE'S
QUIET, HE'S
GROWING INTO HIS
ROLE AS A LEADER.

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AT THIS TIME LAST YEAR, none of Missouri's city newspapers had delved into the past of a certain young MU quarterback from Youngstown, Ohio; those stories came in October 2002, after he had shown a rare talent in early games. There weren't any replicas of his No. 16 jersey at the University Bookstore; they weren't stocked until this football season. There was no speculation that a Heisman trophy might go to that same young man; reporters didn't begin pinning him as one to watch for 2003 until the end of the Tigers' 5-7 season in 2002 — a season much more exciting than the record shows.

Before the Tigers took the field on Aug. 31, 2002, Bradley Smith was as inconspicuous as his name. But one redshirt freshman season and 3,362 yards later, Smith has become a poster boy for MU athletics. Fans and foes alike expect an even better season from 19-year-old Smith and the rest of the Tigers in 2003. Smith finished 2002 having passed for 2,333 yards and rushed for 1,029 yards. He is only the second NCAA Division I player ever to throw for 2,000 yards and rush for 1,000 in the same season. In 2001, Clemson University's



Woody Dantzler became the first.

In Smith's second year as starting quarterback, he will take the field as one of four MU captains. His goals for this year are simple: "Get better at everything. Everything I do, I just try to think about winning and whatever it takes," Smith says. "I just want to get our team to a higher level of play and hopefully do better than last year, which I believe we will." Smith turned heads right away in 2002 when the Tigers took down defending Big 10 champion University of Illinois in the season opener. "After the Illinois game, a lot of players on our team, along with the rest of the nation, got a little bit of a shock treatment," says MU wide receiver Marcus James. "Electrifying is what I like to call him."

Smith's high-voltage performances don't come with an overbearing ego or a sports-only attitude. Although Smith carries some football habits into his everyday life — he licks his fingers for grip whether he's reaching for a football or a pencil — he's found a balance between football and life. He is becoming equally renowned for his behavior on and off the field. Smith's friendly personality, along with his focus on academics, family and religion, makes him an even more attractive icon for MU fans.

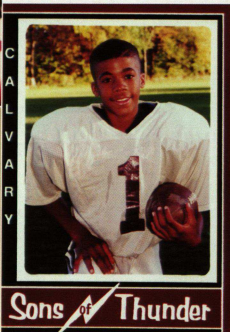
It's difficult to describe Smith without also describing his religious life. Members of his Pentecostal church in Youngstown introduced him to football when he was 6 years old. Some men in the church knew Smith and his older brother were in a single-parent home and invited them to play in the church league. Knowing few people in Ohio, Smith and his brother were eager to find something that would keep them busy. "My dad wasn't with us, so it was just a way to be around older guys and have a man to be interested in [us] about something," Smith says. "I think that helped me."

Smith played with his church league as long as he could, then he joined his high school team, the Chaney High



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERRI SMITH

Smith's mother, Sherri, above, works for their church in Youngstown, Ohio, where he learned to play football on the Sons of Thunder team, right. His mother says he is curious, kind and well connected to his family. Smith, far right, played multiple sports growing up.



School Cowboys. Although he didn't play football for his middle school or junior high teams, he had no problem mixing his academic and athletic lives once he reached high school.

Academics have always been important to Smith and were a large factor in his decision to come to MU. "When I graduate, I want to have a degree that will be respected," Smith says. "I want to know that I got the best education that I can get. I think I have that here." Smith has not declared a major yet, but he is leaning toward business.

SMITH'S INTEREST IN ACADEMICS MAY come from his natural curiosity. "He's always been very inquisitive about things," says his mother, Sherri Smith, who works for their church in Youngstown. "He likes to know the inner workings and the details of things."

The most important woman in Smith's life is his mother. He talks with her regularly. While at college, Smith has remained close with his older brother and sister as well. "They've always been quite close, roughhousing and playing around," his mother says. She describes her son as "genuinely kind."

His teammate James agrees. "I don't think I've ever met a person who cares

more about others than he does," James says. "If you ever met him on the street, you wouldn't think he was Big 12 Newcomer of the Year (The Associated Press, *Kansas City Star*, *Columbia Daily Tribune*). You'd just think he's the nicest guy you've ever met."

At first meeting, many people describe him as shy. Not so. If he seems quiet, it's because he's a no-nonsense, easygoing kind of guy. In high school, when local reporters shortened his name from Bradley (what his family calls him and how he introduces himself) to Brad, he didn't bother correcting them. He just doesn't talk unless he has something important to say.

Smith carried that demeanor into early practices. "I thought he was a kicker or something because he was so quiet," James says. "Now he's more vocal."

After a little warming up to the rest of the team, Smith has stepped into his role as a leader for the Tigers. "He has the best kind of leadership," Assistant Head Coach Dave Christensen says. "He leads by example. He shows great leadership through his work ethic. He works every single day at being a better player." Every day, Smith works on throwing the ball. "If there isn't anyone around to throw to, he'll throw to a garbage can. If there's not



MU ATHLETICS MEDIA RELATIONS PHOTOS

Bradley Smith's opponents must guard against both his passing and running. Smith, above and left, is the second player in Division I history to pass for 2,000 yards and rush for 1,000 in a season.

Some of Bradley Smith's 2002 Achievements

- Honorable Mention All-American (CNNSI.com, *College Football News*)
- First team Freshman All-American (FWAA, *The Sporting News*, *College Football News*, *Rivals.com*)
- Big 12 Offensive Newcomer of the Year (AP, *Kansas City Star*, *Columbia Daily Tribune*)
- Big 12 Freshman of the Year (*College Football News*, *Dallas Morning News*)
- Honorable Mention All-Big 12 (AP, *Coaches*)
- School record of 3,362 yards total offensive output
- School record for lowest interception percentage (1.6%)

a garbage can around, he'll throw to a spot on a wall, go get the ball and do it again. If he can't get into a place where he can throw, he'll watch films.

Christensen says it is Smith's work ethic that inspires other players to follow his directions: "He got a lot of respect for working hard in the off-season."

Smith will have to rely on the support of his teammates this season. "When you're looking at teams, you try to circle their impact players. Smith gets circled

fast," says Head Coach Gary Pinkel. "We've got to be able to play better defense. We've got to be able to run the ball without him."

In the Big 12 last year, the Tigers finished last in pass defense, ninth in rushing defense and rushed for just 1,175 yards, not counting Smith's 1,029.

Going into his third season as Tiger head coach, Pinkel feels his program is on track. "It's been pretty much what I anticipated from the standpoint of build-

ing a program. When I was making the decision of whether or not I wanted to [take this position in 2000], my wife asked me what I was thinking. I was asking myself whether or not I wanted to put myself through this. I'm used to winning; I've always associated myself with winning, so it's been tough. But it's been a good two years."

Pinkel emphasizes the changes the Tigers have made over the past two years. These changes are bringing some early

attention to the University. In its 2003 college football annual, *Athlon Sports* ranked Missouri No. 25 in its preseason poll. It is the first time since 1984, when the Tigers were No. 18, that MU has appeared in *Athlon's* preseason rankings.

Like the media, fans see major differences in the team's offensive numbers since Pinkel arrived. The Tigers went from averaging 154.2 rushing yards and 196.8 passing yards in 2000 to 183.7 and 203.2, respectively. Another change was seen on the hands of every MU player at the end of the third quarter in 2002. Everyone held up four fingers as a reminder of how crucial the last quarter can be. In Pinkel's first season, the Tigers were outscored 102-47 in the fourth quarter. In 2002, the team outscored opponents 88-68 in the final periods.

At the quarterback position, Smith has made strides for the team. In 2000, no MU quarterback completed more than 50 percent of his passes. Smith finished 2002 passing 53.6 percent.

Any improvements the Tigers and Smith made in this past off-season will be

tested by a strong Big 12 Conference this season. For starters, Kansas State University, the University of Oklahoma and Texas A&M University are on the Tigers' 2003 schedule, and all have star quarterbacks returning. Kansas State and Oklahoma were in *Athlon's* top five in the preseason ranking.

JAMES, A SENIOR, WANTS TO CAP HIS career with a strong finish. "The remnants of last season left a bad taste in our mouths," James says. "I'm personally very hungry, and I know the team's very hungry. You always want to go out on top."

MU's finger-licking quarterback sees that as a possibility. "We're seeing the big picture a little bit better this year," Smith says. "That's a good thing." ❀

About the author: Jayna Rust is a 2003 graduate of the School of Journalism. She minored in psychology. While at MU, she interned as a writer for the New York Yankees and was the athletics editor for the Savitar. This fall she begins the first year of her two-year commitment to Teach For America in Los Angeles.



Coach Gary Pinkel's squad placed 25th in the *Athlon Sports* preseason poll.

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RETURNING STARTERS

Offense (13)

Offensive line: Rob Droege, Joe Gianino, Scott Paffrath, Tony Palmer, A.J. Ricker, Cliff Young
Quarterback: Bradley Smith
Tailback: Zack Abron
Wide receiver: Sean Coffey, Marcus James, Thomson Omboga, Darius Outlaw
Tight end: J.D. McCoy

Defense (12)

Defensive line: Russ Bell, Atiyah Ellison, Terrell Mills, C.J. Mosley
Linebacker: Brandon Barnes, James Kinney, Henry Sweat
Secondary: Michael Harden, A.J. Kincade, Marcus King, Shirdonya Mitchell, Jason Simpson

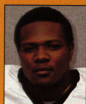
Special Teams (2)

Brock Harvey, Michael Matheny

2003 Football Schedule

Aug. 30	Illinois (in St. Louis)
Sept. 6	at Ball State
Sept. 13	Eastern Illinois
Sept. 20	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 27	at Kansas
Oct. 11	Nebraska
Oct. 18	at Oklahoma
Oct. 25	Texas Tech
Nov. 8	at Colorado
Nov. 15	Texas A&M
Nov. 22	at Kansas State
Nov. 29	Iowa State

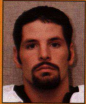
CALL 1-800-CAT-PAWS for tickets.



Abron



Bell



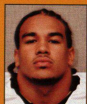
Droege



Ellison



James



Kinney



Mosley



Outlaw



Ricker