

Leach wants Texas Tech's stars in Heisman watch

Harrell and Crabtree are on record paces, but honors rarely go to Red Raiders.

Mike Leach normally doesn't care much about individual awards.

But the Texas Tech coach is making a point to note that early statistics generated by quarterback Graham Harrell and freshman wide receiver Michael Crabtree have been staggering — even by his lofty standards.

Harrell and Crabtree both could challenge NCAA Division I-A single-season records if they can maintain their pace of the first half of the season. Their quick starts have convinced Leach that both players deserve mention in a Heisman Trophy race that features no true breakout performer.

"It's getting a little harder to ignore some of these Adonises they have on the list that are having a tough time," Leach said. "I think Graham and Crabtree are both looking a little more inviting at this point."

Harrell leads the nation with 2,726 passing yards and 28 touchdown passes and ranks second in passing efficiency heading into Saturday's game against Texas A&M. And Crabtree leads the nation with 70 receptions, 1,074 yards and 17 touchdown receptions. He's already broken Tech's single-season touchdown record and the national freshman TD mark in less than half a season.

And if both remain healthy and play in a bowl game, which would count in their final season statistics, they both might break a lot of records before the season ends.

"Obviously, these guys are doing some great things," Leach said. "And I think that if people are going to keep track of these things, there doesn't need to be a vacuum on it. They need to give our players some credit for what they are doing, too."

Video-game numbers have been the norm around Tech's program since Leach brought his high-powered passing attack to the High Plains in 2000. Since then, the Red Raiders have featured five quarterbacks who have ranked among the top three nationally in passing yards in his tenure.

But none of Tech's quarterbacks have finished higher than ninth in the Heisman Trophy voting. And only Kliff Kingsbury in 2002 was named first-team all-Big 12.

Tech's wide receivers have been similarly shunned. Five receivers have ranked among the top 10 nationally since 2000, including two receivers among the top five receivers last season in Robert Johnson and Joel Filani. But Leach's offense has never produced a consensus All-American wide receiver.

It might be attributable to Tech's isolated location or Leach's continued offensive mastery. But Harrell said that every Tech quarterback and receiver has a stigma to overcome.

"I think that we do get overlooked because the perception is that everybody has put up big numbers here," Harrell said. "You kind of get branded as a product of the system and that's not really fair."

"Yeah, we get to throw it a lot, but our coverages often have eight or nine defenders against us on a regular basis. It would be easier to throw against some more regular looks. And if it was really that easy, everybody would be doing it."

Texas Tech QB Graham Harrell and WR Michael Crabtree are on track to challenge several existing Division I-A single-season records. (Projections are in parentheses and for 13 games.)

Graham Harrell

Passing yards: 2,726 yards (5,906)

NCAA single-season record: 5,833, B.J. Symons, Texas Tech, 2003, 13 games

TD passes: 28 (61)

NCAA single-season record: 58, Colt Brennan, Hawaii, 2006, 14 games

Michael Crabtree

Receptions: 70 (152)

NCAA single-season record: 142, Manny Hazard, Houston, 1989, 11 games

Yards: 1,074 (2,327)

NCAA single-season record: 2,060, Trevor Insley, Hawaii, 1999, 13 games

TD receptions: 17 (37)

NCAA single-season record: 27, Troy Edwards, Louisiana Tech, 1998, 12 games

Note: Bowl statistics are included in final season statistics. At 5-1, Tech needs one more victory to gain eligibility.

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