

# 1992 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS



▲ Marshall won the first of two I-AA national championships in a five-year span.

It was the stuff of which dreams are made, but who could have possibly dreamed the game day scenario that carried the Thundering Herd to the 1992 national championship.

Senior place-kicker Willy Merrick, having never attempted a field goal in his life at any level, kicked one through the uprights with 10 seconds on the clock to bring the title to Huntington, W.Va.

In 1987, Marshall failed to hold a 42-28 fourth quarter lead against Northeast Louisiana in the championship game, losing 43-42. In 1991, Marshall took a 17-6 lead into the fourth quarter against Youngstown State, only to lose 25-17. Then, in 1992 Marshall led 28-0 late in the third quarter before those same Penguins stormed back to tie the score, 28-28, and threatened to crush the hopes and dreams of the Marshall faithful once more. But unlike the aforementioned losses, Marshall walked off the field that mild December day National Champions.

Marshall's season began on Sept. 5 as the No. 2 ranked Thundering Herd, the Herd was ranked No. 1 in every major national poll except the NCAA poll, battled I-64 rival Morehead State. Marshall claimed its ninth consecutive home-opener by a score of 49-7.

The Herd played host to Eastern Illinois on Sept. 12 in the first meeting between the two schools. Marshall cruised to a 63-38 triumph with Troy Brown contributing 292 all-purpose yards.

Marshall began its Southern Conference schedule Sept. 19 at VMI. Head coach Jim Donnan had emphasized during the pre-season that Marshall's goal in '92 was to win the schools first ever outright league championship. The game at VMI would be the Herd's initial road game of the year and was also the Keydets Homecoming, a formidable test for the Herd.

Touchdowns from Glenn Pedro, Chris Parker and Orlando Hatchett gave the Herd a 20-16 margin at the intermission. Marshall's defensive adjustments at halftime blanked the Keydets in the second half and Marshall added two more rushing scores in the final seven minutes for a hard earned 34-16 victory.

Marshall went into the Oct. 3 game with Missouri coming off its bye-week and its second No. 1 ranking in school history. The ranking however, failed to impress the Tigers of the Big 8. Missouri jumped to a 17-7 lead at halftime, led 24-14 late in the third quarter and then scored 17 unanswered points. The final score of 44-21 was Marshall's most lopsided defeat of the year.

A full moon on the night of Oct. 10 and sellout crowd of 28,272 at MU Football Stadium provided the scene for another clash with the Furman Paladins. When the dust settled, Marshall stood with a 48-6 win, Furman's worst defeat since 1972.

A Johnson Hagood Stadium record crowd of 23,025 greeted the Herd on Oct. 17 in Charleston, S.C. as the No. 4 Bulldogs and No. 5 Herd squared off in a game

that had both playoff and league title implications. Marshall wiped away all past memories of its Charleston losses by grinding out a 34-13 victory over the Bulldogs.

The win over The Citadel propelled the Herd to a No. 3 ranking going into the Oct. 24 game at home versus the injury-riddled UT-Chattanooga Moccasins; Marshall emerged with a 52-23 victory.

On Oct. 31, the unranked Catamounts and No. 2 ranked Thundering Herd battled on nearly even terms until defensive lineman Jim Tulley intercepted a Michael Payton pass and ran 17 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter giving WCU a 31-17 lead. The Herd went on to lose 38-30.

The Herd scored 21 points in the first half against ASU, but trailed 30-21 mid-way though the fourth quarter. Troy Brown and Glenn Pedro both scored to give Marshall a 34-30 lead with 5:38 remaining. However, the Mountaineers drove 72 yards in 15 plays, scoring the winning touchdown on a nine yard pass with eight seconds left. Appalachian State handed Marshall its first loss in the two year old stadium. The loss also dropped Marshall out of the league title race and MU plummeted to No. 10 in the NCAA poll.

Marshall had to win-out the rest of the season to be considered for a playoff at-large berth. Marshall wasted no time getting back on the winning track, bolting a 21-0 lead en route to a 52-14 thrashing of Tennessee Tech on Nov. 14. The Herd closed out the regular season on Nov. 21 with a 49-10 disposal of East Tennessee State University.

Ohio Valley Conference champion Middle Tennessee State journeyed to Huntington on Dec. 5 for a quarter-final play-off game. Late in the first quarter Marshall All-American quarterback Michael Payton went down with a knee injury and Todd Donnan came off the bench to complete 13-of-23 passes for 246 yards and three TD passes (to Troy Brown) as Marshall posted a 35-21 win.

Delaware, the Yankee Conference winner, challenged Marshall on Dec. 12 in the semifinal round. The Herd forced five Blue Hen turnovers and, after spotting its opponent a 7-0 lead, controlled the

entire game winning by a 28-7 count. Roger Johnson returned an interception 79 yards for a touchdown to highlight the afternoon.

The scene was set for a rematch with Youngstown State, the team that beat the Herd a year earlier in Statesboro, Ga. for the national championship. Less than 24 hours after Marshall's win over Delaware, the MU ticket office employees posted a "Game Sold Out" sign in their window and went home early.

And the rest is National Championship history.

THE 1992 SEASON				
Willy Merrick's Field Goal Gives Herd Win				
<b>Overall Record: 12-3   SoCon Record: 5-2</b>				
Sept. 5	MOREHEAD STATE	W, 49-7		
Sept. 12	EASTERN ILLINOIS	W, 63-28		
Sept. 19	at VMI	W, 34-16		
Oct. 3	at Missouri	L, 21-44		
Oct. 10	FURMAN	W, 48-6		
Oct. 17	at The Citadel	W, 34-13		
Oct. 24	TENNESSEE-CHATTANOOGA	W, 52-23		
Oct. 31	at Western Carolina	L, 30-38		
Nov. 7	APPALACHIAN STATE (HC)	L, 34-37		
Nov. 14	TENNESSEE TECH	W, 52-14		
Nov. 21	at East Tennessee State	W, 49-10		
<b>NCAA I-AA Playoffs</b>				
Nov. 28	EASTERN KENTUCKY	W, 44-0		
Dec. 5	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	W, 35-21		
Dec. 12	DELAWARE	W, 28-7		
<b>NCAA I-AA National Championship Game</b>				
Dec. 19	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	W, 31-28	604-292	
<b>Statistical Leaders</b>				
<b>RUSHING</b>				
<b>PLAYER</b>	<b>ATT.</b>	<b>YARDS</b>	<b>TD</b>	
Glenn Pedro	187	1021	9	
Orlando Hatchett	119	710	12	
<b>PASSING</b>				
<b>PLAYER</b>	<b>ATT.-COMP.</b>	<b>YARDS</b>	<b>TD</b>	<b>INT</b>
Michael Payton	415-268	3610	31	12
Todd Donnan	83-49	741	6	4
<b>RECEIVING</b>				
<b>PLAYER</b>	<b>REC.</b>	<b>YARDS</b>	<b>TD</b>	
Troy Brown	101	1654	16	
Mike Bartrum	62	680	9	

# 1996 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS



▲ Marshall finished the 1996 season 15-0 en route to its second national title.

The 1996 season would be one with many expectations. The Herd returned almost all of its starters from a team that advanced to the championship game the previous year. Also entering the picture this season were a host of transfers including Florida quarterback Eric Kresser and Florida State wide receiver Randy Moss.

Bob Pruett, previously the defensive coordinator at Florida, returned to his Alma Mater to head up a Marshall program that had been picked by most to win the national championship.

Marshall's first two weeks were with familiar foe, Howard and West Virginia State. Against the Howard Bison in week one, Randy Moss and Eric Kresser connected for their first touchdown pass. Despite heading into halftime with only a four point lead, 24-20, Marshall defeated the Bison 55-27. Moss continued his success in the West Virginia State game by contributing three touchdowns in the 42-7 win.

The third game of the season at Georgia Southern marked the Herd's first Southern Conference game of the season. Marshall came from behind to win the contest 29-13.

The Herd entered the fourth game with a 3-0 record. The match-up with No. 12 Western Kentucky would give the victor a perfect record and the loser their first loss of the season. On Marshall's first possession, Moss caught a three-yard touchdown pass for a 7-0 game. At halftime the Herd led 23-3 and won by a score of 37-3.

The Herd got back into the conference schedule with a 45-0 shutout of Tennessee Chattanooga.

After a 7-7 start with VMI, Marshall put up 28 unanswered points in the remainder of the first half. The Herd cruised to a 45-20 win.

Western Carolina found itself in a 35-point hole after only 18 minutes of play. Through one-and-a-half periods of play Kresser was 17-for-23 through the air for 300 yards. Marshall went on to win 56-21.

The next game of the season was a revenge match with 1995 SoCon Champions Appalachian State. Appalachian State earned the outright title by beating the Herd 10-3 in 1995. The Mountaineers pulled ahead, 10-7, heading into halftime. That would be the last time Appalachian State scored in the game.

Kresser made connections with Moss and Tim Martin for touchdowns in the second half. In the 24-10 win, punter Chris Hanson punted six times in a single game for a school record average of 55.3 yards per kick. The 14 point difference will be Marshall's smallest margin of victory all season.

The Citadel Bulldogs came to Marshall Stadium as underdogs, but put up the first points of the game. The Kresser and Moss connection answered back quickly to even the score. Moss had now caught a TD pass in each of the nine games, as well as in the first quarter of every game.

Before halftime, the Herd and the Bulldogs exchanged points, but Marshall held the lead heading into the break, 21-16, with the help of an 88-yard kickoff return by Moss that led to a touchdown. Marshall won the game 56-25.

Following the game, Moss had tallied 17 touchdowns in nine games, a new SoCon record. Moss' four TDs against Citadel game tied the SoCon touchdown receptions in a single game.

At the beginning of the 10th week, Marshall had two games left and three teams were in contention for the SoCon Championship. East Tennessee State held the Herd scoreless in the first quarter, a feat no other team has accomplished all season. Despite the setback, Marshall won 34-10. The Herd earned a share of the SoCon Championship with this victory.

The No. 12 ranked Furman Paladins took the lead 14-7 by answering Marshall's opening TD with two unanswered touchdowns of their own. The Herd went into the halftime break trailing 17-14. By the end of the game Marshall outscored Furman 42-17. Moss became the leading freshman receiver in NCAA history with 1,073 yards.

The Herd entered the playoffs seeded second behind defending National Champion Montana, who was ranked No. 1.

In the first round Marshall was matched with Delaware, a team the Herd had defeated twice in the last five years. Marshall never gave the Blue Hens much of a chance and won 59-14.

The quarterfinals set up a rematch of Marshall and Furman. Unlike the last meeting, Marshall did not give the Paladins any chance to take the lead. The Herd rolled over Furman 54-0.

Marshall faced Northern Iowa in the semifinals. Kresser rushed two yards for his first TD of the season on the Herd's first possession. Marshall turned a 10-0 halftime lead into a 31-14 victory. The victory marked Marshall's fifth trip to the championship game in the past six years.

Marshall and Montana would meet in the finals, both teams vying to keep a perfect season. The Herd repeated its playoff style by jumping out early and claiming a 23-6 halftime lead.

In the second half, Montana managed to put up 23 points, but that wasn't enough to top the Herd's 26 points. Marshall won its second National Championship by a score of 49-29 and achieved a perfect 15-0 record.

Kresser tied the school record for touchdown passes in a season, 35 shared with assistant coach Tony Peterson. Moss finished with a school record and Southern Conference record 174 points in a season. His 28 touchdown receptions tied the Southern Conference career touchdown reception record.

In all, 10 players were named to at least one All-American team. In addition 17 players were all-conference selections, nearly the entire starting line up.

## THE 1996 SEASON

### The Perfect Season

**Overall Record: 15-0 | SoCon Record: 7-0**

Sept. 7	HOWARD	W, 55-27
Sept. 14	WEST VIRGINIA STATE	W, 42-7
Sept. 21	at Georgia Southern	W, 29-13
Sept. 28	WESTERN KENTUCKY	W, 37-3
Oct. 5	TENNESSEE-CHATTANOOGA	W, 45-0
Oct. 12	at VMI	W, 45-20
Oct. 19	WESTERN CAROLINA	W, 56-21
Oct. 26	at Appalachian State	W, 24-10
Nov. 2	THE CITADEL (HC)	W, 56-25
Nov. 9	at East Tennessee State	W, 34-10
Nov. 16	FURMAN	W, 42-17
<b>NCAA I-AA Playoffs</b>		
Nov. 30	DELAWARE	W, 59-14
Dec. 7	FURMAN	W, 54-0
Dec. 14	NORTHERN IOWA	W, 31-14
<b>NCAA I-AA National Championship Game</b>		
Dec. 21	MONTANA	W, 49-29 658-210

### Statistical Leaders

#### RUSHING

PLAYER	ATT.	YARDS	TD
Erik Thomas	187	1,296	8
Doug Chapman	198	1,238	15

#### PASSING

PLAYER	ATT.-COMP.	YARDS	TD	INT
Eric Kresser	375-226	3,407	35	11
Mark Zban	55-35	480	6	2

#### RECEIVING

PLAYER	REC.	YARDS	TD
Randy Moss	78	1,709	28
Tim Martin	74	868	5