



Raye of Light: Jimmy Raye, Duffy Daugherty, the Integration of College Football, and the 1965-66 Michigan State Spartans

Tom Shanahan

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When Jimmy Raye enrolled at Michigan State University in 1964, he did more than just enroll in a university hundreds of miles from his native Fayetteville, N.C.: he was part of a groundbreaking movement that forever changed college football.

His story, as well as his Spartan teammates and coach Duffy Daugherty, is told in *Raye of Light*: the first book to fully explain Duffy Daugherty's Underground Railroad and its impact on college football. History has not accorded Daugherty, Raye, and the Spartans proper credit for their roles in the integration of college football. Too many view Daugherty as recruiting a couple of All-American players from the South, winning a bunch of games with his 1965-66 teams, and then having it all come to an end.

But that ignores the history made by Raye and the Spartans. In his junior season in 1966, Raye was Michigan State's first black starting quarterback and the first black quarterback from the South to win a national title. The Michigan State team with a progressive head coach, a pioneer black quarterback, and the first fully integrated roster in college football is the subject of this engrossing new book by award-winning author Tom Shanahan. In *Raye of Light*, Shanahan tells the story of how Daugherty integrated his Spartan teams in a time when leading college programs like the University of Alabama were still segregated, when it was unusual to see black athletes at skill positions like quarterback, and when choices for outstanding Southern black athletes were either traditionally black colleges or northern college opening their doors to nationwide recruits.

It's been 50 years since Raye and his teammates made history, and issues of race still reverberate in college and pro football, both on the playing field and on coaching staffs. One need only to reflect on the ugly comments on Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling to realize we are not living in a post-racial society, making the inspiring tale of Raye, Bubba Smith, Duffy Daugherty and the rest of the 1965-1966 Michigan State Spartans even more relevant.

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