BLACK COLLEGE REPORT

A Season Of Surprises, Hungry New Contenders

By LONZA HARDY JR.
Review Staff Writer

Eddie Robinson and Grambling State have learned quickly this season that there are serious challenges in the SWAC for the defending champion Tigers, who were picked by most to recapture the glory in 1984. After just one game, the word in Bayou country was that the Tigers would indeed face much stiffer competition than expected.

The first Labor Day Classic in the New Orleans Superdome on Sept. 2 pitted the pre-season favorite Tigers against the predicted No. 5 Alcorn State Braves. The game drew fewer fans than anticipated (13,676), but more fireworks from the Braves than anyone could imagine. The result was a surprising 27-13 romp by Alcorn, which went on to slaughter Alabama State 52-0 and earn a No. 10 national ranking by the NCAA.

"I guess you could call it embarrassment," said Robinson in perhaps the quote of the month. "I don't know if I have any other word for it, so you can use that."

Almost overnight, it seemed, Alcorn State had again become a force to be reckoned with in the SWAC. And the Braves' neighbors from up north in Mississippi -- Mississippi Valley State -- have also laid their claims as a chief SWAC title contender.

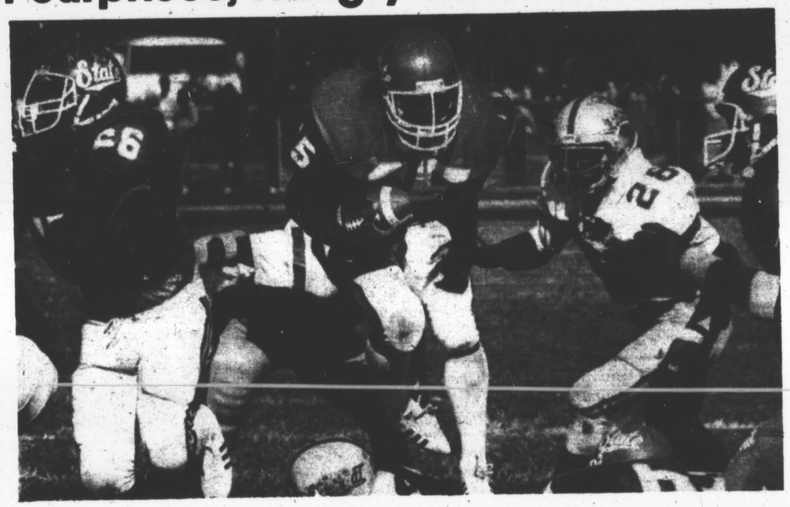
The Delta Devils romped by unheralded Kentucky State 86-0 before performing a likewise ritual over Washburn University, 77-15. Heading into a big conference showdown against Jackson State, a team Archie Cooley and his Delta Devils hadn't beaten in 27 years, the talk of the town was that MVSU just "wasn't for real."

Behind the twosome of quarterback Willie Totten, who completed 30 of 50 passes for 526 yards, and receiver Jerry Rice, who caught 15 passes for 285 yards and four touchdowns, the Delta Devils eased past JSU 49-32 in a score not indicative of the rout. After 27 years, an MVSU team had finally beaten the Tigers and Cooley ran an Olympic-style victory lap around Mississippi Memorial Stadium waving a huge Delta Devil flag.

"I haven't been this happy since my first child was born," Cooley exclaimed. "It has to be the best victory I've ever had in my coaching career. My former classmates at JSU even suggested that I become the next head coach at JSU."

Another surprise this season has been the performance of the Texas Southern Tigers. At press time, TSU sported a record of 3-1 overall and 1-1 in the conference. The Tigers' wins have come over Lamar (13-7), Morgan State (31-14) and Alabama State (33-20). Their lone loss was a close 10-3 defeat by Southern.

"We are proud of our young men thus far," said TSU Coach Lionel Taylor. "Our team has developed tremendously and we shall continue to work toward even greater improvements."



The Brown Hornet

A key to Delaware State's success has been running back Gene Lake and a workman-like offense (photo by Delaware State College).

Changes In The Pecking Order

Meanwhile in the SIAC, kingpin Fort Valley State did something it hadn't done in three years -- lost a league game, 14-10 to Morris Brown College Sept. 22.

In a dramatic finish, the underdog Wolverines stopped Fort Valley's Robert Davis at the 2-yard line as time expired.

Fort Valley hadn't lost an SIAC game since 1981 and had beaten 21 straight SIAC opponents during that span.

In the MEAC, the most recent surprise was Bethune-Cookman's upset of Delaware State in a slugfest, 41-38. B-CC's Harvard Firsher preserved the win with an interception of a Pat Spencer pass.

The win put Bethune-Cookman into first place in the league while perennial favorite South Carolina State continued to plummet into mediocrity, falling to Alcorn State, at home, 41-6. At presstime, the Bulldogs were a lackluster 2-3.

In the CIAA, Norfolk State started strongly under new Coach Willard Bailey, surging to a 4-0 record, including a 38-0 drubbing of Bowie State.

UMES Hire Evans

Howie Evans, a former assistant basketball coach at Fordham University, has been appointed men's head basketball coach at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

Kirkland Hall, who served as the Hawks' head coach for six seasons, will assume the duties of interim athletic director.

The changes were announced by UMES Chancellor William Hytche at a special press conference on the UMES campus. It was also announced that Dr. Leon Coursey, UMES athletic director for the past two years, has relinquished the post to devote full attention to his chairmanship of the school's health and physical education department.

Evans, a native of New York City, is a graduate of the City University of New York. He attended UMES for three years (1955-58) and earned letters in track and basketball before completing his undergraduate studies at CUNY. He brings to UMES a cross section of coaching experience on various levels. He has worked extensively with high school and amateur basketball teams both nationally and abroad. In 1974, Evans coached the first-ever high school basketball team from the U.S. to tour the Soviet Union.

His New Hawks ballclubs captured a pair of National AAU Junior Tournament titles in 1975 and 1976. He has also conducted basketball clinics in more than 20 foreign countries, including Puerto Rico, Spain, West Indies, Ireland, England and Italy.

While an assistant at Fordham, Evans was responsible for recruiting Dud Tongal, the figst seven-footer in the school's history. During the last four years of Evans' six-year stint at Fordham, the Rams received four consecutive bids to the National Invitational Tournament (1980-1984).

In addition to his coaching experiences, Evans has served as senior sports editor for the *New Amsterdam News*.