It was "The Game," Alcorn State versus Mississippi Valley State in a sabbath showdown for the lead in the Southwestern Athletic Conference and a berth in the NCAA Division I-AA

It was the battle of the unbeatens in a clash which featured, as one reporter described them, the "unstoppable" MVSU Delta Devils (7-0) and the "immovable" ASU Braves (6-0).

It was Sunday afternoon at the Mississippi College Super Bowl, a game which many members of the media had called the biggest sports event ever in the state.

It was all of those things and

On Sunday, Nov. 4, 1984, Alcorn State and Mississippi Valley State played a football game that easily ranked as their most important and most emotional ever.

"It's perhaps the biggest game I've ever coached," said Alcorn Coach Marino Casem before the game. "It's as big a ball game as you'll ever see, with prestige, the conference title and national rankings on the line. It'll be family versus family, friend versus

Said Archie Cooley, Mississippi Valley's head coach, during pre-game week: "This could be the biggest game in our lives, but we'll do nothing new. They have to stop us from doing what we do best and from doing what we have been doing all year."

Like the words of a biblical sage, Cooley's prophecy did indeed come to pass. Before a standing-room-only growd of 63,808 boisterous fans, the potent Valley Air Express, which had led the world in scoring, averaging 64.1 points per game, and in total offense, getting an amazing 666.6 total yards per outing, hit turbulent air and came to a crash landing, falling to the

State's nationally No.2-ranked defense deciding factors. The Braves were able to hot only limit MVSU to 28 points, but held the Delta Devils to 383 yards, about half of their usual production. The Braves' offense, on the other hand, moved the ball with reckless amassing 526 total yards, their most productive day in decades.

On the very first possession of the



Alcorn State's Perry Qualls churns for yardage in The Game of the Century. Rush-happy Qualls totaled more than 200 yards against pass-happy Mississippi Valley (photo by Mark Gail).

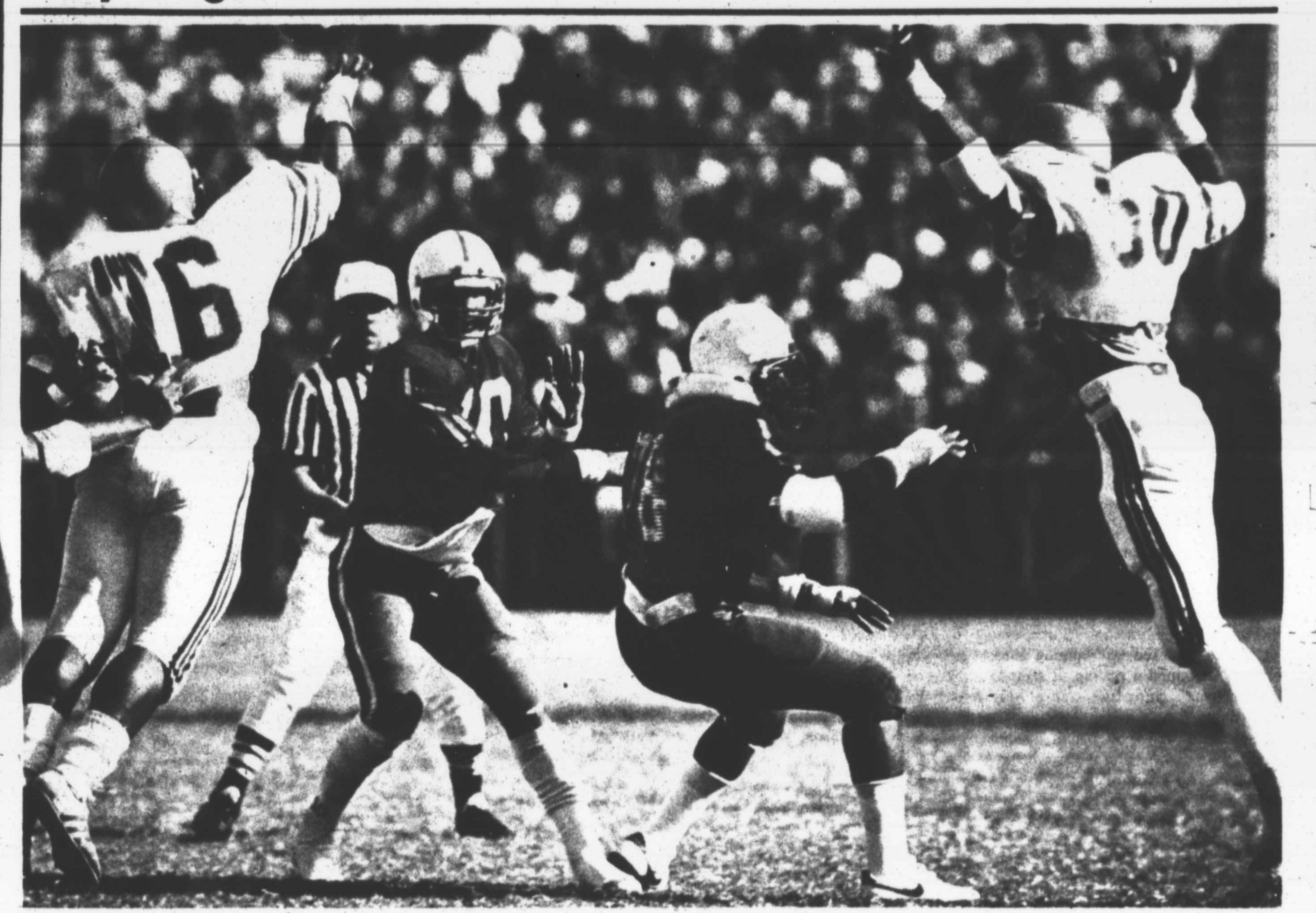
## to a crash landing, falling to the undefeated Braves by a margin of 42-28. It was a combination of Alcorn and Mississippi Valley's unranked defense defense which proved to be the deciding factors. The Braves were able

By LONZA HARDY JR.

Alcorn State and Mississippi Valley: They billed it as The Game of the Century, World War III, the Super Bowl of black football -- and they were right.

## fought a war

CONTINUED



Okay, so nobody can stop Willie Totten. Alcorn's defense did, however, make each pass an adventure (photo by Mark Gail).

Perry Qualls, who scored a school- point. Green's extra-point attempt failed.

hit the field after the ensuing kickoff, 'there were chants of "SWAC-busters" from the MVSU contingent. The moment of truth was at hand.

How would Jerry "World" Rice "General Ike" Holt, both considered first-round draft picks?

Could MVSU's offense run havoc

Or would Alcorn's patented 'Tomahawk Defense'' prove to really be an immovable wall of granite?

In 10 plays, the Delta Devils moved 90 yards in just 1:53 to score on their Quarterback Willie Totten hit Cleo

game, Alcorn State moved 68 yards in Armstrong in the end zone with a second half, scoring the next three eight plays to take an early 6-0 lead in 14-yard pass, putting MVSU ahead 7-6 touchdowns en route to knotting the the first three minutes. Junior tailback following Emmit Matthews' extra score at 28-28.

back in Mississippi," then shifted into 191-pound junior from Forest, Miss., Carl Byrum ran in from the five. scored on a five-yard run with 7:37 left in the opening quarter, followed by a touchdown run of three yards and a fare against Alcorn defensive back 10-yard touchdown reception from Richard Myles, both in the second

The Braves entered the locker room over Alcorn State, as it had done all at intermission holding a commanding,

"They're beating us down," Coole "They're just beating us down."

But Valley has been down at the half Delta Devils stormed back in the

Totten connected with Rice on a record five touchdowns, capped the But Qualls, called by one sport- 35-yard scoring toss and ran in himself march with a nine-yard run. George scaster "the most underrated running from the one-yard line, both in the third frame, to narrow Alcorn's lead to When Mississippi Valley's offense high gear, scoring the next three 28-21. The score was tied at the 14:56 touchdowns of the game. The 5-9, mark of the last stanza when fullback

"The kids got complacent after the first half and Valley adjusted," said Casem. "Mighty Mo turned against us and it was hard to get her back on our side. But we've got all winners and that's why we were able to come back "Rice and raced 29 yards for the final and seal our victory."

Qualls, who rushed for 211 yards in 37 carries and made five receptions for 79 yards, put the Braves ahead for good with 1:51 left in the game on a one-yard plunge. The winning ASU

"If you've got a cannon, you shoot it," marveled Casem. "Qualls is a cannon. He's a winner. You have to go with your winners."

So spectacular was Qualls that he overshadowed the one-on-one battle between Rice and Holt, the matchup that was the subject of most of the pregame hoopla. Holt managed to hold Rice to eight receptions for 134 yards and one touchdown, marks far below the wide receiver's usual pace.

Holt had the last laugh, too, when he intercepted a Totten pass intended for touchdown. When it was over, the considered his performance against Rice just a normal day's work.

"They call Rice 'All-World'," Holt said after the game. "I knew that, to beat him, I'd have to be 'All-Universe.'"