Jerry Rice, Mississippi Valley's all-America wide receiver who is said to be so good that he can catch a BB in the dark, had two shadows Nov. 4 - his and Holt's - in a matchup that dazzled the anxious eyes of 63,808 fans in a jam-packed Mississippi Memorial Coliseum, the second-largest crowd to attend a sporting event in Mississippi

How close were their shadows?

"We kept bumping into each other," said Rice, the 6-foot-3, 205-pound fireball, who's better known as "World," after his team lost 42-28 in a slugfest billed as "the game of the week, game of the month, game of the year, game of the decade and game of the century" by the public address announcer.





As it turned out, Holt and the rest of the Braves' Tomahawk defense got the cond in the NCAA Division I-AA back to tie the score at 28 early in the best of the bumping. Holt had the behind Tennessee State, threw up a fourth quarter. whole "World" in his hands, limiting Rice to eight catches for 134 yards and game averaging 12 catches, 197.3 yards and three touchdowns per contest.

And Valley began the game leading the country with a 64.1 points-pergame average, tops on any collegiate

brick wall against the Delta Devils "We are the real SWAC-busters," when it counted most. ("Defense wins said a jubilant Marino "Godfather" a 35-yard score. Those statistics would championships," the Braves chanted in Casem, Alcorn State's head coach, first receivers taken in next year's be excellent for most receivers, but on- the locker room after the game.) Holt, alluding to Valley Coach Archie who was "thinking six," turned out "Gunslinger" Cooley's pregame statethe lights on Valley when he beat Rice to the ball and returned his sixth interception of the season 29 yards for the game's final score with 16 seconds left, thus thwarting the Delta Devils'

last effort in a gallant comeback.

Alcorn State's defense, ranked se- Valley trailed 28-7 at the half but came

ment to the local media that the contest would be "the SWAC-buster."

Holt isn't expected to be a bust in next year's NFL draft. "He has speed, quickness and closes in on the ball," said Gil Brandt, director of player per-

The Coaches

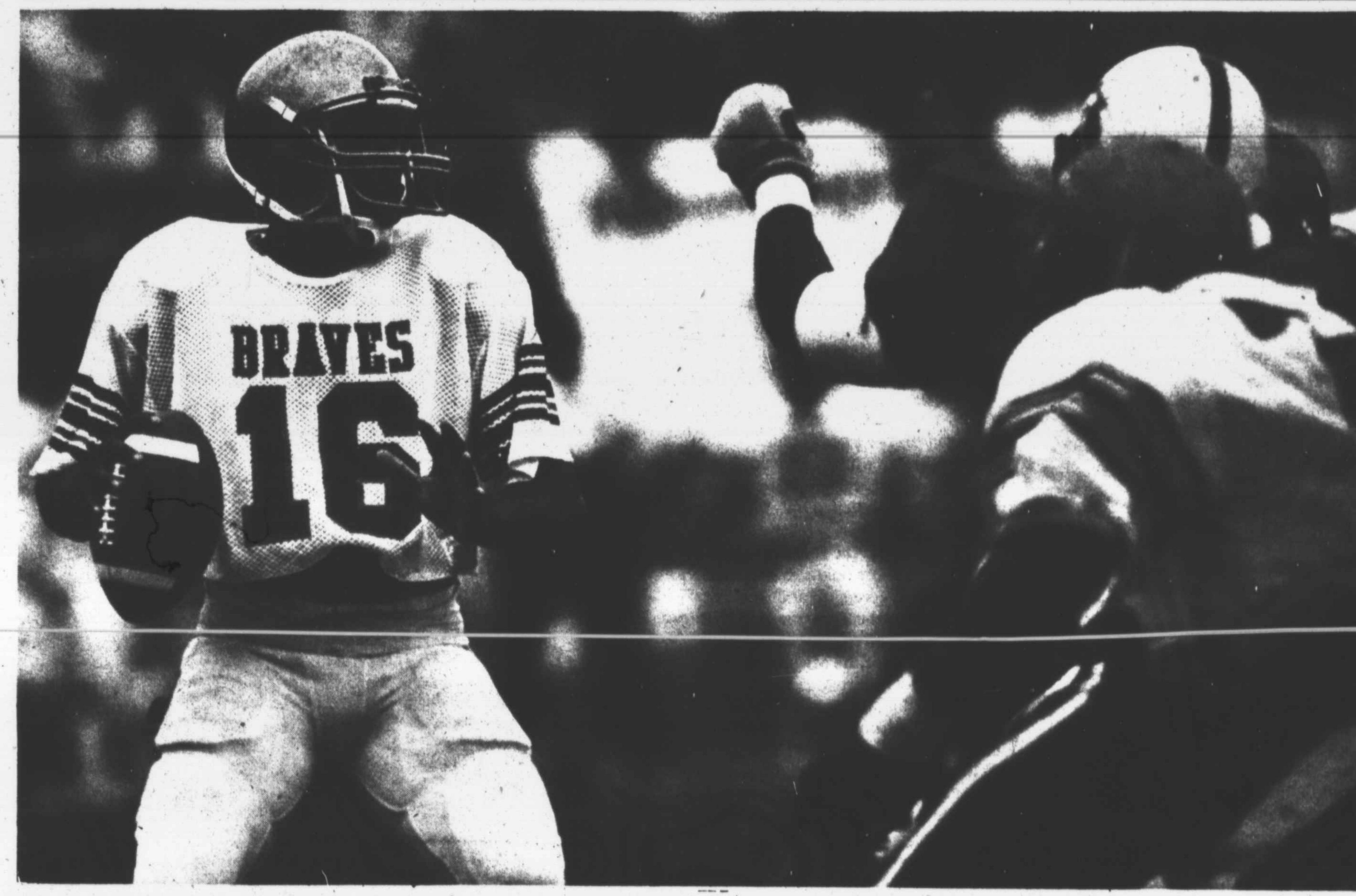
Above, MVSU Head Coach Archie Cooley directed and devised as only he can -- but Alcorn State outpointed his scoring machine in the end (photo by James Terry). Below, left, Alcorn's Marino Casem shares a victory hug with one of his players (photo by Mark Gail).

sonnel for the Dallas Cowboys. "I'm not sure if he's a first-round draft choice, but he stands pretty close to being one. He's coming on, as they say."

"I think his (Holt's) stock went through the ceiling after the way he played in this game," said former Alcorn State defensive back Roynell Young, who now plays for the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles but is injured this season. Young was a first-round draft choice by the Eagles.

Meanwhile, Rice, who dazzled the crowd with a spectacular shoestring catch for a 23-yard gain in the first quarter, is expected to be one of the three or four times a week," says Jackson State's 6-5, 210-pound wide receiver Chris Burkett, who caught two touchdown passes in Jackson State's 47-0 rout of Texas Southern on the eve of The Big Game. Burkett, a senior, is

They fought a war CONTINUED



Alcorn quarterback Richard Myles didn't have rival Totten's press clippings, but he did direct a Brave offense that racked up a whopping

42 points against Valley (photo by Mark Gail).

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS REVIEW

choice in his own right.

"He's good at coming off the ball. picking it up better," added an admiring Burkett.

'He has done everything that would dictate him being a first-round draft choice," said the Cowboys' Brandt of senior Rice, who reminds many observers of Lynn Swann in the way he comes back for the ball. "He didn't run a 4.4 (40-yard dash) when we timed him, but he ran pretty darn fast. He ran a 4.51 or 4.52 or something like that. The only difference between that and a 4.4 is a blink of the eyelash."

One blink and he's gone.

However, Rice couldn't pick up the big gainer (his longest reception was the 35-yard scoring play) - the 60- or 70-yard electrifying flash of brilliance that he's noted for. "I think about 50,000 people were expecting that (Rice

Among those expecting a great game

players, including former Grambling quarterback Doug Williams, now in an All-Pro with the Pittsburgh Steelers case on this Sunday. during their glory years.

Blount is now the NFL director of player relations.

Blount, the bearded and bald 6-3, 210-pounder who still looks like he could knock your block off, is one of an elite few whom Holt idolizes. "I like all the great defensive backs," said Holt. Others include Mike Haynes and Lester Hayes of the L.A. Raiders, Ronnie Lott of the San Francisco 49ers and the Eagles' Young.

"He (Young) was on the sidelines," said Holt, who started playing organized football at age 9. "He helped me

Valley's no-huddle, sometimes norunning-back offense with as many as

caught four passes for 75 yards and no touchdowns. The Delta Devils entered the USFL, and Mel Blount, an ex- the game averaging 18 points in the defensive back for Southern who was first quarter. However, that wasn't the

> The most critical play for the Delta Devils in the first half may have been a fourth-and-six play at the Alcorn State Totten dropped back to pass and spot- (the Raiders' ted Rice in the right flat. But Holt bat the ball away with 14:40 left in the would determine the game's outcome. second quarter. As a result, Alcorn maintained its 13-7 lead, and the Delta Devils missed out on a chance to grab the lead.

"I'd cover Rice just like he's (Holt's) doing," said the tough-as-nails Blount during the game. "He's jamming him at the line of scrimmage. That's the way to do it."

Sports Illustrated, ABC-TV's Jack four, five or six wide receivers uniquely Holt, who has played against some of Whitaker and, in Itta Bena before the forming patterns and diagrams usually the best wide receivers in the SWAC, That was my problem. But now I'm game, CBS' Pat O'Brien. And there seen in high school geometry classes, including the USFL's Trumaine was a who's who of former SWAC needed help in a first half in which Rice Johnson, formerly of Grambling. "The Lord didn't give them more athletic ability than me.

"Rice is one of the best. I respect him, but some (other defensive backs) respect him too much. They're scared to hit him (at the line of scrimmage)."

"Holt against Rice is like James Lofton (the Green Bay Packers' All-Pro 20-yard line. Valley quarterback Willie wide receiver) against Mike Haynes cornerback),"said Brandt of the matdashed in front of the star receiver to chup that many observers thought

> Lofton didn't catch a pass when the Raiders and Packers played earlier this. season. The Packers' other All-Pro wide receiver, John Jefferson, caught three passes for only 19 yards in that

Holt is the Braves' all-time career interception leader with 24. He broke Leslie Frazier's record of 21 earlier this