



Left, Lake dances to daylight (photo courtesy Delaware State College). Right, the MEAC's Player of the Year receives his all-conference plaque (photo by James Parker).

## The MEAC's 'great Lake' decides to flow on

By SAM DAVIS Review Staff Writer

Bryant Eugene Lake knows about artillery. For three years, he drove tanks in Germany for the U.S. Army. Most recently, however, he's been a part of Delaware State's arsenal, carrying footballs through enemy lines and, true to the Army credo, working hard to be all he can

You see, Lake enrolled in college five years after he left high school, and, while that isn't uncommon among nonathletes seeking degrees, it doesn't happen very often among Saturday afternoon heroes.

"I needed an adventure," says Lake, a native of Milford, Del., on his round-about route to stardom. school, I had already made up my mind to get away for awhile."

And get away he did, joining the Army and learning to drive tanks.

The second youngest of Mrs. Dorothy Lake's nine children Gene, 26, as he is called by relatives and friends, says his family's financial situation also figured in his decision to enlist.

"My mom practically raised all of to graduate from high school. We didn't have very much and I thought I had to help out."

But the Army wasn't Lake's only option. A first-team all-state running back, he was recruited by nearly a dozen colleges.

And, amazingly, during the five years between the time he left high school and enrolled in college,

more than 1,000 yards. As a junior us," says Lake. "I was the only one this past season, Lake led the nation was still in good shape," he says. in rushing among both small and major colleges, totaling 1,722 yards and 20 touchdowns in only 10 games, including a memorable 336-yard, three-touchdown effort in the season finale against Liberty

> Part of his drive to excel, says Lake, comes from his experience in the military, which, he says, taught

"It was a challenge for me per-

duty in Europe. "It took a while to

get accustomed to new customs and

everything, but it was a lot of fun,

"I gained a lot of weight, but I "Whenever I'd get a chance, I would lift weights and run."

Though he was far from home, Lake says he still felt a closeness and sense of responsibility to his tightlyknit family.

"The whole time I was in the Army, I sent an allotment home to my mom each month," he says. "I would only take leave once a year and then I could spend the whole time with my family."

Once his enlistment was over in 1980, Lake returned home, found a job in a department store and played flag football in a recreation league. Then a Delaware State assistant coach spotted him.

"One of our coaches (John Kovaleski) saw him playing in the flag football league," says former DelState Head Coach Joe Purzycki. "He was the biggest and fastest player in the league. When we did some research on him, we realized who he was.

"My teams had played against Gene when he was in high school," says Purzycki, who coached on the

He's 26 and he's got to look at what's best for him and his family." -- Joe Purzycki

him a lot about himself.

"We're certain that he's going to pursue the NFL or USFL draft.

Lake's skills didn't diminish one iota. In fact, he says he thinks delaying his decision to go to college may have helped his career.

"I feel a lot more mature," he serious about playing football

After an injury-plagued freshman season, Lake set five MEAC records in addition to establishing numerous new school standards for rushing.

As a sophomore, he rushed for

The Army also helped Lake grow physically. When he left high

pounds. But, by the time he left the Army, he had bulked up to 205 (He now weighs 215).

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