THE CREAM OF THE CROP

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strong point. He catches it long and short. I rank him right behind (former NFL star) Harold Jackson."

Burkett holds the Jackson State record for the longest reception with a 98-yard touchdown bomb he caught against Mississippi Valley this past season. However, he was hampered in '84 because Jackson State quarterback John McKenzie played the entire season with a broken thumb on his throwing hand.

Because of Burkett's height, would one dare add 15 to 25 pounds to his 210-pound frame with the tight end position in mind? Could he be the next Rich Caster or Jerome Barkum, wide receiver-tight end types who played at Jackson State and starred for the New York Jets?

"I don't think you'd want to do that," says Brandt, "because he can be such a force as a wide receiver."

During his career, Burkett caught 94 passes in 36 games for 1,708 yards, averaged 18.2 yards per catch and 47.4 receiving yards per game, and scored 16 touchdowns.

Hall, starting at the Grambling 16-yard line, returned the ball 34 yards to midfield, where Green dashed from the bench with his 4.7 40 speed to tackle him.

"It all happened so fast," says Green. "I saw the guy coming towards me and I got carried away. They were already running away with the game. I couldn't stand to see them score again, so I just came off the bench without thinking about what I was doing."

But his mistake didn't prevent another Grambling score. After Eddie Robinson protested, and the officials had given Grambling the ball at TSU's 26-yard line, Grambling drove for a touchdown and a 48-0 lead.

Green received the Dickie Meagle Award for the most unusual play of the year in Los Angeles and even was scheduled to appear on the "Life's Most Embarrassing Moments" television show. However, the show was canceled.

What else could go wrong?

Well, on the weekend of Jan. 12, Green was honored -- if that's the right verb -- for his act by the 100 Percent Wrong Club in Atlanta.

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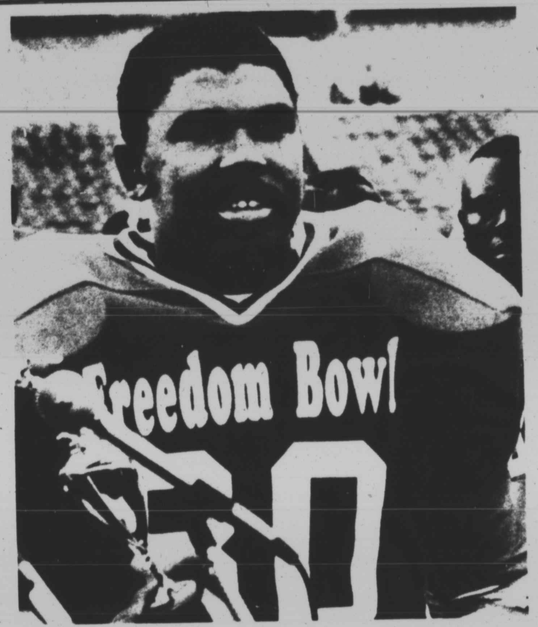
-- Texas Southern's Bruce Green



Freedom Bowl standout Calvin Magee of Southern: "Once I talk to the USFL, I'll decide" (photo by James Parker).

After the Big Three, the talent level dips a bit. But Texas Southern linebacker Bruce Green is mentioned the most in that "next-best" class of seniors.

The 6-3, 220-pounder made 139 total tackles, including 85 unassisted, to lead the Southwestern Athletic Conference in '84. He also had one quarterback sack, made three interceptions, batted down 11 passes, forced three fumbles and made three fumble recoveries. Plus, he returned one interception for a 35-yard touchdown in a 51-0 win over Prairie View A&M during the last game of the season.

Add it up. He was the '84 Southwestern Athletic Conference Defensive Player of the Year. And he has been called "the best hitter" in the conference by some observers.

"I think he's a player," says Brandt. "He has the ability to play (in the NFL), but he's not in the Burkett-Rice-Holt class. These guys can be stars.

But during his junior season Green did become a star, though he might have preferred to earn his notoriety some other way. During a game against Grambling, in which Texas Southern was losing 41-0, TSU quarterback Harold Smith, throwing from his own 40-yard line, had a pass intercepted by Grambling defensive back Glenn Hall with 13:57 left in the fourth quarter.

Green, who was picked by Houston of the USFL in the territorial draft, was named to *The Sporting News'* preseason all-America Division I-AA team. He also was drafted by the USFL's L.A. Express last year, but decided to return for his senior season.

The other members of Sheridan's team, according to pro scouts, are mainly potential players -- seniors who have a chance to make it but will probably be middle- to late-round draft picks. Beginning with the defensive players, they include:

James Polk, defensive lineman, 6-11, 325, Grambling: If Holt is the Defensive Player of the Year, Polk is undoubtedly the most interesting player of the season because of his unusual size. He had 17 solo tackles, 16 assists but only one quarterback sack in '84. He played nose tackle and can play on the offensive line. Polk has limited speed -- 5.2 or 5.3 in the 40 -- which is usually considered slow but is good for a man his size.

"He is a good athlete for a man his size," says Steinberg. "He's probably a middle-round choice."

Joe Lane, defensive tackle, 6-2, 265, Delaware State: Lane had 57 tackles (14 unassisted), four quarterback sacks and two passes batted down last season. Lane also was first-team all-Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference and a first-team Black College Sports Inc. all-America this past season.

Steve Collier, defensive tackle, 6-7, 285, Bethune-Cookman: Collier had 21 solo tackles, 28 assists, three fumble recoveries, three quarterback sacks and four tackles for losses in '84. He transferred to Bethune-Cookman from Illinois, where he was an offensive lineman.

"He's a pretty good player," says Brandt. "He's not a first-round choice, but he can play in the league."

Leon Smith, linebacker, 6-2, 220, Norfolk State: Smith led his team in tackles for three consecutive years and in '84 had 113 total tackles, broke up 11 passes, recovered three fumbles and registered four quarterback sacks. Smith runs a 5.0 40.

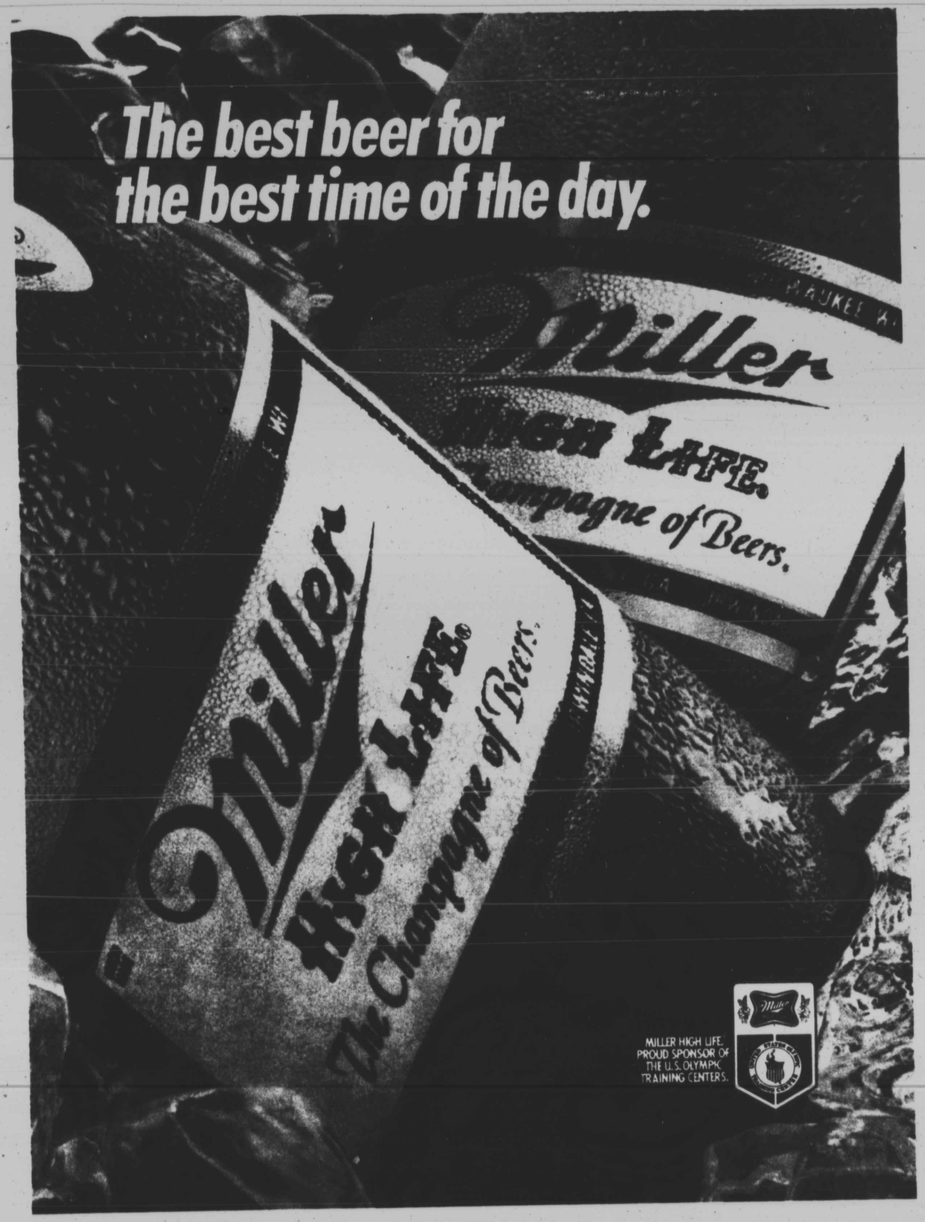
James Derico, linebacker, 6-2, 235, Tennessee State: In '84, Derico had 115 tackles to lead Tennessee State's No. 1-ranked defense in Division I-AA. He also had two fumble recoveries and three quarterback sacks. Derico is said to run a 4.5 40.

Frank Tatum, cornerback, 6-0, 180, Central State: Tatum had seven interceptions in '84, 28 unassisted tackles, six assists, two forced fumbles, one fumble recovery and six pass deflections. He runs a 4.5 40.

John Bostic, cornerback-safety, 5-10, 175, Livingstone: Bostic has 59 deflections, one quarterback sack and two tackles for losses this past season. He was the MEAC Defensive Player of the Year and a third-team Division I-AA all-America. He was also picked by Tampa Bay in the USFL's territorial draft. Bostic runs a 4.45 40.

Kim Davis, punter, 6-1, 180, Southern: Davis had 57 punts for 2,222 yards and a 38.9 average. He was all-SWAC and his longest punt traveled 55 yards.

Joseph "JoJo" White, running back, 5-7, 175, Livingstone: White gained 1,068 yards rushing in '84 on 194 carries and scored 14 touchdowns. He averaged 106.8 yards per game during the season and has a career per-carry average of 5.8 yards.

Tony "T" Johnson, running back, 5-8, 180 pounds, Norfolk State: Johnson gained 1,310 yards to lead the CIAA in rushing in '84 and scored 11 touchdowns. He set school records in

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