## MILLER PRESENTS BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PROFILE

## TSU's Renfroe: Finally it's his turn to shine

By DAVID BULLA Review Staff Writer

It's long been known that Gilbert Renfroe possesses the talent to be an outstanding college quarterback.

Yet, various circumstances have kept the 6-foot-4, 215-pound senior out of the limelight.

Until this season.

The Tennessee State signal caller recently became the school's fourthleading career passer, surpassing the 5,000-yard mark. Though doubting Thomases out there might say, "You expect that from a senior," Renfroe's achievement is so remarkable because this is his first season starting at TSU.

Through eight games, the Tuskege Ala., native had completed 168 of 353 passes for 2,252 yards and 14 touchdowns. Only Mississippi Valley State's Willie Totten (2,729) and North Carolina Central's Earl "Air" Harvey (2,424) had thrown for more yards among black-college quarterbacks.

But, before you go pointing a finger at second-year Coach Bill Thomas and his predecessor, John Merritt, for underemploying Renfroe, realize that he succeeds Kenneth Biggles as the Tigers' signal caller.

Biggles is TSU's all-time leading passer. He also led the Tigers to a three-year record of 29-3-2.

clearer perspective, consider that he year. threw for more yards than such Tiger "Going into the season, I was confi- "I was looking forward to the Eldridge Dickey.

"The talent turned out to be better here than I expected," said Renfroe, who passed for 1,200 yards as a junior at 4-A Tuskegee High School before an injury limited his playing time as a senior. "I thought I'd get to play as a freshman. But I had to be patient and it turned out for the best."

winning tradition.

Still, Renfroe had to bide his time. Finally, last season, he split time with Biggles, coming off the bench and engineering frequent clutch drives during TSU's perfect 11-0 season.

Indeed, Renfroe passed for 1,460 yards and 17 touchdowns as Biggles' platoon mate.

Then Biggles graduated and it was



Renfroe and Mississippi Valley's Willie Totten have been listed among the top pro quarterback prospects in the nation because of their size and skills and the nature of their teams' offenses (photo by Mark Gail).

up to Renfroe to lead the team this

year to realize I could get it done."

The Tiger quarterback not only has had an outstanding season, but he also typified what has been a frustrating has been matched against some of the season for the Tigers, who took a 5-4 best quarterbacks in the land: Totten, record into the Bethune-Cookman North Carolina A&T's Alan Hooker, game. The Tigers fumbled seven times Bethune-Cookman's Bernard Hawk and Alcorn State's Richard Myles.

In his most publicized game, Ren-Division I-A powers Auburn and froe outdueled Totten in their Circle Alabama, but his senior-year injury City Classic meeting last month in Inopened the way for such black college dianapolis. Both completed 21 of 43 powers as Grambling and Jackson passes, but the Tennessee State athlete celebrated player.

> Yet, Renfroe pays homage to the Delta Devil signal caller.

"Willie's year gave me enjoymen and excitement," Renfroe said of Totten's amazing 5,043-yard 1984 season. "When someone gets that many yards, what he accomplished didn't hurt what tough," Renfroe said. "Professional do."

I and other black college quarterbacks hoped to do this season. . .

legends as "Jefferson Street" Joe dent I could get the job done," Ren- (Mississippi Valley) game. But I wasn't froe said. "Those people who had aiming to show him up. I would have doubts only had to look back to last been happier with a win, especially the way we lost."

> The Mississippi Valley game has against the Delta Devils, losing three believes the day of the NFL quarterinside the TSU 20-yard line. Turnovers back position being white-only is near also played critical roles in losses to an end. He points to the success of Western Kentucky (22-17), Grambling Houston's Warren Moon and State (31-24) and Southern University Philadelphia's Randall Cunningham --

Because of his size, Renfroe is being State. He chose TSU because of its passed for 350 yards, compared to 252 mentioned as one of the best quarterfor black college football's most back prospects for next May's National Football League draft. It is said having a positive impact," Renfroe that he, Totten, Iowa's Chuck Long said. "I think that a lot of black college and Brigham Young's Bobby Bosco are the top prospects.

> Renfroe ponders the prospect of pro ball with a level head.

you have to be happy for him. Plus, he with a pro team, hopefully I'll be able quarterbacks) and I think we'll get deis black and goes to a black college. So to keep my cool and be mentally cent opportunities to show what we can

football is at a higher level of competition, so you must be at your best physically and mentally. At the same pressure on myself to be perfect. Still, I'll have to play at my best to make a

Renfroe, like Totten, has been exposed to offensive alignments that are customary in the NFL. Thomas uses a pro set or a one-back alignment.

The Tennessee State quarterback not to mention what former Grambling star Doug Williams accomplished at Tampa Bay.

"Tony Robinson at Tennessee also is quarterbacks in the past haven't been given the same opportunity to jell. A young white quarterback is given more time to prove he deserves a job in the NFL. That's probably still the case, "If I get an opportunity to try out but there seem to be more of us (black

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