PROFILE

Two SIAC 'candidates' running strong this year

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE Review Staff Writer

NOT ALL of the tight races in November were at the polls.

As of this writing, two SIAC candidates are campaigning hard for a rushing title. Dan Land, Albany State's full-service tailback, is the incumbent, having rushed for 1,235 yards to take the office last year. Most folks around the league acknowledge him as the SIAC's premier ball carrier.

But Casey Grigley, his counterpart at Savannah State, is giving Land a run for his money.

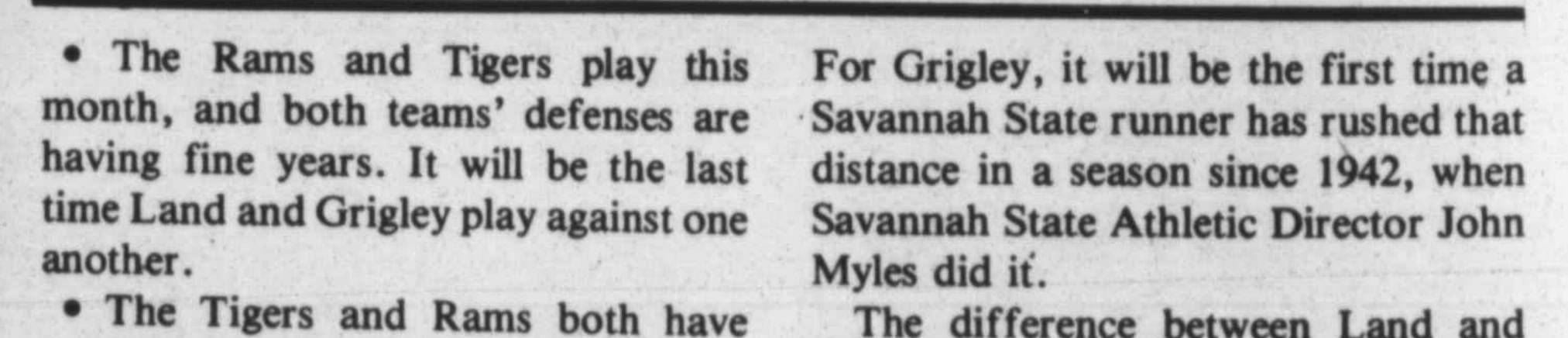
At press time, Grigley held a 34-yard edge after seven games, with 887 yards on 160 carries, six TDs and a 126.7-yards-per-game average. Land was on the case with 853 yards on 155 carries, eight TDs and a 121.8-pergame average. Both were averaging 5.5 yards a tote.

Will Grigley maintain his advantage? Several key factors will affect the

• Albany State plays 11 games this year, Savannah State 10.



Above, incumbent Land slashes for a gain in quest of his second straight 1,000-yard season (photo by Todd Stone/The Albany Herald). Below left, challenger Grigley searches for daylight (photo by Craig T. Greenlee).



dates against Fort Valley State and its celebrated "Blue Death" defense, which was ranked No. 2 in Division II at the end of October.

• Albany State faces Morris Brown, which, despite its woes this year, always plays tough run defense.

• Besides Albany State, the Tigers meet another ranked Division II foe in Valdosta State.

The similarities between the two standouts are numerous. Both were first-team all-SIAC choices in '85 and were likely to have broken the known by rookie Head Coach Bill 1,000-yard barrier by the middle of this Davis, who took over the Tiger promonth. Land is 6-foot-11/2, 195 gram this fall after seven years at South pounds; Grigley, 6-2, 200. Both have Carolina State. "I knew about Casey 4.5-4.6 speed and are slashing backs before I even came to Savannah," who can run tough between the tackles Davis says. "He has competitive speed and are able to get outside for long

Reaching the 1,000-yard milestone will be a repeat performance for Land.

Myles did it.

The difference between Land and Grigley, according to their respective coaches, is that Land has a bit more foot speed. Albany State Head Coach Hampton Smith feels his runner has the perfect build for a tailback.

"He's muscular and has that long stride -- like a thoroughbred," Smith says. "Strength and instincts are his major assets. He has a knack for finding the hole and is very good at using his slashing style to set up his

Grigley's reputation already was and is as good as any back in the divi-

In Albany, Dan's act has been referred to as the "Land Rush."



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Given his career rushing total of 2,318 yards (with four games to go), it's easy to see why the name came about. The senior is a main gear for the 6-1 Rams, the defending conference co-champions. They were ranked 15th in the National Division II polls at the start of this month.

Opponents realize Land's value to his team and commonly stack their defenses against him -- sometimes at all

Tuskegee University decided to commit itself totally to the run. Eight- and nine-man fronts were the order of that

Tuskegee succeeded, limiting Land to 55 yards on 28 carries. But Albany prevailed, 22-6. And Land still had a hand in the offense, scorching Tuskegee with two receptions for 33 and 35 yards that set up field goals. On the year, he has 12 receptions for 219 yards, three TDs and a sizable 18.3-yards-per-catch average.

"Teams are always doing things to try to stop me on the ground," Land says. "If I move, they move, tailing me everywhere I go on each play. But it doesn't faze me because I know a defense can't watch everybody on every play. As long as we win, I'm fine. They can hold me to 10 yards, but we have other ways to move the ball besides myself."

Land is an excellent receiver. When he's out on a pass pattern, defenses are strained because they tend to gear themselves to stuffing the run. Land loves it.

"When I'm catching passes, defenses can't predict what I'm going to do," he says. "I like making them think about what I may do instead of the other way around."

A health and physical education major, Land gets more than his share of intimidation attempts. He's grown accustomed to shouts of "Watch 28!" and "You're through."

"Someone's always threatening what they're going to do to me," he says, "but I just laugh it off. Sometimes, though, I wish I could go out with a different jersey number. That way, they wouldn't recognize me quite as early in the game."

But the Donaldsville, Ga., senior gets his yards despite all the attention. In the Rams' 13-2 upset of Florida A&M, Land stuck it to the Rattlers for 159 yards and a touchdown. He opened the season with a 168-yard day against Morehouse in a 41-6 walk-away

Donaldsville has a population of roughly 3,500, and very few black male "Most people tend to underestimate high school graduates there go on to my speed to the outside." college. Most opt to enter the military The Tigers' top ball carrier has had

or work in the mills. Land is the only some big performances in '86. He the quarterback instead of the hanblack male from his senior class at romped for 221 yards in a 20-3 win doffs he was accustomed to in the split Seminole County High School to go to against Georgia Southwestern. In that game, he reeled off a 91-yarder, which set a new school record for longest run wait longer to get the ball. At times, He was highly recruited by 14 schools, including Florida State and from scrimmage. There also was a the ball will come later because the Georgia Tech. Luckily for the Rams, 209-yard effort in a 16-0 win over Clark.

they got there first to sign him. Pro scouts have been eyeing Land quite closely this season. An average of two to three scouts a week have visited Ram workouts since the first of August, Smith says.

Grigley, on the other hand, wasn't highly sought after as a senior at College Park High School in suburban Atlanta. He made his decision at the yards and one score. urging of his high school principal, In Grigley's opinion, Savannah

Grigley has surprising power for his ble. "Talentwise," he explains, "we've size, hitting the hole as quickly as any always been there. The difference in back in the conference. His legs constantly churn, enabling him often to is as thorough as any coach I've seen. break tackles, especially when he's run- He's good at motivating us and keepning inside. Then there's the "com- ing our spirits up." petitive speed" Davis mentioned. If Casey gets a step, he's not likely to be too much motivation. He's a fiend

caught from behind. "I feel I'm about equal when it comes to running inside and outside," the mechanical engineering major says.

Stone/The Albany Herald).

Land strides like a thoroughbred, says his coach, and has greater foot speed than Grigley (photo by Todd

Unlike Land, Grigley hasn't played on a winning team until his senior season this year. The Tigers won only three games during his first three years, really hard to compare the two," going 2-9 last season.

But Grigley still had an outstanding '85 individually, gaining 809 yards for six TDs and catching 11 passes for 93 have good backs."

Herschel Robinson, a Savannah State State's sudden turnaround (5-2 with three games to go) isn't all that incredithis team now is attitude. Coach Davis

But Grigley doesn't seem to require about working to improve. Davis came to Savannah and installed a few option the Rams face the Tigers. It ought to be plays for the Tigers' offense, a good one. something completely new for Grigley, says Davis.

must be prepared to take pitches from tributes to the Review.

backfield and I formation. The difference is that the running back has to quarterback will either keep it or wait until the last minute and make the defense commit before he pitches.

As for who's the best, both runners have their share of supporters. "It's Smith admits, "but they are the two best running backs in the conference, even though Tuskegee and Fort Valley

How do the runners themselves feel about it? "It's hard to say," Grigley says. "I haven't seen that much of him on film. All I know is that we're both competing for the same job of being

Land says he hasn't given it that much thought, though he adds: "Teams don't play him like they play me. I don't think teams key on him as much as they key on me."

Maybe the issue will be settled when

Craig T. Greenlee is an Atlanta-based In the option, Davis says, Grigley free-lance writer who frequently con-

