

# Freedom Bowl Debuts With Resounding Bang

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The SWAC failed to smack the MEAC last Saturday in the first annual Freedom Bowl All-Star Classic at Atlanta's Fulton County Stadium.

The Eddie Robinson-coached Southwestern Athletic Conference All-Stars did beat the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference. But the closest they came to a smack was the slap in the face the MEAC felt when SWAC quarterback Harold Smith passed six yards to Rufus Stevens for an unnecessary score with but 15 seconds left on the clock. That final TD made the final score a deceptive 36-22 in the SWAC's favor.

"I was shocked that Coach Robinson went for the touchdown with only seconds left in the game. That really surprised me. I figured they would just run out the clock," said MEAC Coach Bill Davis.

The legendary Robinson, whose 313 wins are by far the most of any active football coach, defended the pass for the last score, noting, "This was an all-star game and fans want to see as much action and excitement as possible."

Action and excitement are just what the crowd of 16,097 got on the sunny, 50-degree day from the time South Carolina State linebacker Lonnie Roberts picked off a Hollis Brent pass on the game's second play until the Grambling and Florida A&M bands had concluded their post-game shows as the darkness began to settle in.

Surprisingly, the MEAC, playing with two quarterbacks who were not starters for their respective teams during the regular season, and with another eight players not in their regular positions, drew first blood. But not as soon as expected.

Despite starting at the SWAC 27 after Roberts' interception, the MEAC could not score. In three plays it managed to lose five yards and a 49-yard field goal attempt by Bethune-Cookman's Dennis Daniels fell short.

The game appeared to be a defensive struggle for more than six minutes. Neither team could manage a first



## Greetings

**FAMU's Greg Fashaw (24) finds the handle on a SWAC punt just in time to be greeted by Grambling's Michael Dennis (37) and Southern's Kevin Stevens (45). Though Fashaw missed most of the season because of injuries, he strutted his stuff impressively in Atlanta (photo by James Parker).**

at the 3:53 mark of the first quarter. Davis decided to go for the two-point conversion and Greg Sandiland of Bethune-Cookman promptly skirted left end for an 8-0 lead.

That, however, was the high point for the MEAC until the third quarter. The SWAC took the ensuing kickoff and methodically drove 78 yards in eight plays for a score, the key play a 49-yard pass from Brent, Robinson's starting signal-caller at Grambling, to running back Tony Good of Southern.

The SWAC grabbed the lead on its next possession, this time driving 65 yards in 10 plays. Smith, who won the game's Most Valuable Player award, completing 15 of 26 passes for 170 yards and three scores, took over the quarterbacking duties and completed two third-down passes to keep the drive alive. The second completion, which caught the MEAC defense by surprise, set up the score. On third and one from the MEAC 33, Smith passed 24 yards to Grambling's Rufus Stevens for a first down at the eight. Two plays later, Southern's Tony Good scored from nine yards out.

Grambling's Mike Harrington added the conversion for a 15-8 SWAC lead with 10:02 left in the half.

The SWAC defense continued to make things miserable for the MEAC and the Southwesterners built their lead to 22-8 35 seconds before intermission.

After a six-yard punt by Daniels, Smith went deep on the fourth play of the drive, his 46-yard scoring pass going to Stamps. Harrington added the conversion.

The super halftime show featured the showmanship of the Grambling and Florida A&M bands. But it was the inspiring rendition of "We Shall Over-

come" by FAMU that brought tears to the eyes of Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young as he remembered Dr. Martin Luther King on the day before what would have been Dr. King's 55th birthday.

The MEAC players may not have heard the music, but they returned to the field and "overcame" the 14-point deficit they were shackled with at the half with 44 seconds left in the third quarter. "I told the kids at the half that we could come back if we executed," said Davis, happy with the play of his team and the success of the game.

"These kids showed a lot of pride and they did a tremendous job of executing in the second half," Davis said. "In fact, they played flawless football."

Fashaw started the comeback by gaining nine and seven yards, respectively, on the half's first two plays from scrimmage. Three plays later, he bolted 31 yards for a score with less than three minutes of the final half gone.

Lady Luck helped cut the margin to 22-16 as kicker Daniels turned passer after a bad snap on the conversion attempt and tossed a two-pointer to Bethune's Mike Revel.

FAMU's Ray Alexander, who had

*"We worked the kids hard and it paid off. I'm proud not only of the way we played but the way the MEAC played as well. This is one of my top experiences in coaching."*

-- Eddie Robinson

down until the SWAC squad was penalized for having 12 men on the field during the MEAC's second punt of the afternoon.

Given a first down at midfield by the infraction, the MEAC offense came to life. Florida A&M's Greg Fashaw, the game's top runner with 116 yards in 19 carries, ran for seven yards on first down and darted 22 yards on the next play.

Five plays later, S.C. State's Lamont Green lofted a 10-yard pass to FAMU's Ray Alexander for the score

On the next play, Brent passed six yards to Sylvester Stamps of Jackson State for the score. It was the first of three scoring passes Stamps would grab coming out of the backfield as he earned Offensive Player of the Game honors with six catches for 82 yards, tops in the contest.

Robinson decided to go for the tie immediately and Brent went again to Stamps, whose conversion catch knotted the score at eight with 16 seconds of the second quarter gone.