

RECRUITING

Alcorn: A winning year begets a hefty haul

By DAVID BULLA
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Alcorn State's rise to the top in the Southwestern Athletic Conference last year had its ramifications, one of which was to make recruiting easier for Coach Marino Casem and his staff.

"This year recruiting was far better than last year," said Casem, whose 1984 team posted a 9-1 record. "We were better able to meet our needs.

"The increased exposure we received, coupled with a successful program (16 winning seasons in the last 19 years), made us more attractive. So we were able to recruit that player with great size and good speed."

Casem's greatest needs were defensive linemen, defensive backs and running backs. Three of his top recruits were linemen, including Anthony Wood, Sterling Garman and Cecil Trotter.

Running backs Ezra Thomas and Cedric Bush are expected to see more than a little playing time this season. Elliott Smith was the top secondary recruit.

"You hope a few in each class will help immediately," Casem said.

"We've got about a half dozen this year. But you also know about 90 percent won't, so you just hope they contribute eventually."

Mississippi Valley State's top losses included all-America wide receiver Jerry Rice and defensive linemen Lloyd Mumphrey and Robert Sanders. Yet Coach Archie "Gunslinger" Cooley believes he can find adequate replacements.

"No one can replace Jerry Rice," he said. "But our new crop will make

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-- Alcorn's Marino Casem

names for themselves. Without Mumphrey and Sanders, the defensive line will be watched closely. But I think we have quality talent there."

One of the Delta Devils' best recruits is robust Ryan Burgess of Eudora, Ark. Burrell stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 290 pounds. Cooley and his staff recruited another giant in 6-5, 295-pound Ronnie Webster of Chicago

and a talented defensive back in Marvin Prevo.

Cooley said successful 1983 and '84 seasons put some additional money in the athletic department's coffers, giving the MSVU staff the luxury to recruit more extensively. The sixth-year Delta Devil coach was 14-16-1 in his first three years at the Itta Bena, Miss., school, compared to a 16-4-1 showing the last two seasons. That includes a 9-2 ledger last year.

"We recruited in Louisiana,

and defensive linemen, and we got the physical players who can help immediately."

The Jaguars recruited 22 players, including 15 linemen. Among the best line recruits are brothers Calvin (6-3, 240) and Carl Milligan (6-3, 250), Ken House (6-4, 270) and Darry Brooks (6-3, 220).

Southern also landed a transfer in Jeff Alexander, who had played at Tulane. Alexander should see time at running back.

Grambling State's Eddie Robinson, coming off a 7-4 season, likes to concentrate on the long term. He prefers to minimize the role of freshmen and, after losing only six lettermen, Robinson expected only one newcomer to make a contribution this season in cornerback Ricky Branch.

Jackson State's W.C. Gorden prefers to work for the long term, too. Even though Jackson returns just nine starters, Gorden will find replacements among his returning players.

"None of this year's crop will contribute right away," said Gorden, whose 1984 team posted the first losing

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