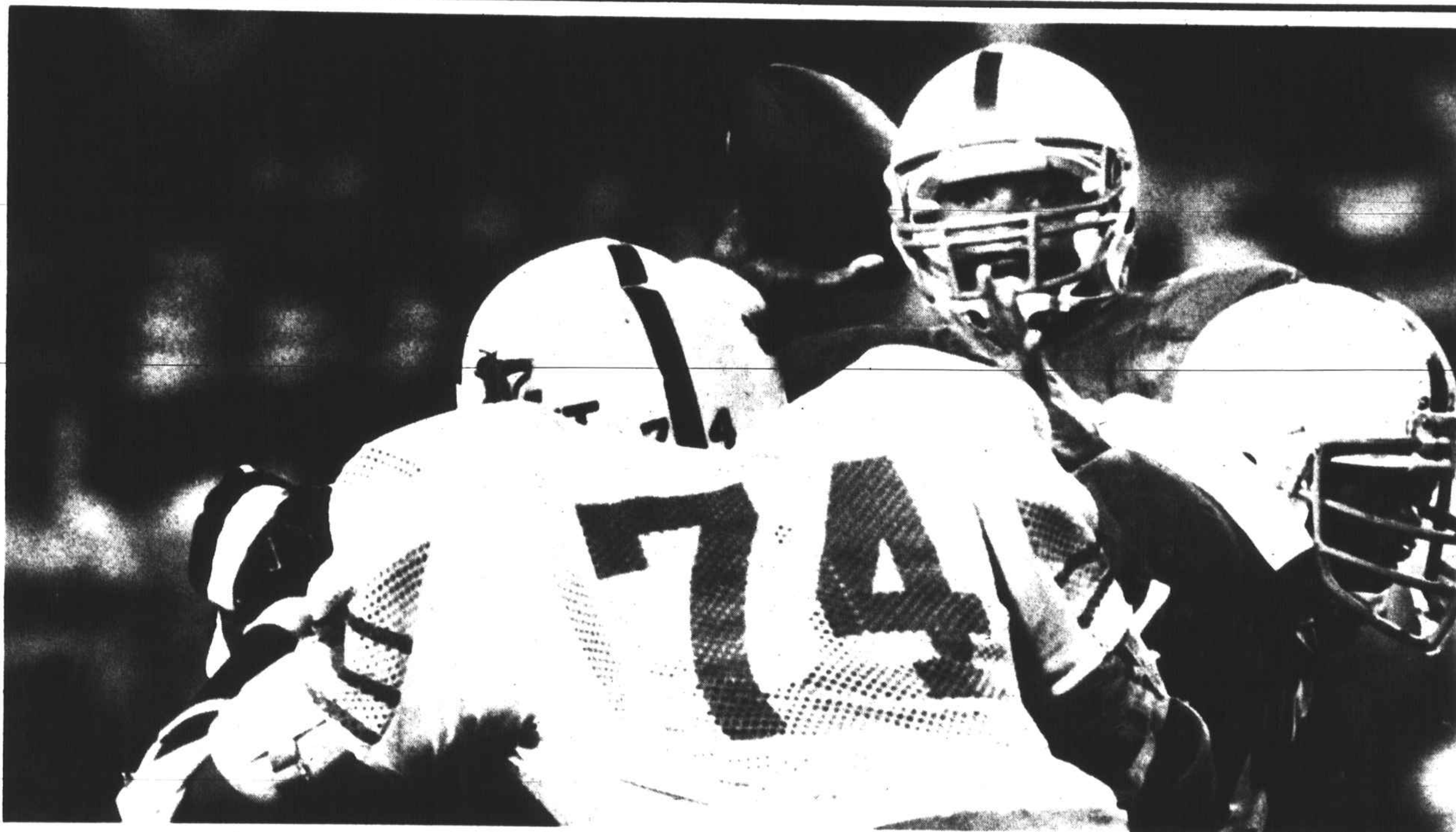


SIX-SHOOTER

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Jackson State's W.C. Gorden on "Satellite": "Totten is a pass receiver's quarterback. He throws a soft ball with a good, tight spiral, which is uni-

que (photo by Mark Gail)."

"Being black is always a strike against you," says Totten. "I feel if a person is producing, he shouldn't be judged by his color but by his performance. But the way things are set up there are more white quarterbacks than there are black.

"I read once where quarterback is a white man's job, but white quarterbacks are proving that to be wrong. On some teams, I don't see how white quarterbacks even play.

"Being black will be a factor against me. I'll just do what I do best -- throw the ball. If they don't want me throwing the ball, I may as well pack and get me a coaching job."

Cooley feels the only thing standing between Totten and an outstanding pro career is the prejudices of owners and coaches.

"If they give him a shot like they do everybody else," says Cooley, "I'm not worried about him. 'The only problem is how black they're going to get. He can play football. They know that. The point is who is willing to give him a fair shake and not use what he does wrong as an excuse to sit him down.'"

Cooley is the first to acknowledge

that Totten has imperfections. But those imperfections are few. At 6 feet 2 and 200 pounds, he has the size the pros like.

Also, he is accustomed to reading defenses. He has a strong enough arm to go deep and possesses good touch on the medium routes.

"You never conquer it all," says Cooley. "The thing is how good can he get from where he is. I hope he will get even better. All of us have weaknesses. But the kind of weaknesses he has you have to look for."

Totten, who will graduate with a degree in health and physical education in December, says he will just wait and see what happens.

"I would love to play pro ball," says Totten. "That's always been one of my dreams. I mostly wanted to play in the NFL because that was the only league. But I'm not going to base everything on playing pro ball.

"I know how difficult it is to be a pro athlete. You can have the ability but you might not perform the way the owner and coaches want you to. Things don't always work the way you want them to. If I get drafted, it'll be the best thing to happen to me. If I

don't, I can always fall back on my degree."

New England Patriots Director of Player Personnel Dick Steinberg thinks it'll be a while before Totten will have to worry about putting his desire to work.

"We've looked at him in a preliminary way," says Steinberg. "We haven't looked at him close but we know he's a prospect. He has a good arm. He's strong and he's experienced in an offense similar to what he will be asked to do in the NFL."

Even though Totten plays for a small black school and the popular notion is that NFL clubs tend downgrade such athletes -- especially quarterbacks -- Steinberg contends that won't be a factor come draft time.

"We do consider level of competition, all else being equal," he says. "If a player is similar in size, skills and athletic ability to Willie and he played at Illinois for instance, we take the guy from Illinois. But he won't be penalized a great deal -- only if everything else is equal.

"We penalize a kid less for level of competition if he's a quarterback than any other position. It's a different

position. No matter what level he plays on, he has to cope with the pressure and be a leader.

"Being black isn't a factor anymore," Steinberg says. "Some will be skeptical, but I think we've progressed beyond that point. I'm sorry people feel that's a problem. Coaches want to win. They have to be concerned about their livelihood. They want the best people they can get."

Considering his desire to play professionally, it would be understandable if Totten were to think of himself first and concentrate on doing whatever is necessary to make himself more attractive to the pros. That's happened to more than a few star players.

But Totten doesn't appear to be a candidate for that role.

"I need to try to keep my composure and not worry about going pro and letting pressure be the main issue," he says. "I need to stay relaxed and keep confidence in myself. After that, I'll reach my final goal.

I'm just hoping I have a good year.

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