

SOUTHERN INTERCOLLEGIATE

Albany hopes winning will breed more winning

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IT'S DANGEROUS to play with dynamite, swim after eating, smoke in bed or predict Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference football.

There was, for instance, a strong consensus last year among media, coaches and fans that Alabama A&M would rule the SIAC roost, with Fort Valley State placing a strong second.

So much for predictions. Albany State's Golden Rams (7-2, 6-1) went on to capture the SIAC title.

Determined not to be humbled so embarrassingly again, the prognosticators have chosen to take a more cautious approach in 1985, forecasting a three-team fight among Albany State, Fort Valley State (8-3, 5-2) and Alabama A&M.

ALBANY STATE is again favored to challenge for the crown primarily because of its defense, led by a terrorist in shoulder pads named Johnnie Williams. Williams, a 6-2, 235-pound senior defensive tackle, recorded an incredible 21 quarterback sacks in 1984 and was named SIAC Player of the Year.

"He is without a doubt one of the most dominating players in this conference," says Fort Valley Coach Doug Porter. "His presence alone is enough, but they have some other outstanding players returning on that unit."

Two of those other performers are defensive tackle Andre Tift and safety Mark Liles, both all-SIAC selections. Tift and Liles form the nucleus of the stingy, punishing Albany defense.

The offensive unit is also solid, led by running back Antwan Banks, named to last year's all-conference team after rushing for 732 yards. Banks will run behind a seasoned offensive line led by all-SIAC guard Shawn McElroy, tackle James Henderson and center Anthony Cox.

When the Golden Rams decide to take to the air, they can be equally effective. Junior Nathaniel Street threw for 11 touchdowns in 1984. His main target is junior tight end Dexter Niord, who snared 21 passes in '84, three for touchdowns.

"There has been a lot of enthusiasm generated from our winning the title," says Albany State Coach Hampton Smith. "But that enthusiasm has to be tempered. It's going to be a lot tougher to repeat because of the toughness of an 11-game schedule. We hope that winning breeds winning."

FORT VALLEY'S Porter has a

premium on winning.

Throughout a brilliant career as an assistant at Grambling under Eddie Robinson, as head coach at Howard and for the past six years at Fort Valley State, Porter has been no stranger to success.

This year should be no different.

"In assessing our season, I would have to say that the experience on our offensive line is a plus, along with the defense," says Porter. "Our major concern is at the quarterback position, where we have four candidates who have not been tested. If we can solve that problem, we'll be in the thick of things, although right now I think Albany would have to be favored."

Defense has always been one of Porter's trademarks. In defensive tackle Rodney Norwood, free safety Eddie Anderson and cornerback Duvall Calloway, the Wildcats boast a trio of all-SIAC performers.

On offense, whomever is selected to call the signals should have few problems finding someone to throw to. Wide receiver Dale Casey (46 receptions, 727 yards, eight scores) and former all-SIAC pick David Monds (6-3, 196 pounds) are among some of the finest in the conference.

All-SIAC tackle Richie Wells anchors a strong offensive line.

ALABAMA A&M'S (5-4-2, 4-2-1) considerable strength may be a moot point this season, since league sanctions prevent it from qualifying for the conference title.

Rulings aside, the Bulldogs's bite is still worse than their bark because of stalwarts on defense like Mark McCraney (6-2, 240), Joe Savage (6-0, 240) and Knute Walker (5-10, 165).

James Baugh lacks experience at quarterback, but that should be offset by running backs Marvin Reeves (5-10, 220), Lamuel Mills (6-0, 220) and Glenen Farris (5-10, 165).

They'll find room to run behind all-SIAC center Kevin Whaley (6-2, 240), guard Orange Hollaway (6-3, 269) and tackles Howard Dallard (6-6, 290) and Leafus Thomas (6-6, 235).

If Baugh can develop a touch in his passing, he could be rewarded by speedy receivers Dondo Raysor, Sebastian Moore and Jacoby Leonard.

MORRIS BROWN (5-4-1, 4-1) looks good in the passing department with the return of Leonard Campbell, who threw for 1,406 yards and 10 touchdowns last season, and wide receiver Victor Scott, who grabbed 30



Morris Brown's James Liverpool moves from the outside to middle linebacker, where his physical style will give opponents headaches (photo by Craig T. Greenlee).

receptions, three of which went for scores.

But the Tigers' air force may be grounded unless an inexperienced line develops fast.

MORRIS BROWN will have to build its defense around linebackers James Liverpool (6-1, 225) and Chris Mainor (6-0, 225), both of whom were all-conference selections in 1984.

MOREHOUSE (5-4-1, 3-3-1) pulled off a few surprises in 1984, but will be

hard-pressed to perform an encore this season.

The Maroon Tigers are hurting in several places, but they do have two fine athletes in running back Elvernee McGhee (5-9, 180) and wide receiver Tamlin Antoine (6-0, 180).

TUSKEGEE could be a sleeper if some of its talented recruits can develop, while SAVANNAH STATE (2-7-1, 1-5-1) and CLARK (2-7, 1-6) will fight to avoid the cellar.