

SOUTHWESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE



Left, Southern quarterback Herman Coleman runs for his life in a season-opening loss to Mississippi Valley. Right, Alcorn blue-collar tailback

A crowded penthouse



Perry Qualls scoots for yardage (photos by Mark Gall).

By LONZA HARDY
Review Staff Writer

EQUILIBRIUM RUNS more rampantly in the SWAC in 1985 than it has in nearly a decade, prompting Grambling Coach Eddie Robinson to call this season perhaps "the SWAC's finest hour."

"Any team could win the championship," Robinson says, exaggerating only a little bit.

Marino Casem, coach of defending SWAC champion Alcorn State, agrees.

"I think it's going to be a very close race," Casem says. "All teams in our

conference have improved, as last year indicated, and you can no longer easily distinguish the top from the bottom. Any team on any given day can beat any other team."

Still, Casem's very own Braves are the favorites to answer the SWAC's call to glory, with Grambling State and Mississippi Valley State tying for second in preseason balloting among the coaches.

It's possible, too, that all three teams could knock each other out of the championship race.

ALCORN STATE has two things in its favor: momentum and a potentially

explosive offense.

The Braves, predicted to finish fifth in 1984, became the scourge of the SWAC last year as they ground their way to the school's best season since 1931, finishing 7-0 in conference play, 9-0 in regular-season action and 9-1 overall.

"I hope the impetus we gained last year will give us the momentum to make it through the rough spots this year," says Casem, whose last back-to-back league titles came in 1968 and 1969. "Our kids know what it'll take to come back and defend their championship. They're serious about what they

do."

Rarely does Casem, the SWAC's dean of defense, rest his team's future in the hands of his offensive unit, but that's the case this year and not totally by choice.

The Braves' offense is loaded and may rank among Casem's best, featuring the return of eight starters and numerous key reserves. Among the team's top offensive returnees are senior quarterback Richard Myles (6-3, 190 pounds), who, with 3,446 career passing yards needs only 964 additional yards to become ASU's No. 1 all-time leading passer, and Perry Qualls (5-9,