

# SPORTS REVIEW

## BCSR Player of the Year

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### Another one bites the dust -- once more

For the time being, another black college all-star football game has bit the dust -- again.

This time, it's the Freedom Bowl All-Star Classic that has been laid to rest. It seems that corporate sponsors decided to withdraw their dollars because of low fan attendance and lack of financial support from the black colleges involved. Organizers of the five-year old contest are hoping that they can stage the game in '89. They'll need that time to come up with a workable plan that will satisfy sponsors and guarantee their continued participation.

The game has been a Godsend to black college seniors, providing them with an additional opportunity to show their wares to NFL scouts.

Let's face it, there aren't very many black college football players who get to play in the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala., the East-West Shrine game in San Francisco, or the Blue-Grey game in Montgomery, Ala. Getting that extra opportunity has made the difference in some black college players being drafted or not being drafted.

The Freedom Bowl has given fans a preview look at some pros to be. Barney Bussey showcased his skills as a defensive back in the '84 contest. Bussey played at South Carolina State and is now a major contributor as a DB (nickle back) for the Cincinnati Bengals. Jerry Rice, the game breaking receiver for the 49ers, played in the '85 game representing Mississippi Valley State. So did cornerback Issiac Holt, now a member of the Minnesota Vikings secondary. Holt played his college ball at Alcorn State. Delaware State alum John Taylor, a return specialist/wide-out, is Rice's teammate. He played in the '86 game.

Granted, some may debate that these guys were the creme de la creme of college football players while they were in school. All of the NFL teams knew everything they needed to know about them, they will argue. They didn't need an extra look. They would've made it anyway, the reasoning goes.

However, there are some exceptions. The most notable example of how this game can help a player's stock in the draft occurred in '87.

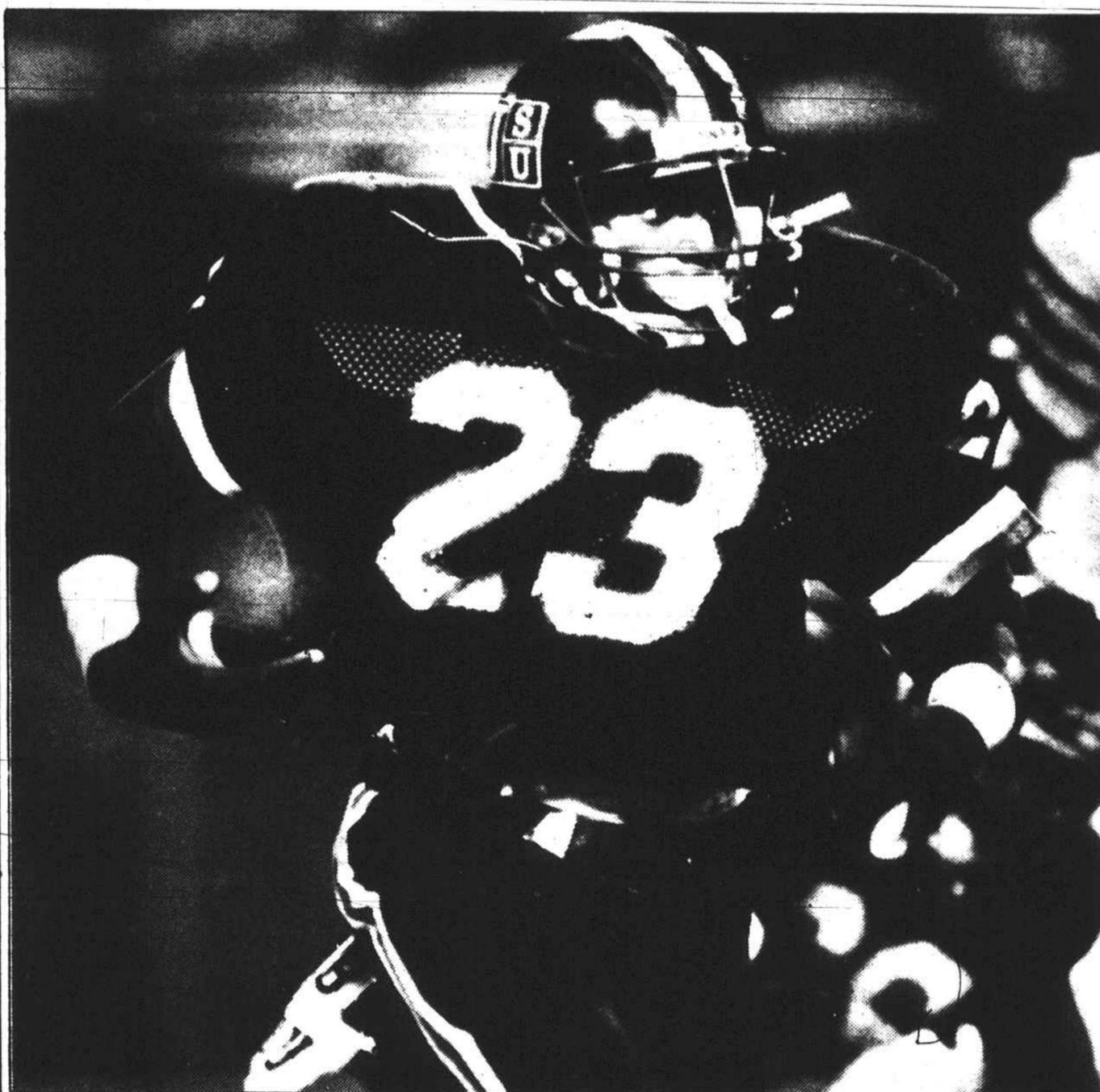
Terry Williams played cornerback for Bethune-Cookman that year. He had a solid year, but didn't even make the all-MEAC team. But he got the opportunity to play in the Freedom Bowl. By the spring of '88, Williams had left some very positive impressions in the minds of NFL player personnel directors and scouts. He was chosen in the second round by the New York Jets and was the first black college

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File Photo

Lewis Tillman's consistency as Jackson State's main man made it difficult to overlook his achievements this past football season.

## This Lou's for you

Lewis Tillman, the workhorse running back for Jackson State has been selected as *Black College Sports Review's* Player of the Year for 1988.

The 6-1, 202 lbs. senior from Hazelhurst, Miss. had a very consistent year, rushing for 100 or more yards in eight of the Tigers 11 games. For his career, he ran for 100 or more yards in 19 games. Tillman ended the season with 1,436 yards and 13 TDs as the Tigers won their fourth straight SWAC championship and finished at 8-1-2.

Tillman will best be remembered for breaking Walter Payton's single season and career rushing records at Jackson State. He set the new career standard in JSU's seventh game vs. Grambling, which gave him a career total (at that point) of 3,597 yards. Payton, who played for the Tigers from '71-'74, held the previous record of 3,563 yards. The year before, Tillman rushed for 1,474 yards to shatter Payton's single season mark by more than 300 yards. He ended his college career with 4,167 total yards and 33 touchdowns. In 43 games, he averaged 19 carries a contest.

His best individual performance of '88 came against Grambling in a game that helped JSU secure another SWAC

football crown. In the 24-17 victory, he scored the winning TD and ran for 224 yards, which was also a single game career high.

Tillman has proven himself to be a valuable commodity in the eyes of NFL folks. He is viewed as one of the top three running backs coming out of the college ranks this past season. He has a solid shot at being a top draft pick this coming spring.

Not necessarily as fluid a runner as Payton, Tillman's main assets are his ability to read his blockers and make his cuts at the right times. He finished No. 2 among 1-AA rushers, averaging 130.5 yards per contest.

Last month, Tillman gave the pro scouts an eyeful during the Blue-Grey All-Star game. He was the Grey team's MVP, rushing for 86 yards, catching five passes for another 25 yards and scoring two touchdowns.

At the start of this season, Jackson State put in a new wrinkle in its sports promotions by touting Tillman for the Heisman Trophy. In the Payton Award voting, which goes to the top player in Division I-AA, Tillman received 10 votes. In '87, he was a finalist for the award as 1-AA's No. 3 ranked rusher.

-Rolando Simmons