

SIAC

Ft. Valley's Wildcats take the early lead

This was supposed to be another title year for the Albany State Rams. But after five weeks, **Fort Valley State** holds down the **No. 1 position** in the SIAC, with **Alabama A & M** lodged in second place in the league standings.

But there are other happenings in the conference that could have an impact on how things will wind up before the dust settles.

The league office determined that Knoxville College had to forfeit three games because they used an ineligible player in their first three games. They lost two of those games, so Morehouse, who lost to KC, 39-7, was awarded a victory. As of Oct. 1, the league was no longer divided into an East and a West region.

But now, let's go back to the Wildcats.

Going into October, coach Doug Porter's team was ranked ninth in the Division II national poll.

The Wildcats have been successful due to a solid blend of offense and defense. Valley has one of the SIAC's top offenses (317.3 total yards per game).

Ditto for the defense -- especially against the run. The Wildcats have allowed just under 36 team rushing yards per outing (1.2 yards per attempt). The pass defense has improved as evidenced by the play of Mario Black, Lorenzo Carswell and Jackie Cannon. That threesome has collectively picked off 10 passes. Black is the SIAC's top interceptor with four.

Valley, 4-0, has dispatched Morehouse, Cheyney State, Morris Brown, and Clark/Atlanta University.

Curtis Bell leads the ground game for FVSC and he also leads the league in that department -- 661 yards and seven scores. Quarterback Larry Baker compliments Bell. In four games, Baker has accounted for seven TDs (five running, two passing).

Facing a very tough schedule early put **Alabama A & M** in an 0-3 hole. But the Bulldogs rebounded to win their two conference games and are now primed to

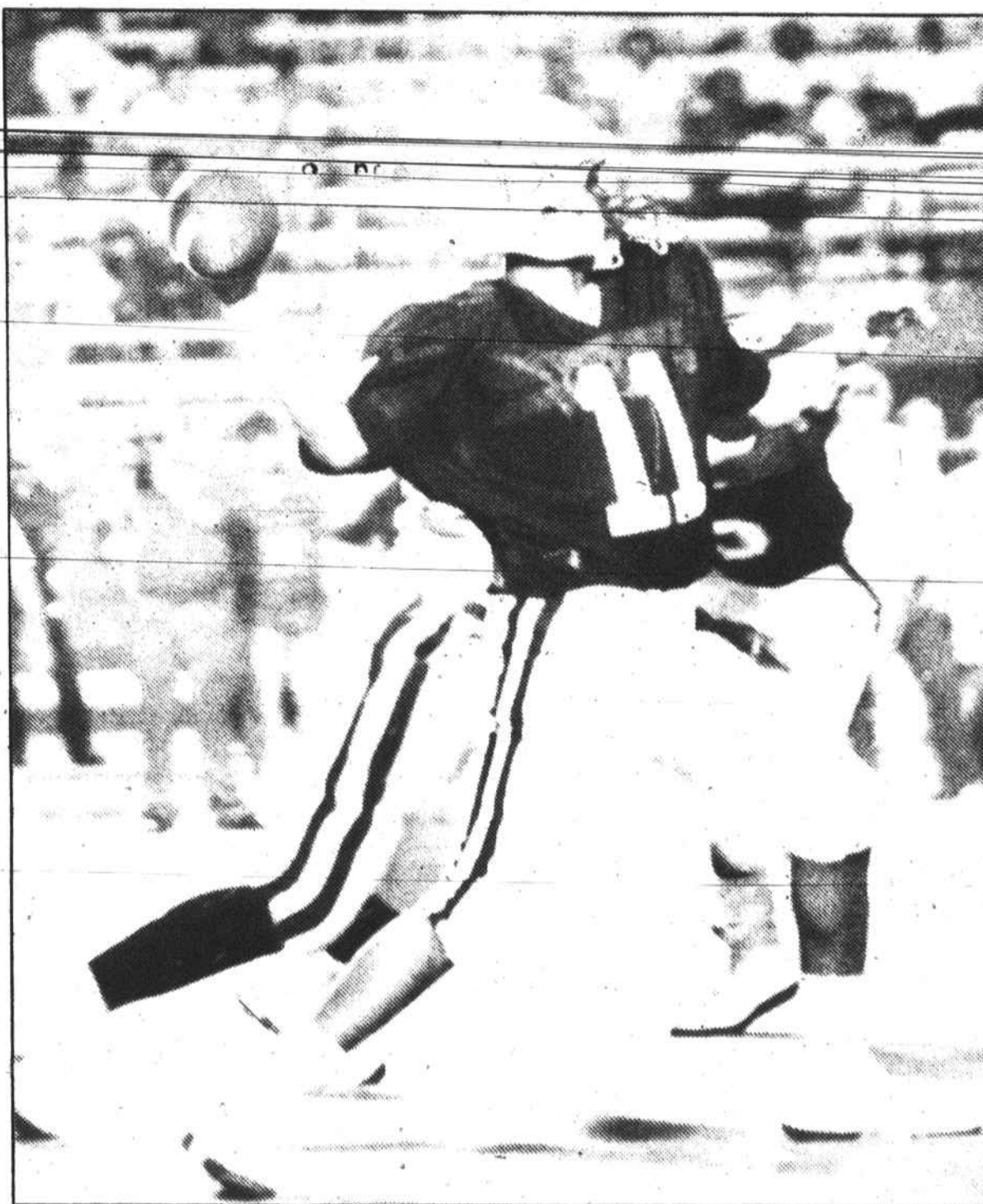


Photo by Ron Slaughter

Bulldogs quarterback Tracy Kendall is ranked No. 2 in total offense in the conference. He has guided A&M to a 2-0 SIAC mark after the Dogs dropped their first three games to non-conference foes.

make their bid for the league crown.

The Dogs more than held their own in non-conference losses to Northern Alabama, Jacksonville State (Ala.) and Grambling. They responded in SIAC play by whipping Albany State, 16-2, then whitewashing Morehouse, 25-0.

Quarterback Tracy Kendall has become the take charge guy for A & M's

offense. Kendall has accounted for better than half of the Bulldogs' 1,401 total offensive yards. He's thrown for 710 yards and four TDs. Barry Wagner is his prime receiving target (25 catches for 413 yards and two TDs).

But while Valley and A & M are the likely folk to battle it out for the title, it's hard not to talk about Savannah State, a

squad that could very well be the best in the league.

The Tigers were placed on probation by the league because of infractions in women's tennis and men's track and field. As a result, they are ineligible to compete for the football title.

Nevertheless, the Tigers have rolled to a 3-0 record. They didn't play one game because it was cancelled (the Virginia Union contest was called off because of Hurricane Hugo).

The Tigers have it all. Quarterback Richard Basil is the top passer in the conference (831 yards, 11 TDs) and Shannon Sharpe is a top-of-the-line receiver (18 catches, 456 yards, seven touchdowns).

To top it all off, Tony Simmons has added punch to the running game. Simmons hasn't been featured a lot in the Tigers' scheme so far. But when called upon, he has responded (228 yards on 28 carries for three TDs, and a sizeable 8.1 yards per carry average).

Defensively, the Tigers have put the big bite on everybody. They have allowed just 160 total yards per game. Mike Wallace, Donald Dupont and DeCar Brown have a combined seven interceptions.

Albany State can't seem to get on the right track. The Rams have stumbled and staggered.

Their only win came against Miles College (26-13). Then they dropped decisions to North Alabama (17-3), Alabama A & M, and Tuskegee (12-7).

Tuskegee University hopes to make more progress as the season wears on. Maurice Heard leads the offense. He has tossed five TD passes and Chris Holder has 15 catches for 330 yards and two TDs. Cleveland Gipson ranks among the league's top hitmen with 40 stops.

Other top performers around the league include: **Morris Brown** wide-out Russell Cambridge (28 catches, 376 yards, three TDs) and **Morehouse's** Jimmie Davis (700 passing yards and seven TDs).

-Richard Nealy

Morgan is the big surprise in MEAC football *Continued From Page 12*

The play of Howard's defense enabled the Bison to hand Grambling their first shut-out defeat since 1976.

Against South Carolina State, the Buffalo Soldiers held off a determined Bulldogs' offense to claim the win. Gary Mossop's 30-yard field goal at the end of the third quarter settled the matter. Linebacker Charles Gibbs led the defense with 10 tackles.

The rest of the teams in the league were playing no better than .500 as the second half of the season began.

Bethune-Cookman beat Central Florida (23-15) and Howard (10-3), while losing to Morgan and Jackson State.

Against Howard, the Wildcats played all MEAC wide

receiver Stevie Thomas at quarterback. The move paid off when Thomas scored the winning TD on an 18-yard run.

Turnovers proved to be costly for the Bison. They lost five fumbles and threw three interceptions.

Florida A & M has had its share of problems in the early going. They bombed Tuskegee, 41-9 and defeated Tennessee State, 21-9 in the Ebony Classic played in Atlanta. But they were humbled by Alabama State (23-8) at home and were outclassed by Georgia Southern, 28-0.

Delaware State has also had its ups and downs. They had few problems in handling Cheyney State (41-0). They were very proficient in their 11-3 road win over

Northeastern. Matt Stehman kicked two field goals in that game, his second one being a 22-yarder that won the game for the Hornets.

North Carolina A & T continues to go through growing pains. The Aggies beat up on North Carolina Central and the University of DC. But they were dumped by Winston-Salem State and Morgan State. Norfolk State beat them on a last second touchdown.

South Carolina State has experienced a lot of inconsistency so far this season. They had won one of four games, the lone victory coming against Presbyterian (32-27).

- Steve Zimmerman