

Freedom Bowl Can Succeed In Winston-Salem

WINSTON SALEM, NC — In the box overlooking the 31,000-seat Groves Stadium, nearly 150 NFL and Canadian League scouts, several reporters and dozens of administrators, faculty and boosters from 56 historically Black colleges watched the North Squad beat the South 15-9 in the fifth annual Freedom Bowl, All-Star Football classic.

By the way, 6,494 paying fans watched the 80 student-athletes and five high school and college bands strut their stuff at this post season event, too.

"The Freedom Bowl has two important purposes," SWAC Commissioner James Frank, told a reporter. "Number one is to raise funds for the conferences. Number two is to give exposure to the players from historically Black colleges and universities. There is no question that the second purpose has been fulfilled."

So it seems. All week long, scouts representing all 28 NFL teams and some Canadian Football League squads were in town, according to Howard's coach Willie Jeffries, "timing these young men (in the 40-yard dash), weighing them and giving them intelligence tests". Most of these football teams, Jeffries added, "they also sent three or

four scouts apiece. So we've had about 150 scouts here to see these young men."

History provides good reason for their interest. Several prize NFL catches have played in this game. Among them, Everson Walls (Grambling, Dallas Cowboys), Jerry Rice (Mississippi Valley State, 49ers) and Derrick Beasley (Winston-Salem

State, New England Patriots).

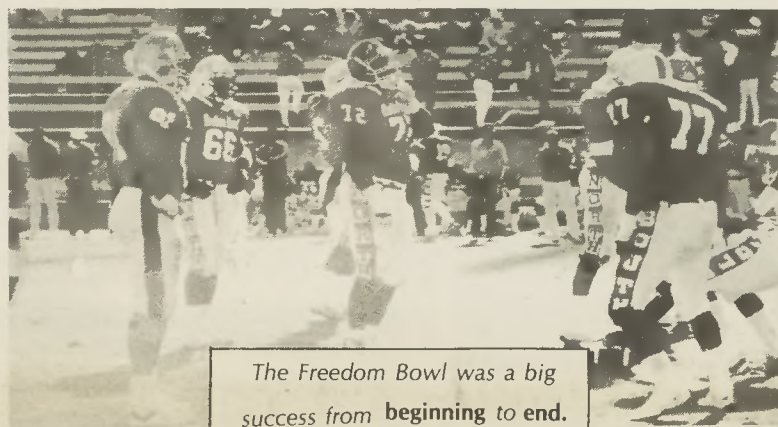
The game also means a lot for the athletes on display. "What Freedom Bowl means (financially) is that the ball players who might ordinarily sign as free agents, - if they perform well (in the game) - will become draft picks," noted Ronald Davenport, chairman of the board of Sheridan Broadcasting

Network which sponsors the Bowl game as well as rates teams each in its SBN Black College Football Poll. "This affects their careers in terms of what they sign for and the bonuses they get. It also means these players who ordinarily would not be free agents will have the opportunity to become free agents after performing well here."

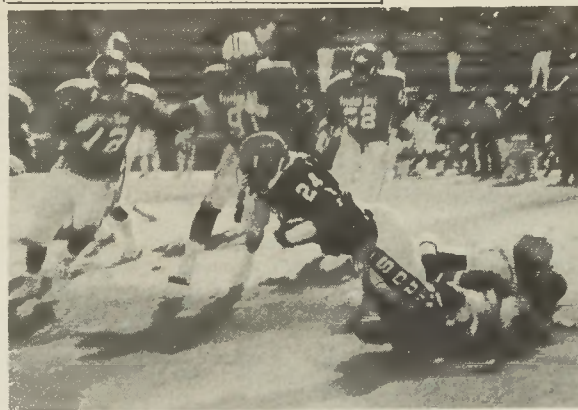
But as Dr. Frank said earlier, the Freedom Bowl is also important to those who think in terms of the time value of money—the conferences, the NCAA and the sponsors.

Bowl games, like the Cotton Bowl, Sugar Bowl, Fiesta Bowl, Rose Bowl, Hula Bowl and others, are

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The Freedom Bowl was a big success from beginning to end.



Photos by M.A. Pharr

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