

Black College Sports

You can never be sure in the wild and woolly SWAC

By BARRY COOPER
Syndicated Columnist

In the Southwestern Athletic Conference, important decisions are often made on the run, in much the same fashion that a quarterback changes plays at the line of scrimmage.

For example, one of the league's teams, Jackson State, thought it had wrapped up the conference football crown last year with a 5-0-2 record.

That, however, was changed when the SWAC Council of Presidents decreed that Grambling -- which earlier had been ruled ineligible for the championship -- nevertheless deserved the crown because of its 6-0-1 record. The presidents declared Grambling the champion.

There have been other such incidents in the SWAC, though not as major. In 1977, Alcorn faced Jackson State in a football game,

and the contest was stopped for nearly five minutes while Alcorn Coach Marino Casem argued against a controversial call. Meanwhile, the clock continued to run during the discussions, and the officials refused to do anything about it.

Other stories exist about SWAC baseball teams refusing to play the second game of doubleheaders because of allegedly poor umpiring and of basketball teams being suddenly ruled ineligible for the conference tournament.

Though most of the disturbing happenings in the SWAC are minor, they detract from what is regarded as one of the finest athletic conferences in the country.

As far as football is concerned, the SWAC reads like a who's who among smaller colleges. Grambling is nationally known and so is Jackson State. Virtually

all the other league teams are known for their aggressive and wide-open style of play.

Mississippi Valley was even prominently featured in *Sports Illustrated* recently because of its star receiver, Jerry Rice.

Fortunately, the SWAC has been able to put its best foot forward as far as the national media are concerned. Its dirty laundry and housekeeping problems have been confined to media outlets in just a few Southern states.

The time has come, though, for the bad news to be shut off from even those outlets. Better yet, why not eliminate the bad situations altogether?

The man charged with that is James Frank, brought on several months ago as the league's commissioner. It is his job to bring some law and order to the SWAC.

Still, some wonder whether he

can manage that, since his hiring reportedly was orchestrated by just two of the SWAC schools: Grambling and Southern.

Despite its shortcomings, the SWAC continues to be a winner on the field, and is in far better financial shape than the country's other predominantly black Division I-AA league, the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference.

It would be nice, however, if the SWAC got its administrative act together. Already this year there are grumbings from Jackson State, which is picked to win the football title. But the folks at JSU aren't so sure about that. Though Grambling and Southern University, two SWAC powerhouses, are ineligible for the crown now, who knows what might happen come November?

The SWAC might just call another audible.

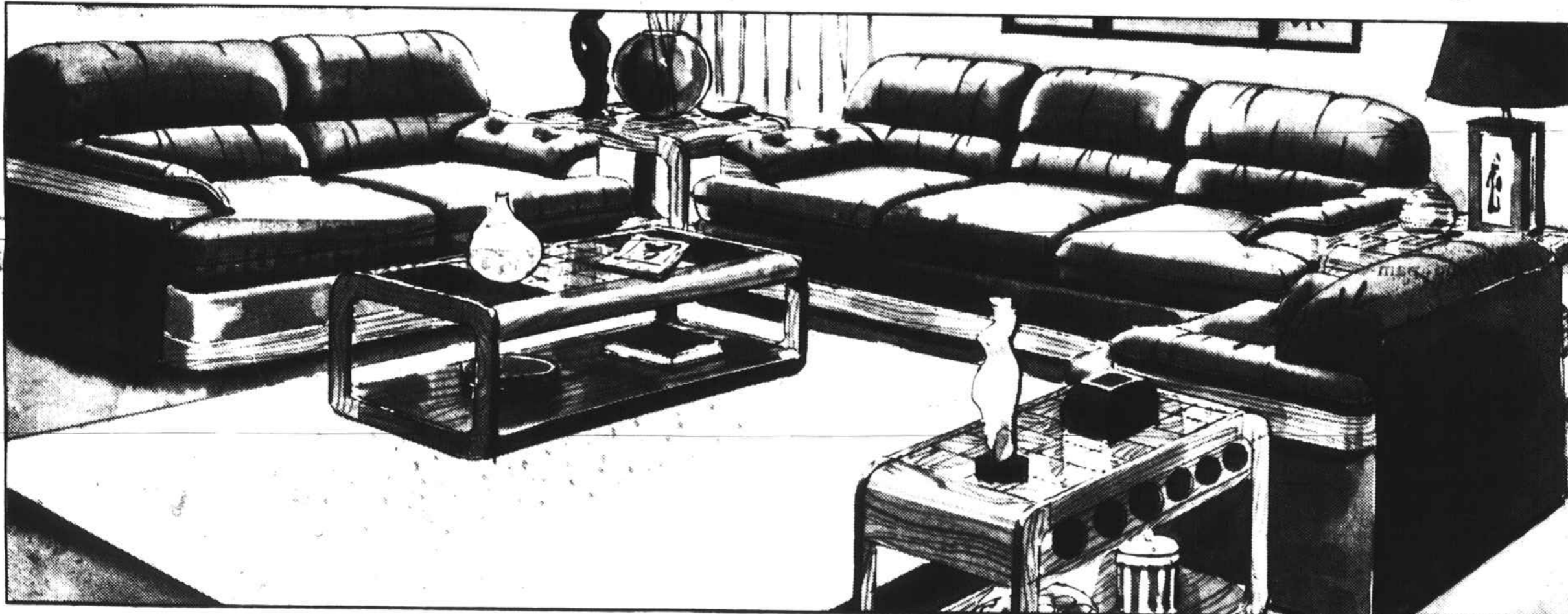


Daylight

Carver's Fred Henry finds a gaping hole in the West Forsyth jayvee's defense. Carver defeated the overmatched Titan rookies 45-0 last week (photo by James Parker).

Fall Home Sale

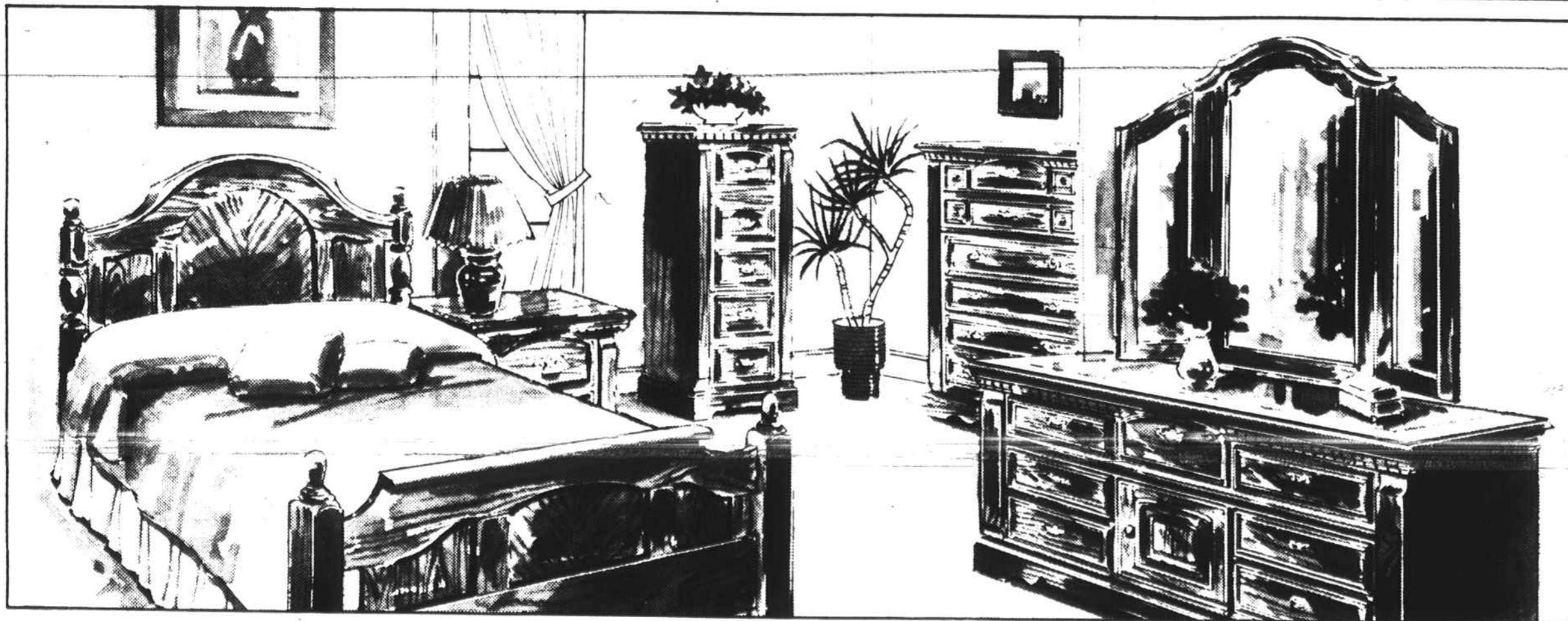
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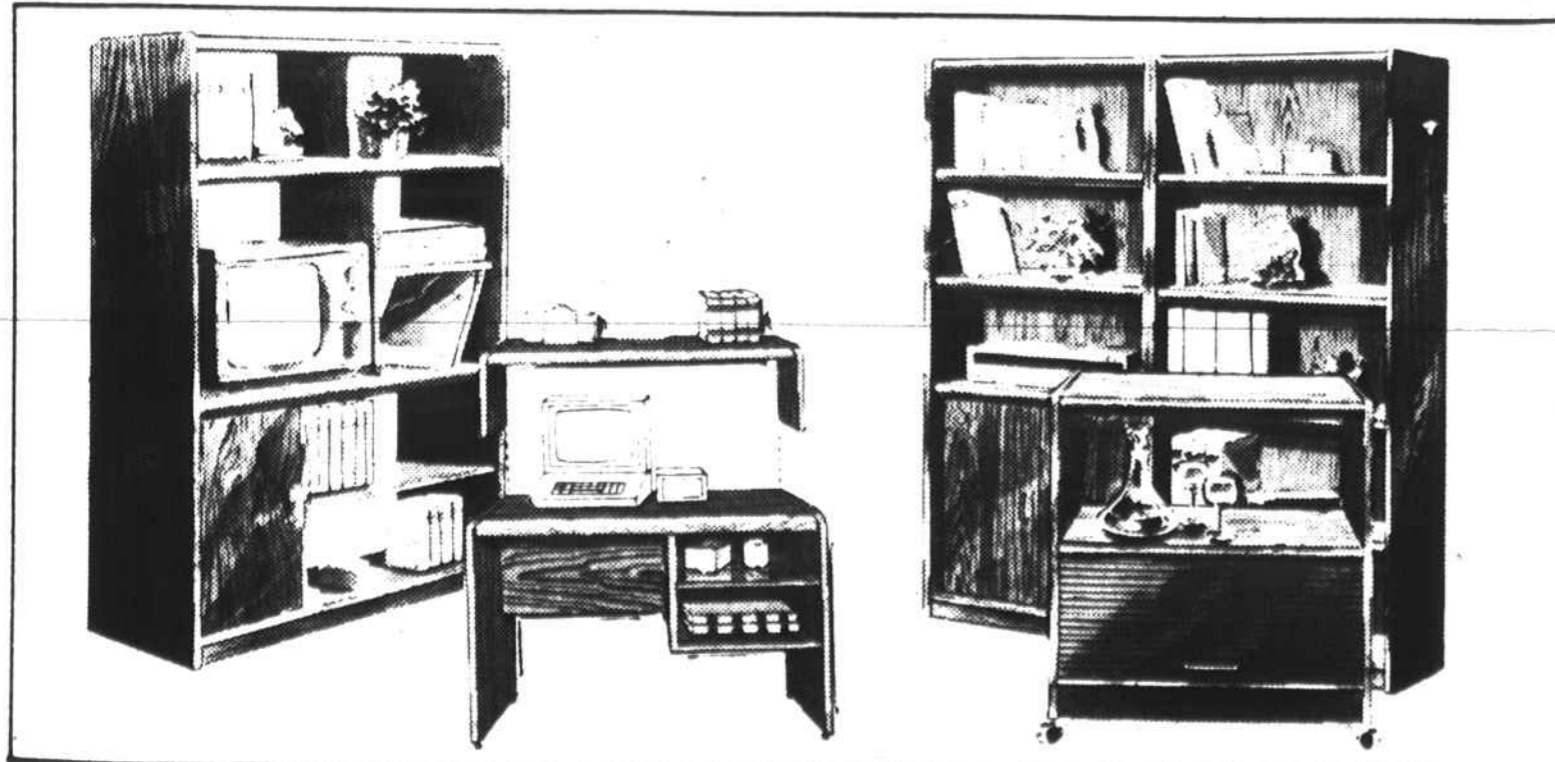


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