

# SWAC Preview

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The soul of Jackson's defense is the linebacking corps. Charles Ray Davis and Marlo Perry are two of the league's best. Last year, Davis (8 1/2 sacks) and Perry (SWAC's Freshman of the Year) were in on 160 tackles.

The secondary will have to regroup in the absence of All-American cornerback Robert Turner, who died in a tragic shooting last spring. Turner set an NCAA record last year when he returned four interceptions for touchdowns.

## Grambling

The G-Men are always a threat to win and the '91 season is no exception. However, legendary coach Eddie Robinson and crew could be hard pressed to reach the league penthouse this time around.

After all, SWAC MVP Walter "Mr. Touchdown" Dean is gone and so are wingback Jake Reed and offensive tackle Raymond "World" Smith, both of whom were All-Americans. But it doesn't stop there. The entire defensive line has graduated.

Still, all is not lost. QB Shawn Burras will carry the Tigers on the strength of his rocket launcher of an arm. As a junior last year, Burras broke Doug Williams single season record for passing yardage (2,302 yards) and he also tossed 25 TD passes, ending the year as SWAC's No. 2 rated passer.

Even with the departure of Dean and Reed, the G-Men still have gifted people to haul the load. Look for Dexter Butcher and Derrick Ned to increase their productivity now that they will be guaranteed more minutes on the field.

Craigory Sam, Billy Norman and Jarrod Ellis form the nucleus of the offensive line. With those three clearing the way, Grambling isn't likely to encounter too many problems putting points on the board.

All-star linebacker Thomas Griffin leads a defensive unit that returns seven starters. Griffin, who recorded 107 tackles last season, is the league's top-rated hit man entering the '91 grid wars. Robert Pinckney holds down the fort at tackle and the presence of Charles Williams at strong safety helps to solidify the secondary.

## Mississippi Valley State

Coach Larry Dorsey opted to rely on the friendly skies last year and the results produced a very surprising 5-6 mark for the Delta Devils.

Valley never shied away from putting the ball up. They were SWAC's pass-happiest group a year ago (393 attempts). QB Darryl Cox posted some credible numbers in nine games — completed 49.4 percent of his passes (95 of 193) for 1,510 yards and 10 TDs.

Wide receiver Jerrell Horner and tight end Fred Washington were the prime beneficiaries of Valley's passing game. Washington (43 catches, 561 yards) led the league in receptions per game (4.8) and Horner finished up as the leading pass catcher with 51.

But in spite of the passing yard numbers, opponents shouldn't be lulled into thinking that Valley has a total disdain for the rushing game. Ronald Humphrey (795 yards, 8.9 ypc, 4 TDs) is very dependable and was SWAC's No. 2 rusher behind Grambling's Dean last season.

The Deltas have a few heavy-duty tanks on their offensive line. The front line of Anthony Foreman, Marvin Chapman, Ellis Brown, and Keith Myles averages 273 lbs. per man.

If the Devils are to continue their ascent, the defense will have to tighten up. Last year, they were the league's most generous bunch, allowing 423.6 total yards per game.

But when it comes to defending the pass, it's a different story. The secondary is the heart of this unit, thanks to the return of Everett Nicholas (6 interceptions), James Williams (89 tackles) and Ashley Ambrose. Eric Snow and Stacey Wright are back to provide stability at linebacker. In '90, these two collectively accounted for 105 tackles.

## Southern University

Coach Gerald Kimble is hoping that the third time is a charm and that better things are in store for his Jaguars in '91.

Good fortune was absent last fall as Southern finished in a three-way tie for the league basement with Texas Southern and Alcorn State. The return of seven starters on both sides of the ball should help Kimble's team avoid pitfall this time.

For the Jags to rediscover their groove, QB Nate Harrison must have ample time to scan the field. That wasn't the case last season (1,181 yards, only 6 TDs and 15 interceptions).

In order for Harrison to produce up to his capabilities (2,142 passing yards, 17 TDs and 9 interceptions in '89), Donald Bullock, Ronald Cherry and Dennis Craig will have to come through with solid performances in the trenches.

Defensively, the Jags have a glaring deficiency in the secondary. Sean Wallace is the only experienced DB returning. The rest of the DB crew is young and untested. But on the line, Kelvin Coney (88 tackles) is a proven commodity and so is Robert Harris.

## Alcorn State

The Braves are eager to redeem themselves after taking a deep plunge

last fall when they won just two of nine games. At the end of the season, Theo Danzy was dismissed as head coach and former Jackson State assistant Cardell Jones has named as Danzy's successor.

Everything that could go wrong, did go wrong for Alcorn a year ago. The team couldn't move the ball offensively (averaged 264.6 total yards, scored 14.2 ppg). Defensively, they weren't much stronger than a Kleenex (allowing 418.9 total yards and 28.9 ppg).

Offensively, Jones feels he can put more zip in Alcorn's attack by going to the passing game. Reginald Martin (1,503 passing yards, 7 TDs) has a talented pair of receivers to work with in Cedric Tillman (36 catches, 538 yards) and Torrance Small (23 catches for 236 yards in five games). Janci Finkley will handle the rushing chores. As a freshman, he averaged 6.1 yards a tote.

On the other side of the line, linebackers Spurgeon Banyard and Al Smith are being counted on to lead the way. Keiver Campbell and Sidney Felder are seasoned cover guys in the secondary, but the rest of the crew has very little game experience.

## Texas Southern

Texas Southern is all too aware that happy beginnings can very easily become agonizing endings.

After breezing to four straight wins at the start of last season, coach Walter Highsmith's team performed a serious deep-six maneuver, losing their last seven games.

Attaining consistency is something that the Tigers will have to master to prevent a repeat of last season's relapse. On offense, TSU has its share of guns, led by a pair of quarterbacks who saw plenty of action in '90.

Stacy Moore and Ronnie Toliver provided excitement and productivity as part-time starters. Together, they passed for 2,086 yards and 21 TDs. Toliver started the first half of the season last year and Moore finished the

second half as the guy in charge.

Going into the season, it's not certain who will get the starting call. But regardless of who starts, each QB knows that he as a quality receiver he can depend on, Will Moore.

As junior, Moore developed into one of the league's elite pass catchers — 46 receptions for 701 yards, 9 TDs, 15.2 ypc.

The Tigers will do themselves a lot of good if they can manage to keep folk out of the end zone with some regularity. Last fall, they gave up more points than anybody else on the circuit (33ppg).

Seven defensive starters return, with Anthony Wallace (47 tackles) being touted as the best of the bunch.

## Prairie View A&M

Starting all over again is going to be tough for the Panthers, who return to the gridiron after the school dropped football last year because of financial woes.

Coach Ronald Beard has been charged with the task of rebuilding the Panthers from ground zero. Beard's revitalization project started during spring drills when 50 people showed up for practice. Those 50 will be joined by the 26 who have signed letters-of-intent to play for the Panthers.

PVU is top-heavy with youth. Half of the players who reported to spring drills are rookies.

Beard, however, does have an experienced quarterback. The only hitch is that he hasn't played since '88. Kevin Phillips missed the '89 season due to a fractured ankle, so he's bound to be rusty. Still, he has previously demonstrated he can handle the job. When he last played, Phillips hit on 48 percent of his passes (85 of 177) for 935 yards.

Defensively, linebacker Kyle Douglas, tackle Thomas Houston and DB Allen Richardson are expected to provide leadership and experience.

- Dan Wesley

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er who will get support from Walt Simmons, Curtis Davis and Benny Cook.

## Morgan State

It's obvious that first-year coach Ricky Diggs loves to meet challenges head-on. He inherits a team that has been hard pressed to find its way back to the winning column in recent years.

But the good news for Diggs is that he has 11 starters on offense returning.

Glenny Moore is the marquee performer at wide receiver. Moore missed most of last year due to injury. Two years ago, Moore was

one of the most brilliant receivers in the MEAC with 41 catches for 637 yards and 8 TDs.

Nathan Ayers is the team's top returning running back and Sean Nelson ranks among the circuit's best as kickoff return specialist.

The quarterback situation seems to be in the hands of Orlando Persell who is the only QB in camp with any kind of game experience.

Defensively, Matthew Steeple is the best of the front liners and Reno Lucas is rugged at linebacker. Eddie Hill and Horace Minnifield are proven vets in the secondary.

- Rolando Simmons