

MEAC FOOTBALL

A&T, Delaware State finish as co-champs

Some unexpected events occurred towards the end of the regular season which created a two-way tie for first place between North Carolina A&T and Delaware State.

At first it appeared that the Aggies win over South Carolina State had all but guaranteed them sole possession of first place. But that changed the Monday after that game when it was disclosed that Bethune-Cookman had to forfeit its victory over Delaware State (28-20 on Sept. 7) because the Wildcats used an ineligible player.

Because of the forfeit, Del State's conference record (5-1) is the same as A&T's. So the two school share the title.

Still, there was a question about who would be the MEAC representative in the Alamo Heritage Bowl opposite SWAC champion Alabama State. Since Del State beat the Aggies in head-to-head competition, some folk assumed that the Hornets would get the bid.

DSC didn't get the bid. The MEAC waived its head-to-head tiebreaker to determine a conference representative for the game in case of a two-way tie. As a result, the bowl committee was empowered to choose the team that would play in the game. Their choice was A&T.

North Carolina A&T

The Aggies didn't get the undefeated season they were hoping for. But what the heck. They'll take an MEAC championship crown and be very satisfied about it.

A&T played superb in its wins, but not so superb in its losses to Winston-Salem State and Delaware State. Along the way, these guys erased any doubts, ending the season with a 9-2 overall record for the second straight year. Given that, it's easy to understand why Aggies gridmaster Bill Hayes was the pick for MEAC Coach Of The Year honors.

For more on A&T, turn to the cover story on page 7.

Delaware State

Del State finished the year with a serious rush, winning four straight. But more importantly, the Hornets added North Carolina A&T and South Carolina State to its list of victims.

DSC downed A&T on the Aggies home grounds, 31-26. Tackle Gregory Johnson paved the way for the Hornets to rush for 325 yards. Running backs Michael Murray (three TDs) and Dakiel Short (one TD) combined to rush for 249 yards.

On defense, LeRoy Thompson wreaked havoc, registering five quarterback sacks for the day.

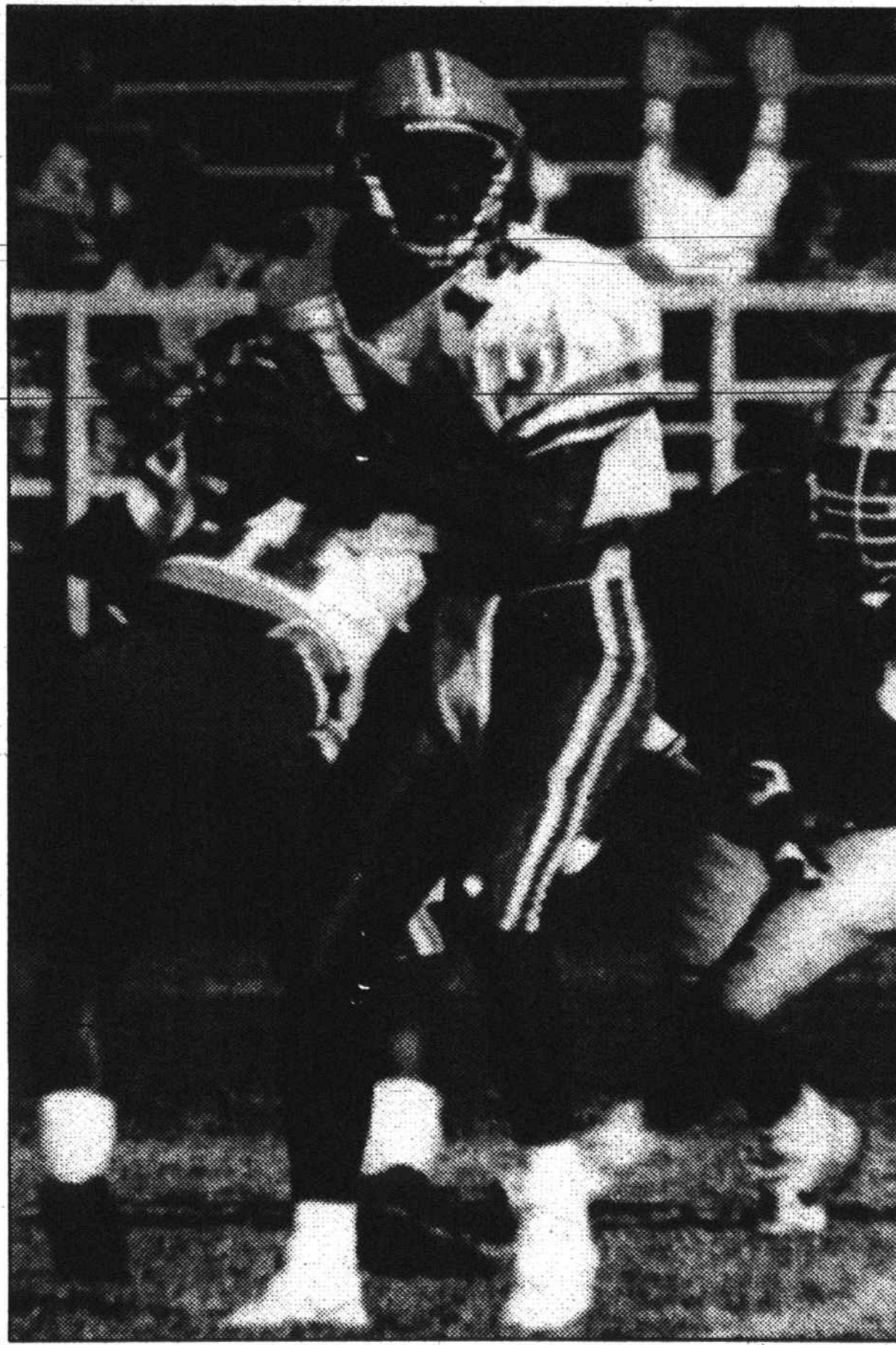


Photo by T-Lee

FAMU's Antoine Ezell bombed B-CC's secondary for four touchdown passes in this year's Florida Classic at Tampa.

The Hornets used that same type of toe-to-toe approach in dismantling a tough South Carolina State defense, 19-14. Guard Rod Milstead was the leading blocker for q Hornets front that gave the backs enough running room to generate 314 rushing yards.

DSC wrapped up the month by smacking Northeastern University (46-20) and Howard University (56-12).

Murray gained 160 yards vs. Northeastern, which put him over the 1,000 yards mark for the year. He is now No. 5 on the MEAC's all-time rushing list with 2,951 yards. Murray (nine rush TDs) ended the year as the MEAC's leading ball carrier with 1,200 yards. Milstead was once again instrumental in the game

plan with his blocking. Del State had 380 rushing yards.

On defense, DB James Redding had six solo tackles, an interception, one sack and one forced fumble.

Against Howard, Murray contributed 169 yards and a couple of TDs. DB Brian Randall picked off two passes, returning one of those for 34 yards and a score.

South Carolina State

The Bulldogs went through a rough skid last month, losing to Delaware State (19-14), Jackson State (17-6) and North Carolina A&T (49-21). Their lone win came against Charleston Southern (12-0).

In the Charleston contest, quarterback Marvin Marshall provided the final margin of victory, scoring both touchdowns for the Dogs. Defensive tackle Walt Wilson played strong, contributing 12 tackles plus a recovered fumble.

Tackle Melvin Owens and tailback Mike Johnson took center stage in the loss to Jackson State. Owens gave Johnson room to roam and he produced 123 yards on 23 carries. Robert Porcher, this year's MEAC Defensive Player Of The Year, had eight solo tackles and a forced fumble. Linebacker Henry Graham was the top performer vs. A&T with 10 tackles and one sack.

In spite of a disappointing November, the Dogs proved that they were among the fiercest defensive units in I-AA ball this year. SC State led the MEAC in four defensive categories, which included a measly 14.3 ppg (scoring) and 81.7 ypg (rushing).

Florida A&M

Except for a narrow loss to Grambling (25-22), the Rattlers got the best of it, winning three of their last four.

A&M made its year by downing rival Bethune-Cookman 46-28 in the Florida Classic on Thanksgiving weekend. QB Antoine Ezell was on target, throwing for 296 yards and four touchdowns. William Davis had only two catches, but the result was 114 yards and two scores.

Alonzo Ashwood came through with a workmanlike performance, rushing for 97 yards and one TD.

In the Southern U. game, a 24-20 win for A&M, Ezell strutted his stuff to lead his mates to a comeback win. By game's end, Ezell had completed 20 of 33 passes for 303 yards and two TDs. Chuck Duffey, the league's leading scorer in '91 (13 TDs), rushed for 95 yards and a touchdown.

Defense took the spotlight in a one-sided 55-6 win over Morgan State. Linebacker Cedric Jones (seven tackles, one sack) and cornerback Keino Taylor (four tackles, three pass break-ups, one interception) turned in the top performances.

Bethune-Cookman

The end of the year was not very good for the Wildcats, who lost league games to A&T (39-24) and Florida A&M (46-28). However, the month wasn't a total bust. B-CC journeyed to the Bahamas to play Morris Brown in the first annual Conch Bowl and walked away with a 51-13 win.

Jermajne Hall, who led the MEAC in passing yardage (2,665) and TDs (20), fired up the Wolverines for 268 yards and five touchdowns. DB Leotis McNeil

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