

How they got to Miami

Alabama State

Alabama State romped and stomped all comers during the regular season's final month of play. The Hornets showed no mercy in four straight wins, outscoring opponents 229-53 while rolling up 2,010 total offensive yards along the way.

Those numbers demonstrate why 'Bama State ended the year as the nation's fifth-ranked team in Division 1-AA with a 10-0-1 record, the best-ever in school history.

The team that carries the big sting guaranteed themselves a trip to Miami by body slamming Grambling 60-14 in the Motor City Classic played at the Pontiac Silverdome. Running back/kick return artist Paul Ashby did most of the damage with 267 all-purpose yards and three touchdowns. Ashby returned two kicks for scores (97 and 94 yards) for a total of 199 kick return yards.

Against Mississippi Valley State, a group that led SWAC in total defense, the Hornets reigned supreme 48-20. The defense, led by Emanuel Martin, forced six Delta Devils turnovers. Martin, had two interceptions in that game, which set a new ASU career record for interceptions with 17.

Offensively, Rico White dented Valley for 113 rushing yards and one touchdown.

Al State wound up its season by beating up on Alabama A&M (59-13) and J. C. Smith (62-6).

In the A&M game, the Hornets were sluggish in the first half. They trailed 13-12 in the second quarter. That was enough to infuriate the SWAC kings to blast the Dogs to the heavens. They went on to score 46 unanswered points.

Johnson C. Smith never had a chance in a game played on Thanksgiving Day. The Hornets jumped on top for a 27-7 lead at the

half. Quarterback Ricky Jones didn't play, but it didn't matter. ASU's defense forced four turnovers.

In reviewing the season, it's doesn't take a nuclear physicist to understand why the Hornets dominated in the manner they did.

For starters, Al State's offense has a number of weapons it can deploy, which tends to destroy

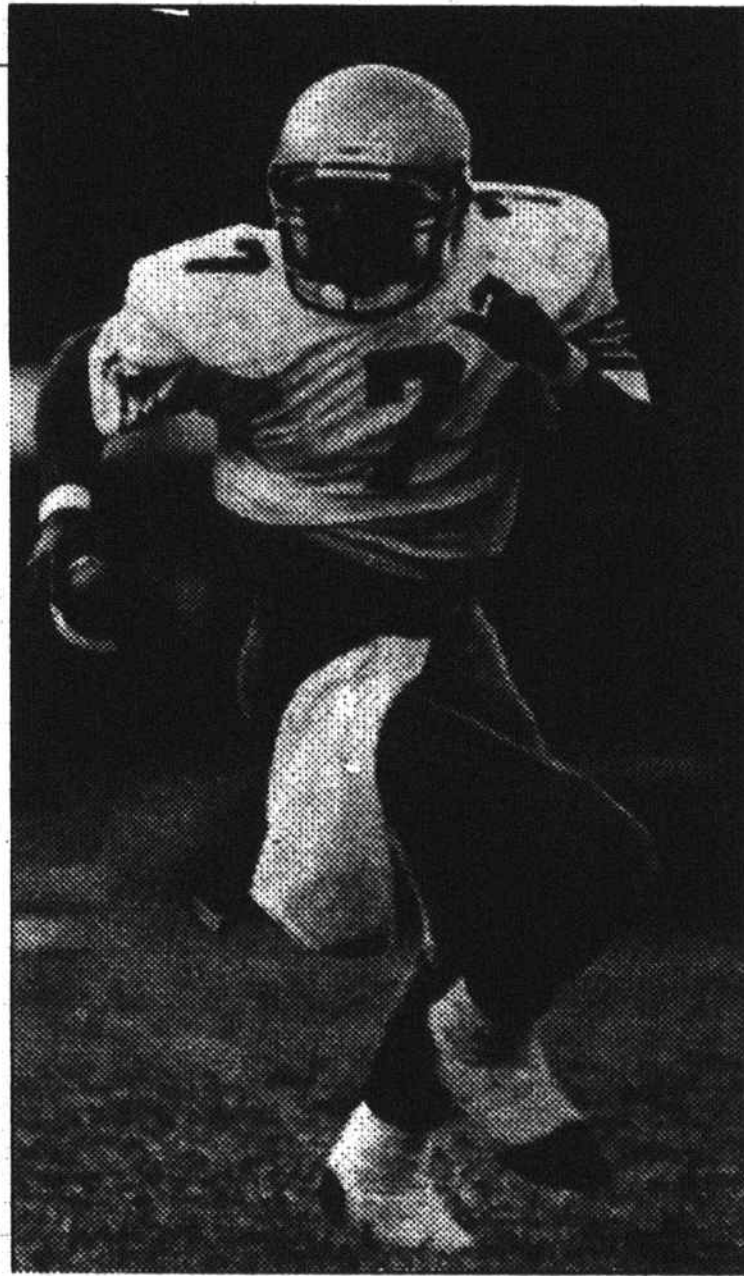


Photo by Mark Gail

Quarterback Ricky Jones is particularly troublesome because of his mobility.

enemy defenses. The Hornets have an excellent run and throw ratio — 51 percent rush; 49 percent pass. How's that for balance?

Quarterback Ricky Jones, a gifted passer who is as fast as most receivers, is the main instigator. Jones completed 53 percent of his passes for 2,042 yards and 19 TDs while throwing only seven interceptions. Jones also averaged 5.5 ypc and scored five TDs himself.

When Jones isn't running, he sets his sights on wide receivers "Downtown" Reggie Brown and Horace Brooks. Brown gets more

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North Carolina A&T

The Aggies are 18-4 over the past two years and that .818 winning percentage is not a product of freak accidents or a set of circumstances beyond human control.

Last month, A&T won two of three, triumphing over South Carolina State and Bethune-Cookman, while losing to Delaware State, a team the Aggies would

and a couple of touchdowns. Thompson's totals set a new A&T career record for TD catches (19).

Running backs Barry Turner and Mike Artis did a number on the Dogs. Turner rushed for 134 yards and a pair of TDs. He also had a touchdown catch. Artis made the most of his limited playing time, finishing with 79 rushing yards and one touchdown.

Defensively, the Aggies never let the Bulldogs get comfortable. Reggie White was the reason why, recording 12 tackles and two sacks.

A win against South Carolina State would not have been necessary for A&T if it weren't for a surprising 31-26 home loss to Delaware State.

Maynor played his usual efficient game, hitting on 18 of 33 passes for 235 yards and a TD. He also ran for a score.

But it was on defense where A&T lost ground—literally. Linebacker Rodney Edwards was ultra busy, coming through with 18 tackles. The Hornets, however, had all the right answers on that day. They had 325 total offensive yards and didn't complete one pass all game long.

At the start of the month, the Aggies took over sole possession of first place in the league when they dusted B-CC, 39-24.

Running back James White ran for 194 yards and one TD (89 yards). Kevin Little was the defensive force with 14 tackles, four sacks and a forced fumble.

The Aggies produced a 9-2 mark for the second straight year because of an elusive quarterback who has a defense that can get him the ball. A&T ranked high in MEAC scoring, rushing, and total

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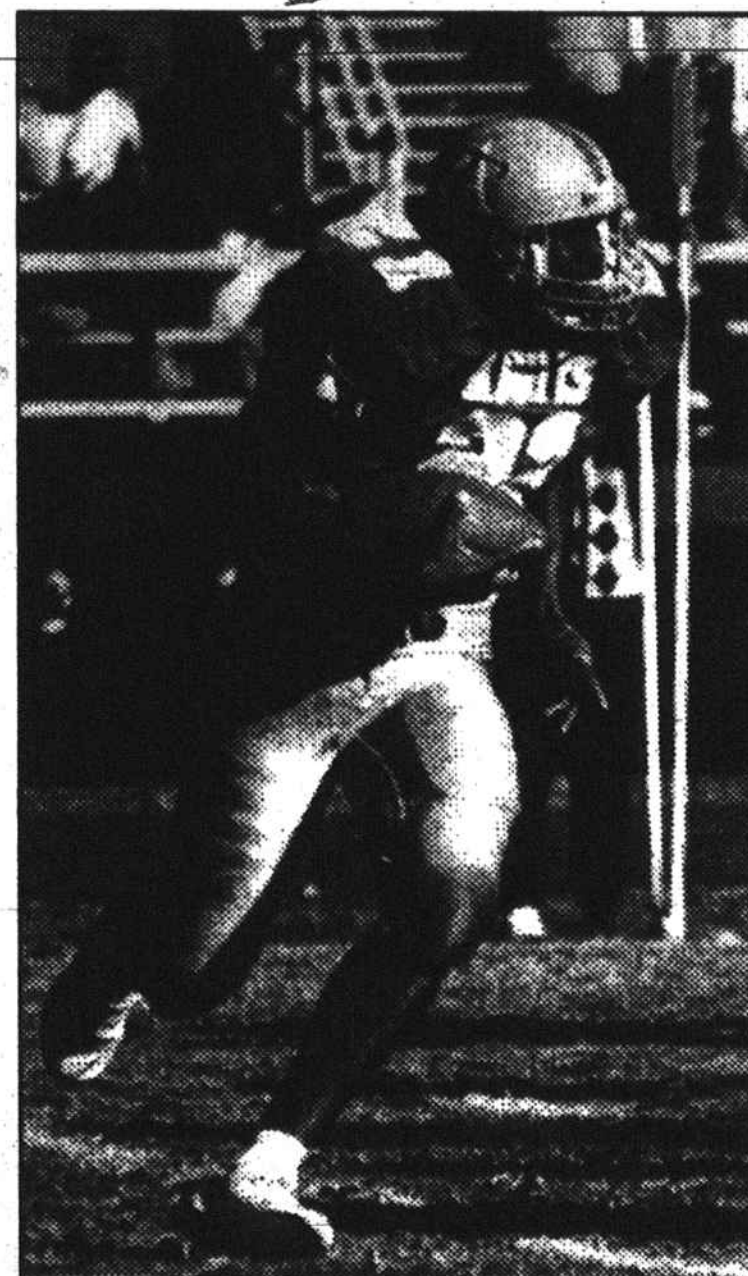


Photo by T-Lee

Barry Turner isn't the flashiest of running backs. Consistency is his forte.

eventually share the MEAC crown with.

A&T's last win was the one that had the most impact on their season. The Aggies completed their conference championship run by smacking South Carolina State 49-21 in the regular season finale for both teams.

Quarterback Connell Maynor provided all sort of problems for the Bulldogs defense, a unit that was the league's toughest. Didn't matter that much. Maynor had a hand in four scores, throwing for three and running for the other.

Tight end Craig Thompson caught four passes for 84 yards