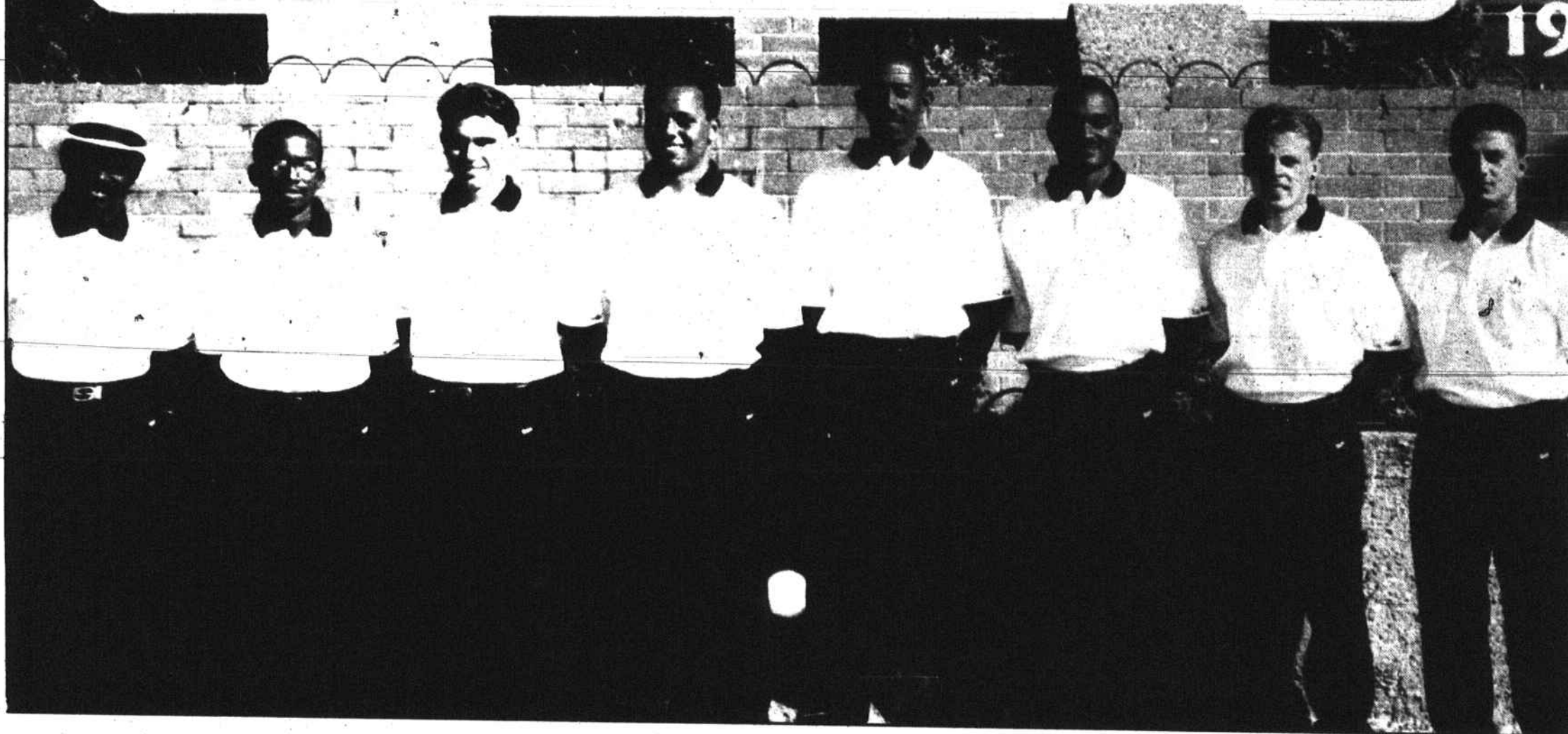


# JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY



## Payton Continues His Winning Ways

By DERRICK MAHONE

Before Eddie Payton took over the golf program at Jackson State six years ago, the Tigers had only won one conference championship. Since Payton's arrival, the Tigers have dominated the Southwestern Athletic Conference.

JSU captured its fifth straight SWAC title with a record-setting performance by senior Sam Norwood at the Santa Maria Golf Club in Baton Rouge, La.

"We went in knowing we were the best team in the conference," Payton said. "My only concern was that we might go in flat. We knew Texas Southern, Southern and Prairie View could be us if we didn't play up to our potential."

But that wasn't the case with Norwood, the individual champion, breaking two of his school records with a final round of 6-under-par 66 for a three-round total of 11-under 205 as the Tigers finished with 868. This past fall Norwood became the school's first all-American in golf.

The JSU score was 104 strokes better than runner up Southern at 972. Next came Grambling with 1,085, Alabama State at 972, Prairie View 1,120 and Mississippi Valley at 1,246.

All six of the JSU golfers made all-

tournament team. Norwood's 66 in the final round bettered his previous school record of 67 set in 1990.

"Winning is a great feeling," Norwood said. "I've been able to play on three championship teams. Winning five in a row says something about the character of the team. Most of the credit goes to coach Payton's leadership."

But the JSU team is more than just winning golf championships. Payton also stresses academics. The team has combined 3.2 grade-point average.

To insure that the team doesn't miss classes during the season, Payton usually schedules most of the tournaments on the weekend or school holidays.

"Coach is very dedicated to our academics," said Norwood, who has a 3.7 average in pre-med. "He says its as important to get victories in the classrooms as well as on the field."

Said John Wallace, who has a 3.7 average in business: "Coach deserves a lot of the credit, because he preaches that we shouldn't try to prostitute the golf program just to get free equipment. He is always on us about studying."

Payton, a former football standout at JSU, said he is trying to help prepare his players for life after golf.

"We tell the guys that 99.1 percent of

them will not play on any pro tour," Payton said. "We tell them to come to Jackson State to improve their golf game and we will help them get a degree. Most of our guys are focused on that concept."

Payton credits his teams success to a tough, competitive schedule. JSU plays in come of the more prestigious tournaments around the country.

JSU has won the National Minority Golf Championship the last three years. The Tigers finished third in the Mississippi Collegiate Championships.

"Our success is based on three things," Payton said. "We are able to recruit good student-athletes. We play a very competitive non-conference schedule and most important we have been able to generate good community support."

The community support is probably a big key for the low-funded program. Through local corporate sponsorship by Chepps Foods, Pepsi, Pizza Hut and Capitol City Beverages, JSU is able to compete on a national level.

Payton's budget without the corporate help is only \$23,000, which includes \$18,000 for scholarship money for his ten golfers.

Most of the top golf programs in the

nation have budgets exceeding \$60,000. Several other golfers either pay their own tuition, which is about \$6,000 or they are on academic scholarship.

"Corporate sponsorship is the lifeblood of our program," Payton said. "We would be in the same situation as man of the schools in our conference. We would be a golf team in name only. As long as I remain here we will have one of the better programs in the South. It is getting difficult each year. Sometimes I feel we are not getting as much support within as we are outside."

Upgrading the facilities has been another big part of JSU's success. Payton built a driving range behind the school's baseball stadium. He was also able to secure a home course for the team at one of the local private country club.

Before Payton arrived, the team practice mostly on public courses.

"The private courses have been invaluable aid to us," said Payton, a former professional football player. "In the past the courses were not accessible to us. It has made the biggest difference in the way we play. We are able to test our skills on some of the more challenging courses in Mississippi. Our golfers know if they can play on those course that they can play anywhere in the country."