

BLACK COLLEGE Sports Review

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NOTHING LEFT TO PROVE

They say he's coming back, that he'll take a year off and get away from the limelight, the allegations and the media. They say, in the end, that Michael Jordan won't be able to live without basketball.

This is hogwash. "I am very solid with my decision not to play any more basketball in the NBA," Jordan said in a news conference to announce his retirement on Oct. 6.

"I have always stressed that when I lose the sense of motivation and the sense to prove something as a basketball player, it's time to leave." There is nothing left for Michael Jordan to prove. He's done the things he said he always wanted to do.

He's left his mark on the game. He's been the league's Most Valuable Player. He's won seven straight scoring championships — something only Wilt Chamberlain was able to do. And most important, Jordan won the ring.

In fact, he won three of them. Magic could not do it. Bird could not do it.

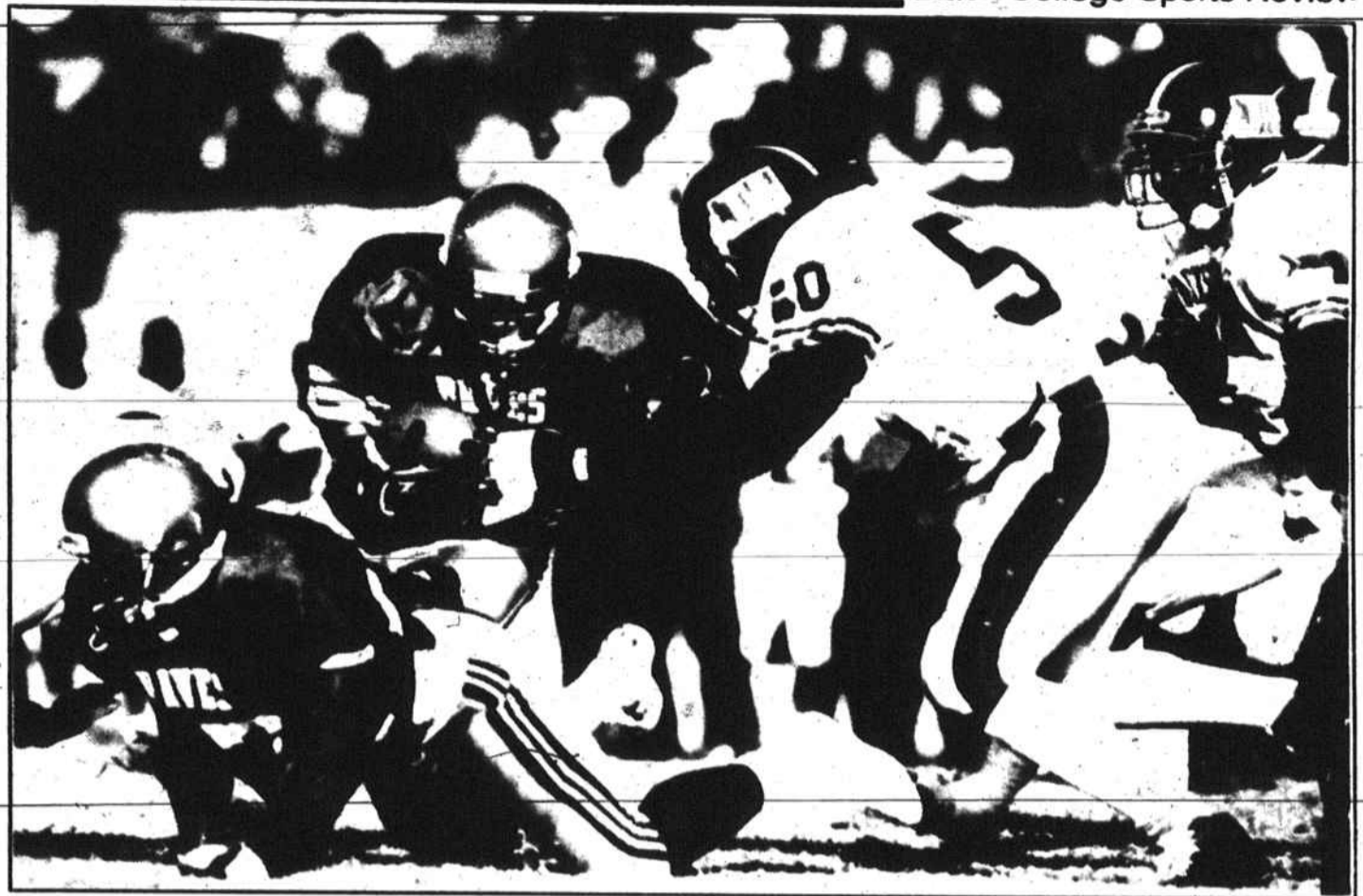
If you want to measure a player's ultimate worth by the hardware he has won, Jordan's three straight championships mean more than Bird's and Magic's combined total of eight. But Bird played with Robert Parish and Kevin McHale and Bill Walton and Dennis Johnson. Magic played with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and James Worthy.

These players are sure to go to the Basketball Hall of Fame. Jordan played with Bill Cartwright and Scottie Pippen and Horace Grant. These are serviceable pro ball players, but they are certainly not Hall of Famers.

Jordan plays in the NBA's greatest era of talent. Every night, there's another super, superstar to deal with. And Jordan elevated an otherwise normal team to three straight titles. So what's that make Jordan? (And if you think the Bulls really are a great team, check the record this year without MJ). "I have reached the pinnacle of my career," Jordan said. "I have achieved a lot in my short career. I just feel I don't have anything else to prove." There is not. So now, Jordan will go and cut his own grass, watch his children grow and spend more time with his family. His father, James Jordan, was shot and is no longer with him. Jordan looks on it positively, saying that he's happy that his father saw his last game.

If you want to be like Mike now, you'd better get a big couch and a glass of soda. Or a pair of golf clubs. We will see no more of Michael Jordan wearing a Chicago Bulls blood red uniform, jumping past one player and over another, scoring an awe-inspiring, seemingly impossible two points. Jordan, though, says this is something he's thought about for a long time. He's watched other athletes go on for too long — Ali, Erving, Mays. He wants to be remembered in his prime. And what's wrong with that?

— Langston Wertz Jr.



Jackson State #50 Marlo Perry tackles Alcorn State's Harry Brown.

JSU COACH RAVES ABOUT LINEBACKER

Jackson State coach James Carson describes linebacker Marlo Perry as one of those players that has the three main ingredients it takes to make it in college football.

"He has the heart and the desire and especially the talent," Carson said. "I've been here 16 years, and Marlo is one of the top linebackers to come through here."

Carson, who was defensive coordinator for 15 years prior to becoming the head coach last year, said Perry's ability is in the cat with Larry Werts, Jackie Walker and Darion Conner.

"He stacks up with any of the good players that have gone through here," Carson said. "He has no glaring weaknesses. He just needs to keep improving."

Perry, a 6-foot-4, 247-pound senior, said he isn't paying much attention to the talk about playing pro football.

"Personally, I have to overlook those things," Perry said. "That is not on my mind. The thing I'm concerned about is getting our team ready to play."

With the return of 10 starters from last year's defense, JSU is expected to contend for the Southwestern Athletic Conference championship.

Perry, who was an all-conference selection last year, is the pre-season pick for defensive player of the year. Last year he led the league with 108 tackles, including 66 unassisted tackles. He was second to teammate Fernando Smith with eight sacks. Perry had 16 tackles for losses.

"He is mean and aggressive on the field," senior linebacker Fernando Evens said. "Off the field he is a momma's boy."

Said linebacker Vingi Johnson, Perry's roommate: "Marlo is very important to this football team. He respects the other people on his team and is a very easy-going person off the field. On the field he is very business-like. He goes about his business and gets the job done."

Perry entered the season as one of 48 finalists for the Butkus Award, which is given annually to the top linebacker in the country. He is the only player from a historically black college and I-AA school to make the list.

Perry, a fullback and linebacker at Scott Central High, came to JSU after stellar high school career. He turned down scholarships to several Div. I schools including Southern Miss, Mississippi State, Nebraska, Alabama and Tennessee to play at JSU.

After making 69 tackles, four pass break-ups and one sack as a freshman in 1990, Perry was named SWAC Freshman of the Year. He had 15 tackles in a 28-7 Div. I-AA playoff loss against Middle Tennessee State as a freshman.

Perry's father, Jordan Perry, was a former high school coach.

"It gives him an insight into the sport," said Bill Scott, Perry's former high school coach. "His dad never pushed him, but he'd give him encouragement. He picked things up easily. Marlo did a good job no matter where we had him playing."

Carson agreed that growing up

around football was a big help to Perry.

"He was able to pick up on the little things of the game," Carson said. "He has good technique, and that has to be credited to being around football all his life."

Perry's father retired before getting a chance to coach him.

Jordan Perry was a former football player at JSU in the late 1950s. He was a big reason Marlo decided to come to JSU.

"There was no questions where Marlo was going to school," Scott said. "Both his parents went there, and they were big fans of JSU football."

Tragedy came for Perry in 1991 when his father died of complications from a kidney problem. The elder Perry died just before the Tigers played at Texas Southern. Perry played in the game and flew back home the next day to attend the funeral.

"My father instilled in me a lot of good things," Perry said. "As for me, my father helped prepare me for his death. He was sick for a long time, and he would tell me, 'Marlo, it won't be long before I pass.' He knew his lifespan wasn't going to be long. I thank him a lot for preparing me."

"When things get hard and I need that extra push, I always think of him. He was a man who became very knowledgeable in the Bible. He shared with me a lot of his knowledge, especially about life."

Perry, who runs a 4.7 in the 40-

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