

## **2006 Bayou Classic Preview**

At the outset of the 2006 college football season both Grambling and Southern set lofty goals, which included winning the SWAC Western Division and competing for a conference title. But due to injuries and inconsistency, both the Tigers (3-6, 3-4 SWAC) and Jaguars (4-6, 3-5) enter the 33<sup>rd</sup> Bayou Classic with fading hopes of just ending the season with a .500 record. Grambling hasn't played since losing to Alabama State 35-16 on Nov. 4. During that contest the Tigers amassed just 175 yards on offense and turned the ball over four times. Southern meanwhile, lost to division-leading Arkansas-Pine Bluff 45-20 on Nov. 11. Prior to defeating Texas Southern on Nov. 4, the Jaguars struggled through three consecutive losses in October that saw them turn the ball over ten times. Southern's season ends on Saturday and while Grambling still has a Dec. 2 date with Alcorn State, both teams are no doubt looking at the Bayou Classic as their championship, especially since each has won 16 games in the series.

### **When Southern Has the Ball:**

On paper the Jaguars' offensive team statistics would seem to belie their record, as they enter the game with the SWAC's fourth highest scoring offense (25.5 ppg) and third-best passing offense (183.2). However, their weakness is glaring, as they stand eighth (out of ten teams) in rush offense (109.8). Still, while running the ball is where Southern struggles as a team, their top back is also the team's most consistent offensive weapon. Junior Kendall Addison ranks fourth in the conference with 641 yards on 103 carries (6.2 average) and six touchdowns. Addison also returns kicks for the Jaguars and ranks sixth in the SWAC in total offense. Though 13 players have carried the ball for Southern the top gainers behind Addison are backup quarterbacks; redshirt freshman Bryant Lee has run 27 times for 177 yards and three TDs while sophomore C.J. Byrd has 51 carries for 143 yards and four TDs.

Junior QB J.C. Lewis (104-of-172 for 1,110 yards, 10 TDs, 9 ints.) started the season under center but, due to various nagging injuries, has only played in seven games. In his absences he was spelled by Lee (14-31-174, 2 TDs, int.) and Byrd (31-52-389, 3 TDs, 6 ints.). Regardless who has been the, QB the favorite target of Jaguar signal-callers has been 6'2", 225 pound senior Gerard Landry, who ranks in the SWAC top five in receptions and receiving yards (4.8 and 64.6 respectively) per game. His 578 yards (to go with four touchdowns) on the season are 300-plus yards more than his nearest teammate, 6'3" freshman Juamorris Stewart (18-254-1). Other top receivers for the Jaguars are sophomore Del Roberts (21-187-1) and senior tight end Brian Washington (16-207-7).

Grambling counters with a defense that has struggled throughout the season, allowing opposing offenses more than 350 yards in six games. They are the second-worst scoring defense in the SWAC (26.6) and are last in rushing defense (180.3). Still, there is a multitude of talent on that side of the ball, led by the league's eighth-leading tackler Zaire Wilborn (74 tackles, 2 sacks), senior LB Dimitri Carr (61 tackles), senior LB David Hicks (65 tackles) and senior DB Bakari Guice (2 fumble recoveries).

### **When Grambling Has the Ball:**

As was stated above both Southern and Grambling began the season with similar goals, have dealt with similar setbacks throughout the season and, for these reasons, their statistics tend to mirror each other's. Much like their upcoming opponent, the Tigers excel in scoring points (29.3 ppg, tops in the SWAC) and throwing the ball (first with 268.3 ypg). But they also struggle to run

the ball, standing ninth with 100 ypg. Yet, much like the Jaguars, one of their most consistent performers has been senior back Ab Kuan, ninth in the conference with 481 yards and five TDs on 115 carries. And much like Southern, the second and third leading rushers are QBs. Starter Brandon Landers, a sophomore, has run 53 times for 127 yards and two scores while backup QB Larry Kerlegan has 45 carries for 185 yards to go with his 33-of-51 completions for 499 yards and five TDs. No other player has gained more than 55 yards on the ground for the Tigers.

When Landers is in his comfort zone, able to look downfield to a multitude of receivers, there is no better player in the SWAC. His numbers (133-264-1,916, 16 TDs and 10 ints.) are best in the SWAC and, when combined with his numbers on the ground, he also leads the league in total offense with nearly 224 total yards per contest. Landers' favorite receiving targets are senior Henry Tolbert (40-631-3) and juniors Clyde Edwards (47-701-9) and Tim Abney (21-358-5), all of whom rank in the SWAC's top ten in receptions and receiving yards per game. Additionally, senior receiver Keantwon Gray is second in kick returns with 23.2 yard average, including a 98-yarder returned for a touchdown.

Not to beat a dead horse to death, but much like Grambling, Southern's defense gives up more than 26 points and more than 165 rushing yards per game while playing decently against the pass. The Jags are paced by junior DB Glenn Bell (64 tackles, 2 sacks), senior LB D.J. Brooks (61 tackles, 2.5 sacks), sophomore LB John Malveaux (59 tackles), LB Vincent Lands (56 tackles, 15 for loss, 6 sacks), and DB Jarmaul George (46 tackles, 5 ints.).

When looking at intangibles pay close attention to the field position battle. Southern's Breck Ackley leads the SWAC with a 45.7 yard per punt average while Grambling's Tim Manuel is second at 42.7. In addition, Southern is the least penalized team in the league with 57.8 yards per game. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Grambling's nearly 86 yards in penalties per game makes them the SWAC's most penalized squad.

*Kerry Flagg*