

### **Southern to meet Tennessee State in John Merritt Classic**

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When Southern and Tennessee State meet in Nashville on Saturday night in the John Merritt Classic, one team, the Tigers, will be licking their chops to take on another SWAC opponent after they defeated Alabama A&M 34-13 a week ago. Meanwhile, Southern will just be happy to see someone on their "level" after taking it on the chin in a 55-3 loss to the University of Houston. Couple that with the fact that Baton Rouge was hit hard by Hurricane Gustav and as of September 4, the Jaguar team had practiced only once.

The Jaguars' (0-1) only score came on a 36-yard field goal by Josh Duran in the second quarter, but there were some positives to be taken from the game. Bryant Lee, the SWAC's top passer in 2007, completed 22-of-34 passes for 182 yards and also rushed for 40 yards against the BCS (formerly Division I-A) Cougars. Additionally, junior receiver Juamorris Stewart caught eight passes for 56 yards while Curry Allen (5-32) and Corderious Gregory (4-69) were also productive receivers. All three stand 6-3 and weigh around 200 pounds, so expect Lee to look for them early and often against TSU as he attempts to exploit height and size mismatches. Southern's running game struggled mightily against Houston, but backs Kendrick Smith and Brian Threat, both weighing in at more than 200 pounds, gained valuable experience after rushing for 333 yards combined last year. In what may not be a fair assessment, the Jags gave up 615 yards (467 on the ground) against Houston but expect the unit that returns eight starters to rebound against Tennessee State. DBs Michael Williams and Joe Manning finished with 12 total tackles apiece and safety Glen Bell chipped in with 10.

The Tigers (1-0) had a very impressive showing against the Bulldogs, a team picked by the coaches to finish second in the SWAC's Eastern Division, led by senior QB Antonio Heffner (16-30, 292 yards, TD, int.) who completed passes to six different receivers. Senior Chris Johnson led the team with six catches for 127 yards; senior RB Javarris Williams also caught six passes (64 yards) while rushing for another 70 yards. Louisville transfer JuJuan Spillman caught one pass, a 65-yard touchdown, and also returned a second quarter kickoff for 94 yards and a score. Southern's defense will have their hands full as the Tigers' offense utilizes multiple weapons which are liable to line up anywhere on the field. TSU is led on defense by sophomore safety Eugene Clifford (7 tackles), linebacker Rico Council (6 tackles) defensive back Larry Clifford (3 tackles, forced fumble).

Southern won last year's meeting 41-34 but Tennessee State holds a substantial lead in the series (22-11-2).