

SWAC Championship Game

What to watch for: Look for this game to be a defensive battle. Jackson State will make it tough for Grambling to run the football. JSU has the best defense in the SWAC giving up only 233.5 yards of total offense. They also rank third in scoring defense (18.8). These Tigers are led by LB Marcellus Speaks who was named SWAC Defensive Player of the Year. Speaks led the league in tackles (105) and was tied for 2nd in tackles for loss (20.5). Teammate DE Marcus Bernard was also a first team All-SWAC selection after leading the league in both sacks (16) and tackles for loss (22.5). He also led all linemen in tackles (80). In the secondary Dominique Johnson is one of the best corners in the league and was a ball hawk with four (4) interceptions and led the SWAC in pass breakups (13). FS Malcolm Palmer was named to the All-SWAC second team.

Grambling's defense is pretty stout as well. A pair of defensive linemen lead the way. Christian Anthony and Melvin Matthews were named first team All-SWAC. Anthony, a sophomore, compiled 48 tackles, 14 for loss, and six sacks, while Matthews racked up 32 tackles, 18 of those for loss, with eight sacks. DB Jeffrey Jack led a talented secondary with 74 tackles on his way to being named to the SWAC's first team. These Tigers ranked third in total defense (266.8), but where they excel over Jackson State's defense is scoring defense, finishing 2nd in the SWAC giving up only 13.4 points per game.

Both teams have struggled at times on offense. GSU QB Greg Dillon has been pretty consistent since taking over as the No.1 quarterback for the Tigers early in the season. Dillon was named the SWAC's Freshman of the Year and is a true dual threat completing over 56 percent of his passes for 1,242 yards with 15 TDs and 7 ints. He is 4th in the SWAC in rushing (676 yards). His favorite target through the air is Nick Lewis (37-523-6). Grambling is very capable of running the ball led by Cornelius Lewis (150-686-4) and when you throw in Frank Warren (122-457-4) and Dillon the Tigers gain over 160 yards on the ground per game, good for 2nd in the SWAC. Jackson State gains just over 150 yards on the ground and like Grambling, JSU's QB Trae Rutland is a dual threat. Rutland leads the team in rushing (118-490-4) and has completed 58 percent of his passes for 1,333 yards with 7 TDs and 8 ints. He relies heavily on WR Carlos Simpson (42-374-2).

Jackson State won the meeting between the two teams 14-5 on September 20. JSU defeated a heavily favored Grambling State team in last year's SWAC championship game 42-31.