



Southern defense key in Bayou Classic victory

Jaguars win battle of Louisiana for second straight year

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NEW ORLEANS – Over the past couple of years, the Bayou Classic has not meant a whole lot in terms of post season aspirations or championship aspirations for either Grambling or Southern. And while this year Grambling was already guaranteed a spot in the SWAC Championship Game, they were also fighting to stay in contention for the Black College National Championship. For Southern, they were rebounding from a 5-6 season last year and looking to close the season out with their best record since 2003 when they went 12-1 and won the Black college crown. Both teams came in ranked in the top 10 in the Boxtorow.com/BASN Weekly HBCU Top 10 Poll; the Tigers at No. 2 and the Jaguars at No. 7.

As big a game as the Bayou Classic is, perhaps Grambling was looking past Southern and to their match-up in the SWAC championship against Jackson State in three weeks. The Tiger defense, which came into the contest ranked second in the SWAC in total defense gave up 366 yards of total offense, while gaining almost 100 yards below their total offensive yardage output per game in falling to Southern 22-13, before an announced crowd of 53,297 at the Louisiana Superdome.

Grambling (8-3, 8-1) seemed to play uninspired football for most of the game, except for a late touchdown reception by Clyde Edwards that pulled Grambling to within 19-13 with 5:29 remaining. The Tigers lost their first conference game of the season, while Southern won its second-straight Bayou Classic.

“They were better than us,” said Grambling first year head coach Rod Broadway. “They played better than us, they were better prepared and it’s embarrassing.”

In the first half Grambling started four of its five possessions with good field position, but after giving up an opening-drive touchdown, the Jaguars settled down and stopped the Tigers on their next nine possessions. Jaguars punter Josh Duran was key in the second half as his three punts gave Grambling starting field position at their own 14, 2, and 17 yard lines. He also connected on two field goals.

Southern (8-3) opened up the game putting together a methodical 9-play, 80-yard drive as running back Darren Coates gained 45 of those yards including capping off the drive with a 1-yard dive to put the Jaguars ahead 7-0. The Tigers used a mix of pass and run on the ensuing drive and Cornelius Walker’s 1-yard run tied the game at 7-7. The Jaguars came right back, moving the ball against the much acclaimed Grambling defense with ease. Late in the drive on 2nd and 12 Gerard Landry’s one-handed 27-yard catch and run from Bryant Lee kept the Southern drive alive. Two plays later Lee found Coates for an easy 10-yard touchdown reception and the Jaguars led 14-7.

There would not be a third straight score on Southern’s next possession as the Tiger defense began to settle down, forcing the Jaguars to punt, into an interception and a punt on its next three possessions. Grambling ended the half with quarterback Brandon Landers throwing an interception, and a punt as Southern held the 14-7 halftime lead.

In the second half the Jaguar defense put more pressure on Landers, the league's second best passing quarterback. He threw for 96 yards in the half finishing the day 22-of-36 for 192 yards with 1 touchdown and 2 interceptions. Lee, injured in the first half, did not play in the second half and back-up Warren Matthews was efficient completing 9-of-13 passes for 94 yards.

Late in the third, Tim Manuel's punt was blocked and went out of the end zone for a Jaguars safety and extended their lead to 16-7. Duran's 23-yard field goal with 8 minutes, 18 seconds remaining in the game further extended the Jaguars lead to 19-7. But on the ensuing possession, the Tigers quickly moved the ball down the field putting together an 8-play 67-yard drive in 2:47 capped off by Landers (7-8-67 on the drive) 27-yard touchdown strike to Edwards.

Southern (8-3, 6-3) put the game away as Matthews found Coates for 32 yards on 3rd and 2 keeping the drive alive and Duran's 37-yard field goal with 1:19 remaining gave the Jaguars a 22-13 lead and all but sealed the deal.

Coates finished the day with 107 yards rushing on 20 carries and 4 receptions for 46 yards and was named the Classic's MVP. The combination of Lee and Matthews produced 21 completions in 31 attempts for 214 yards with 1 touchdown and 1 interception. Jon Malveaux (16 tackles, 10 solo) helped lead the Jaguars defense in allowing Grambling only 253 yards of total offense.

"There have been a lot of struggles this year but my assistant coaches did a good job of keeping them focused," said Southern head coach Pete Richardson, who received a three-year contract extension on Friday. "And our seniors made sure everybody would play hard."