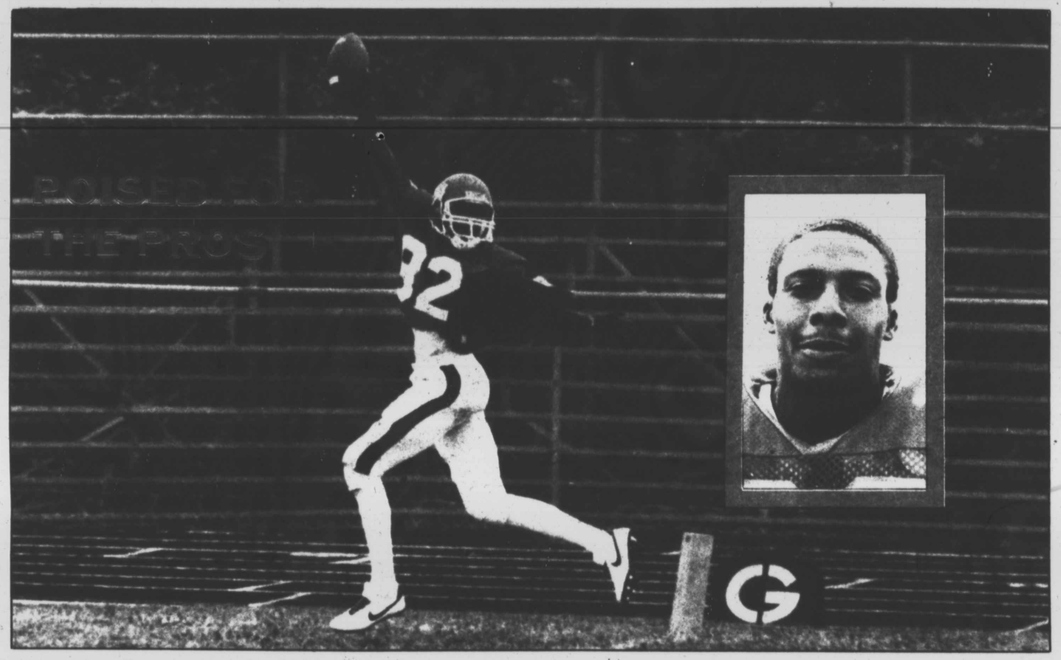
THE PROS



DelState's John Taylor is projected as the first black college player to go in this month's NFL draft.

By GREGORY CLAY
Review Staff Writer

IT'S A FAMILIAR story: Receivers from predominantly black schools are catching on in the National Football League.

Within the last 15 years, receivers Jerome Barkum and Rich Caster of Jackson State have joined the New York Jets, Frank Lewis of Grambling has become a Pittsburgh Steeler and Charlie Joiner (age 38) still plays for the San Diego Chargers.

Last year, the silky smooth Jerry Rice of Mississippi Valley State was the first-round draft pick of the San Francisco 49ers.

Of the Top 150 college seniors who are rated regardless of position in draft analyst Mel Kiper Jr.'s "1986 Draft Report," four are from predominantly black schools, two of them wide receivers from black schools. John Taylor of Delaware State is ranked the 41st-best player in the country with an 8.7 rating and is ranked ninth on the *Newsday* Top 10 wide receiver-tight end list.

Joe Thomas of Mississippi Valley State is ranked the 87th-best player with an 8.1 rating. Another wideout, 6-foot-3¼, 200-pound Calvin Nicholas of Grambling, is the 29th-ranked wide receiver. Nicholas, who has been injury-prone but has good leaping ability and is a fine all-around athlete, has a 6.0 rating and runs a 4.67 40-yard dash.

Thomas' ex-teammate Rice was the only player from a predominantly black school selected in the first round in 1985. This year, Taylor could hold that distinction.

"Some people have said some nice things about him and about his ability," said Paul Warfield, director of player relations for the Cleveland Browns and an NFL Hall of Fame wide receiver.

If Taylor isn't drafted in the first or second round, inside linebacker Jackie Walker of Jackson State almost certainly will be selected in the first two rounds on Draft Day, April 29. "He is the only player to tackle in double figures against us for four straight years," Tennessee State Sports Information Director Kindell Stephens recalled. "That says a lot in itself. He left a lasting impression on us."

Walker, who had 345 career tackles, 131 in 1985, is the 66th-ranked player in the Top 150 with an 8.4 rating. Defensive end Leonard Griffin of Grambling is the fourth player in the Top 150, and is ranked 137th with a 7.5 rating.

The rating system is as follows: 10, outstanding at his position, first-round draft choice; 9, will start his first year, first or second round; 8, potential to start his first year, second to fourth round; 7, potential to start eventually, fifth or sixth round; 6, can make a club and contribute, seventh to ninth round; 5, has some talent with size or speed, 10th to 12th round, and 4, questionable, free agent, may or may not be drafted.

Other players who are expected to be drafted include: Willie Totten, quarterback, Mississippi Valley State; Ike Readon, defensive tackle, Hampton University; Carl Byrum, running back, Mississippi Valley State; Tim Cofield, inside linebacker, Elizabeth City State; Wayne Dillard, outside linebacker, Alcorn State; Eddie Anderson, safety, Fort Valley State, and Gilbert Renfroe, quarterback, Tennessee State. One surprising note is that Danny Moore, a center from Winston-Salem State, isn't mentioned in the draft report. Thirteen players from predominantly black colleges were selected in the 1985 draft.

The 5-foot-11½, 185-pound Taylor has been timed at 4.49 in the 40-yard dash and is ranked the seventh-best wide receiver in the draft. He "rates as one of the top small-college prospects in the draft, silky smooth, super-fast wideout with cat-quick moves and jet-powered acceleration," Kiper's report says. Taylor caught 40 passes for 922 yards, a 23.1 average and 13 touchdowns in 1985.

He is a "versatile athlete, also excelling as a return specialist for the Hornets," the draft report says. "Accounted for over 3,500 career all-purpose yards and 42 touchdowns. Had an impressive week of practice prior to the Blue-Gray game, blowing past cornerbacks like they were standing still."

Thomas, ranked the 16th-best wide receiver, is 5-foot-11, 166 pounds, with 4.59 speed in the 40. He caught 163 passes for 2,274 yards, a 13.9-yard average and 28 touchdowns during his last two seasons. "He may be a diminutive wideout, but this spunky Smurf will never shy away from contact," the report says. "Has a great deal of confidence in his own ability, one of the reasons he plays with such a reckless style."

Walker (6-5, 243) is listed as the

POISED FOR THE PROS *CONTINUED*

fourth-best inside linebacker and is timed at 4.81 in the 40 with a rating of 8.4. A tremendous physical specimen, Walker, ranked the eighth-best linebacker, inside or outside, in *Newsday's* Top 10 list, "has the size to play either inside linebacker, strongside outside linebacker or possibly even defensive end," the report says. "Possesses outstanding quickness, good football instincts and is a reckless hitter, flying all over the football field.

"He is in need of sound pro coaching, appearing raw and undisciplined on film. Able to cover up his mental breakdowns with incredible athletic talent, but the same won't be true in the NFL. Needs to work on his ability in pass coverage, learning to work within the framework of the defense. Improved his stock with impressive practice sessions prior to the all-star games in which he participated." Walker also returned two interceptions for touchdowns and had eight tackles for losses in 1985.

Griffin (6-4¼, 244) is the 15th-ranked defensive end and runs a 4.85 40. He is described as a "sack artist who likes to pin his ears back and attack the quarterback. Good all-around athlete with explosive speed, allowing him to pursue the ball carrier to the opposite sideline. Can also be found 25 yards down the field, operating like a linebacker in his movements. Has trouble on plays run straight ahead, lacking the physical size and strength to control the line of scrimmage. Needs to add about 15 pounds of muscle to a thin frame."

Valley quarterback Willie Totten, 6-foot-2 and 202, seems to be shrouded in mystery. After his junior season, some scouts were touting him as a first- or second-round pick, but it seems his stock has dropped. Kiper's draft report gives him a 6.5 rating, meaning a seventh- to ninth-round pick, but this writer believes Totten will be taken in the first five rounds, despite the cloud. Totten, who runs a 4.71 40-yard dash (impressive for a quarterback), is ranked the 10th-best quarterback in *Newsday's* draft list, 12th by Kiper's draft report.

In Kiper's draft report, the negatives on Totten read like this: "Plays like a 6-foot quarterback and will have trouble throwing over charging defensive linemen at the pro level, unless he alters his motion. Ability to read defenses is also a question mark, since he worked against a low level of competition. Will have to go to an organization that will have the patience to develop his talents for three or four years, until he has learned the nuances of the quarterback's position and corrected his mechanical flaws."

The positives: "Has a chance, due to the fact that he does possess good, raw skills."

Ike Readon (6-1½, 261) of Hampton University is rated as the 14th-best defensive lineman in the "Best of the Rest" category after the Top 10 in *Newsday's* ratings.

Readon runs a 4.93 40-yard dash and has a 7.1 rating as the ninth-best defensive tackle, according to the Kiper draft report. He's a "fine small-college prospect," the report says. "Ike opted for Hampton ... after being heavily pursued by Miami (Fla.) and Florida State. Had a phenomenal junior year, totaling 11 sacks. Wasn't as productive this season, lacking the killer instinct. Readon is a short, squat pure nose tackle with above-average quickness and top strength; bench presses 505 pounds."

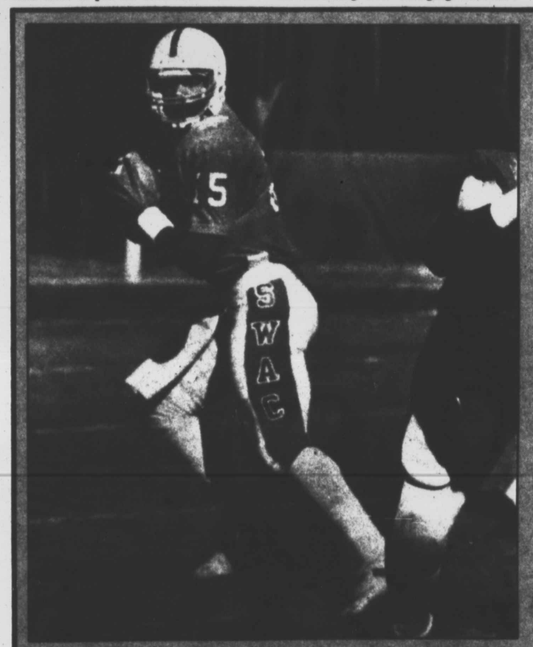
Carl Byrum (6-0, 228) of Mississippi Valley State runs a 4.66 40 with a 7.0 rating. Byrum, ranked the 13th-best fullback, rushed for more than 600 yards and caught 32 passes last season. In 1984, he gained 1,127 yards, scored 12 touchdowns and averaged 6.3 yard per carry in a pass-oriented offense.

He "has good straight-ahead speed," the report says, "but is not a shake-and-bake type, lacking an elusive quality. Runs hard between the tackles, using his power to carry tacklers three to four yards after the initial hit was made."

Byrum is a good short-yardage power back, scoring 19 rushing touchdowns the last two years. He improved his draft position with a good showing in the combine workout in New Orleans.

Tim Cofield, 6-foot-1½, 228, of Elizabeth City State, runs a 4.58 40 and has a 6.2 rating as the 11th-best inside linebacker. He made 76 tackles in 1985, five for losses, and six quarterback sacks. "I'm sure some heads

Please See Page 15



Totten: Coach Archie Cooley can't believe his star may be getting a cold shoulder from the NFL (photo by James Parker).

Is Totten snubbed?

By GREGORY CLAY
Review Staff Writer

Archie Cooley reacted as if someone had just told him he had cancer. Shocked. Disgusted. Amazed. Those kinds of adjectives describe Cooley when he heard the rumors that his star quarterback, Willie Totten, supposedly has an attitude problem.

Totten, the record-setting passer at Mississippi Valley State, is facing criticism at the most inopportune time -- just before the April 29 NFL draft. First, the word in some NFL circles is that Totten and Cooley did not get along last season, a charge Cooley vehemently denies. "I've never had a bad word with this man," said Cooley, who had just learned of the rumors through this writer's phone calls to his office in Itta Bena. "Whoever made the statement that Willie Totten and Archie Cooley didn't get along, that's an outright lie. The kid never said anything to me but yes sir."

Said Totten, who reacted in disbelief: "I don't see why that's so (the rumor starting). Coach (Cooley) and I have a personal relationship. It's like son and father. I don't see why that's so. It's not true, though. I don't see how they could say that ...."

Second, some of those same critics say Totten can't throw the deep pass. "Anybody who throws over 100 touchdown passes in a career had to throw long," said a disheartened Cooley. "Anybody who throws for over 10,000 yards in two seasons had to throw deep sometimes, or he'd be the greatest short(-yardage) passer in the history of football."

Said Totten: "I can throw the deep ball. When you face eight defensive backs, why throw the bomb? I take what the defense gives me. Why show how far I can throw the ball when the pass can get picked off?

"I can throw 65 to 70 yards with accuracy."

"Cooley steamed, 'It's embarrassing. It's embarrassing for them to make a statement that he and Cooley didn't get along and the kid can't throw long. What does the kid have to do?'"

Last season, the kid threw 39 touchdown passes, "even though he lost his top three receivers (Jerry Rice, Curtis DeBardlsbon and Cleo Armstrong)," Cooley said. The previous season, Totten threw 56

Please See Page 15