

BAYOU CLASSIC

THE

GRAMBLING-SOUTHERN FOOTBALL RIVALRY

THOMAS AIELLO



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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

BATON ROUGE

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for Pete

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In the East, college football is a cultural exercise.
On the West Coast, it is a tourist attraction . . . In
the Midwest, it is cannibalism . . . But in the South
it is religion . . . And Saturday is the holy day.

—MARINO CASEM
former head coach and athletic director,
Southern University

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Preface

The Holiday Inn in Lafayette, Louisiana, stays preternaturally cold in March, a common trait of south Louisiana businesses guarding themselves against the already-warm of early spring. It has the jarring effect of walking into an icebox.

I was there in early 2008 for the Louisiana Historical Association's annual meeting, where I was scheduled to present a paper on the first time the universities that would become Grambling and Southern played football in 1932. I was cold. I was uncomfortable from the simple glum reality of going through the motions at another interminable history conference, gatherings designed more than anything else as structured excuses for drinking and self-congratulation. A palaver, to be sure. And I was wearing a yellow shirt, starched with the newness of recent purchase, displeasing because of its feel, but also because of its color. It wasn't the gold of Grambling or Southern. It was something else. The shirt had not been my idea.

The pall of my impotent appearance was surely visible above the bright yellow below my neck as I took my seat at the head of the conference room off the hotel's main atrium. The welcome of flowers and fountains disappeared into corporate bland, and I gave my paper with all the duty of a virgin being marched to a volcano. My argument to the assembled crowd was that the fervor of the Grambling-Southern rivalry demonstrated that the identity phenomenon of state universities—often attributed to white southern conceptions of honor and loyalty, to say nothing of a violent atavism construed by some historians to be the legacy of longtime residents of the Scottish borderlands—was not necessarily a white phenomenon at all.

After I closed, and my fellow panel participants closed their own pa-

pers, we opened the floor for questions. This is a ritual normally reserved for academic nitpicking, where intellectuals with one foot still in the cloister of the university parse the intricacies of the papers they just heard and grandstand for their colleagues with demonstrations of their own knowledge of the presented topics. It, too, has the jarring effect of walking into an icebox.

But this time, something else happened. The audience was filled with scholars from Grambling and Southern. They seemed largely unconcerned with the intricacies of my argument. Instead, they delved into memories of contests past. Who was better. That time Southern quit playing Grambling for eleven years because the little college from up north beat them for the first time. I remember this one game. Oh, yeah? Well, the next season . . .

It was, by far, the best panel of which I've ever been a part. I forgot the cold, and I forgot my hideous yellow shirt. And I listened.

The conversation that followed those paper presentations demonstrated the power of the Grambling-Southern rivalry in Louisiana. Football games are, at base, cultural constructions. What we watch and root for every week is a group of twenty-two players running around on a patch of grass, adhering to a large set of unseen rules. What gives the game its power isn't the touchdowns, isn't the statistics. Instead, the power of such contests comes from the fans, from the people who watch those players running around on that patch of grass. It is the care they show for it, the meaning with which they invest it, that gives the game its fundamental hold over all of us who watch.

In each of those comments, those memories, those my-team-is-better-than-yours, was a fundamental argument that this football game matters. That football matters. That sports and all the ardent loyalties they inspire mean a great deal to those who manage to find such loyalty. They can drown out all the drudgery and frosty historical backbiting that goes on in so many hotel conference rooms in so many overly cold Holiday Inns all across the country.

That session convinced me to write this book. And I would like to begin by thanking the participants in that post-paper discussion for putting the passion that comes with this rivalry on display.

But there are others who need thanking as well. Margaret Lovecraft of LSU Press was there at that conference presentation and also found inspiration in the muddle of dissent that moved through the room. She helped me conceive the book and acted as its champion in Baton Rouge. Without her, you would be looking at hundreds of blank pages. My editor,

Maria denBoer, took the filled pages and made them make sense. In addition, the University of Pennsylvania's Mary Beth Gasman proved inordinately helpful in early research on the teams' first game. Those managing the Special Collections at Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University were indispensable. So too were the librarians of the University of New Orleans, Louisiana State University at Shreveport, the State Library of Louisiana, the University of Louisiana at Monroe, and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. I am also grateful to John Crowley, Paul Letlow, Ryan Paul Knight, Buddy Davis and Rich Hohlt of the *Ruston Daily Leader*, and Renette Dejoie-Hall of the *Louisiana Weekly* for helping with some of the amazing pictures that accompany this text, and LSU Press's Catherine Kadair, who helped me keep my sanity through the picture-collection process. Michael Martin and Mary Farmer-Kaiser patiently listened as I expressed confidence and doubt about the manuscript, such self-evaluations varying almost weekly. So too did Melissa French. Their calm nods through all the outward manifestations of my bipolar plodding were infinitely reassuring.

Grambling University and its staff were incredibly helpful throughout the process. I would like to thank Shannon Davis of the Mary Watson Hymon Afro-American Center, Ray Higgins of the Eddie G. Robinson Museum, and Glenn Lewis of Grambling's photo department for their assistance in securing pictures. Southern was not so forthcoming, but I have managed to find many great pictures outside the bounds of the university. For those interested in seeing more photos relating both to the university and aspects of this story, I would encourage them to visit the Southern University section of the HBCU Library Alliance at <http://contentdm.auctr.edu/>, an amazing site that also features a strong collection of Grambling documents and photos.

While I am doling out acknowledgments, I would also like to express my thanks to the Superdome parking attendant who let me enter the garage on Bayou Classic gameday 2008, even though I had only twenty-three dollars and the entry fee was twenty-five. In the stressful rush that is football traffic, I never got her name. I refer to her in my head as the Bayou Classic Angel, and if she is reading this now, I hope she realizes how grateful I am.

Finally, I would like to thank Jennifer Ritter, who picked out that ugly yellow shirt.

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Introduction

The Happening

By 1:30 the morning fog had dissipated, had long since given way to an early afternoon sunshine, struggling to peek through the cloudy sky left behind. And that mattered in 1974. As the full bore of newspaper columnists, pundits, and television talking heads had continually cried throughout the year, the giant new domed monstrosity in downtown New Orleans was not yet finished. So instead the game was being played at the city's edge, at Tulane Stadium, the Sugar Bowl, home to one of the state's once-premier white teams. It was available because the Green Wave was in Baton Rouge that afternoon, taking on the state's current premier white team at LSU's Tiger Stadium.

And race mattered, too, in 1974. Far away from the watery surrounds of Louisiana, in the dry heat of Davis, California, ten black Fullerton State football players had been dismissed from the team for that day's game against the Cal-Davis Aggies for skipping practices in protest. "We believe a double standard exists," a spokesman for the players argued, "between black and white athletes."¹ The civil rights movement had changed significantly in the past ten years, as nonviolent civil disobedience gave way to Black Power, as media-driven unity gave way to increasing factionalism. Militancy and the desire for some form of race equity were very much alive.

But as Charlie Bates stood in the warm Tulane Stadium locker room that afternoon, his mind was far from militancy and its discontents. He was from Birmingham. Played at Alabama A&M. Played in the pros for five seasons before coaching high school teams, before moving to Southern University as a defensive line coach in 1966, then moving on the following season to take the head job at Kentucky State. In 1972, he had returned to Southern to undertake a massive rebuilding project. His first game for

the Jaguars had been in Montgomery against Tuskegee Institute, and it was there in early September that he debuted the Wishbone offense. It had led his team to an 8–11–1 mark during his brief tenure. He had lost the season's most important game last season, but his team played well, losing 19–14.² And now here he was again, preparing to step out on the soft, manicured grass of a collegiate football field and stare across to the other sideline, into the eyes of a bona fide legend.

"People say that winning is over-emphasized," said Eddie Robinson, "but I say that a coach worth his salt cannot help himself or the athlete or make a worthwhile contribution to society if he doesn't stress winning. Not winning at all costs, but winning within the rules of the game, be it football or life itself. A man who doesn't dream of being on top isn't worth a damn." It was a good speech. Robinson had given it hundreds of times at universities, civic clubs, booster organizations, and military bases throughout the country and around the world. His 225 wins put him only behind Alabama's Paul Bryant among active coaches. He was an executive officer with the American Football Coaches Association and the National Association of College Directors of Athletics. He was a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee. The previous year he had served as the president of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). In 1974, Robinson's Grambling State Tigers football team was 9–1, with a long history of national success.³

Of course, it hadn't always been that way. When the rivalry between Grambling and Southern began in the 1930s, Southern was the dominant state power and consistently demonstrated its strength against the small two-year industrial and agricultural college from Lincoln Parish. It was in the capital city. It was a four-year institution founded in 1880. Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute, meanwhile, was in the small cotton-farming town of Grambling, far from the big city—a creation of early twentieth-century necessity.

In 1941, Normal hired Eddie Robinson to fix its fledgling football program. Three years later, in 1944, Robinson recruited fullback Paul Younger, who would become Grambling's first All-American and first successful professional player. As the decades progressed, the institution became a four-year college and the football program developed into a national phenomenon. By 1974, Grambling's schedule resembled that of a national barnstorming team more than that of a small black college from rural north Louisiana. They had played in both Yankee and Shea stadiums in New York, the Los Angeles Coliseum and Pasadena's Rose Bowl. They had played in Washington's RFK Stadium and Houston's Astrodome.

But that day, November 23, 1974, they would play in Tulane Stadium. The complex negotiations that brought the Bayou Classic to New Orleans began with the idea that this could be the most profitable neutral-site event in the history of predominantly black college sports. It would be more than a game. It would be a spectacle. There would be a parade, a beauty contest, a battle of the school's marching bands. There would be local and national celebrities. In all of Grambling's travels, its individual game attendance had never topped 65,000. But that afternoon, as Robinson and Bates trolled their respective sidelines, more than 76,000 would look on from the Tulane bleachers.

Or so the organizers said. New Orleans' *Louisiana Weekly*—the state's largest circulating black newspaper—estimated that only around 40,000 of the 76,753 who paid attendance actually arrived. The game, it argued, was boring. Southern was inept, and Grambling's 21 points came despite 3 interceptions by freshman quarterback Doug Williams. The public address system was inadequate and ruined the memorial presentation to Marion Hall, wife of the recently deceased *Louisiana Weekly* sports editor Jim Hall.⁴ Meanwhile, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* celebrated the event as a categorical success. Sure, Grambling won the game 21–0, but Southern won the battle of the bands. And didn't that make the whole thing a draw, anyway?

Most important, the Bayou Classic was a financial success. "The colleges probably made more money from this game than they've ever made in the past," reported Cissy Segall of Pace Management (the firm that organized the event). "It was an entire weekend, it wasn't just a football game. It was a happening."⁵

Of course, along with all of the pageantry, the history, and the context was an actual football game. Grambling took an early lead, scoring two touchdowns in the first quarter. Southern had opportunities to catch up in the third quarter but squandered them. One touchdown was negated by a clipping penalty. Another drive ended on Grambling's 1-yard line, with the Jaguar offense unable to put the ball in the endzone. A 41-yard touchdown pass from Doug Williams to Dwight Scales in the early fourth quarter then sealed Southern's fate. Of Williams's 177 passing yards, 126 went to Scales. A trio of Grambling running backs—Edward Martin, Mike Carter, and Dave Dixon—compiled 160 rushing yards. Meanwhile, Southern's Wishbone running attack only amassed 134 yards, and quarterback James Johnson completed only 4 passes. The game featured 7 turnovers and more than 200 yards in penalties. The *Louisiana Weekly* was right. It was ugly.

But the quality of play was really beside the point. Segall, too, was right. The Bayou Classic wasn't just a football game. It was a happening. And that happening, as it turned out, was a culmination of sorts—a theater for a variety of different cultural, political, and athletic negotiations that gave the game its meaning, its significance.

The incomplete Superdome loomed over the event like a dark antithesis to the sunshine above. In 1966, the two dominant American professional football leagues merged to form one National Football League (NFL). The merger required a federal antitrust exemption, and the legislators spearheading the effort to secure it were Senator Russell Long and Congressman Hale Boggs, both of Louisiana. To reward those efforts, NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle awarded an expansion franchise in the newly organized league to New Orleans, prompting the construction of a new domed stadium. The building of the Superdome, however, would be fraught with controversy. The pace of construction was slow. The budget for the stadium ballooned to more than \$160 million. Rozelle was worried. The Saints, after all, were playing in Tulane Stadium, too. In 1972, understandably frustrated with the progress of construction, he sent a delegation to New Orleans to track the Superdome's progress. Among the delegation members was Grambling sports information director Collie Nicholson. Seeking an opportunity to create a higher-profile (and, thus, a higher-revenue) game with Southern, Nicholson used his position on Rozelle's advisory delegation to begin lobbying for an annual Grambling-Southern football game in the new stadium. This effort would eventually culminate in the Bayou Classic, but it certainly wasn't able to speed construction of the Superdome. The venue wouldn't open until 1975.

The city and state politics that led to the stadium debacle had also led over the years to many racial missteps, from casual, institutionalized racism to overt segregationist bigotry. Race politics had always played a role in the Grambling-Southern football game, and it always would. But it was never as simple as "racism" or "segregation." New Orleans was home to tumultuous race riots prompted by the forced integration of the city's public schools in 1960. It was home to Leander Perez's Greater New Orleans chapter of the White Citizens' Council. But it was also home to substantive negotiations between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the New Orleans Public Service Company, which led to the peaceful integration of streetcars and buses in 1958. It was home to the University of New Orleans (UNO), created in the late 1950s as a fully integrated branch of LSU.

State and local politics saw similar contradictions. For every segregationist governor like Jimmie Davis, who infamously rode a white horse up the steps of the state capitol to symbolize the dominance of the white race, there was an Earl Long, who was responsible for the UNO legislation and the registration of tens of thousands of black Louisiana voters. Grambling was in the rural northern part of the state, traditionally the home to the bulk of the state's racism. The school played its first game against Southern in the northeastern cotton hub of Monroe in 1932. Thirteen years prior, the town had been dubbed the "lynch law center of Louisiana." But even though Monroe's reputation would suffer (and in many ways still suffers), the baseball season that preceded the Grambling-Southern football game witnessed the Monroe Monarchs (a local Negro Southern League team) reach the Negro World Series, with half the grandstands of every home game reserved for enthusiastic white fans.

Racial politics, then, was less a state of being than a contract continually being renegotiated. And so the football games between the state's two dominant historically black universities would be reflections of race relations in Louisiana and the nation as a whole—demonstrating in their spectacle, their "happening," the current status of that negotiation. In the late 1960s, Eddie Robinson decided to integrate the football team by offering a scholarship to white California quarterback Jim Gregory. And the success of Grambling's "White Tiger" would reverberate. Southern's football team soon experimented with integration. In 1970, Grambling would start a ten-year student exchange program with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, a predominantly white school. In 1996, the schools would both start white quarterbacks in the Bayou Classic.

Still, these divisions between white and black are somewhat unsatisfactory. Both of the participating universities, of course, were predominantly black. But blackness in and of itself did not stand as an arbiter of equality. Southern was urban. Grambling was rural. Southern was from Catholic, wealthy south Louisiana. Grambling was from Protestant, impoverished north Louisiana. Southern had a long, storied academic legacy. Grambling rose from primary and secondary education to agricultural and normal training to four-year state college legitimacy throughout the twentieth century's first half. Even at the first Bayou Classic in 1974, members of the Southern band celebrated their victory over Grambling's band by chanting, "Go back, go back, go back to the woods."⁶

Not only were there cultural differences between the two schools, but there were also cultural differences between the students and faculty of

each institution. College students throughout the country saw the cloister of bureaucracy as representative of the destructive national authoritarianism that bred segregation, poverty, and Vietnam. Louisiana's historically black universities were no different. The 1972 Grambling-Southern game, in fact, would be canceled because of student political unrest on Southern's campus.

But coverage of the 1974 Bayou Classic provides one more race caveat still. The *Louisiana Weekly*—the newspaper that found so many problems with the game—was the city's black weekly. The *Times-Picayune*—the newspaper that found so many elements of the weekend to laud—was the city's mainstream daily. Traditional race analysis, particularly for the tumultuous 1970s urban South, would probably expect something different. The black press historically trumpeted contests such as the Bayou Classic to supplement the silence of the white mainstream media. That happened in 1932. But it didn't happen in 1974.

So color, time, region, age, and affiliation all played a role in creating the context for Bayou Classic games. So, too, did money. In 1932, Southern defeated Grambling 20–0 in Monroe's Casino Park. The teams in 1974, like those in 1932, played a neutral-site game. There was a shutout. But the stakes and the audience had changed, as more than 76,000 people, a weekend of game-related festivities, and high-dollar media revenue gave the game a newfound financial significance. In 1990, the schools signed a broadcast contract with NBC, and the game remains the only annual football game between historically black universities on national broadcast television. New Orleans, too, sees profit from the rivalry. The 2004 Bayou Classic, for example, grossed New Orleans approximately \$200 million, making it the city's fifth most lucrative event of the early century.

For most fans, though, affiliation is the only category that matters. Southern's state dominance of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s gave way to Grambling's national notoriety of the 1960s and 1970s. Grambling got the best of Southern in the 1980s, Southern dominated the series in the 1990s. The schools played each other evenly for most of the twenty-first century's first decade. In a 2009 article, *Sporting News* listed the game as the state's most heated, most important rivalry, equal to Alabama's Iron Bowl, Mississippi's Egg Bowl, Oklahoma's Bedlam series, and Oregon's Civil War. But it is, at base, the same state rivalry it was in 1932. "To appreciate the rivalry," noted Eddie Robinson, "you have to realize Grambling and Southern fans are close friends, as well as relatives."⁷ It's an important point. And true. But despite Robinson's overtures, those friendships and blood ties fundamentally change on game day. No Jaguar fan makes

the trip to the Superdome just to visit with family and friends. He goes to see the Tigers lose. To urge Grambling fans to “go back to the woods.”

Robinson was tired after the 1974 Bayou Classic, but he dutifully stayed at the press conference, answering question after question about his team’s victory. “I think it’s a plus for the two colleges that we could come here, in this city and rival some of the older institutions, and this is significant,” he said. “It’s possible, in its own way, this game could be history-making, because this may be the largest crowd ever to witness a black football game. It may have meant more to me than to [Charlie] Bates because I’m from Louisiana and can remember playing when we didn’t even have stands and sometimes fields of our own. It would have been pretty difficult to figure then coming to this Sugar Bowl and packing it.”⁸

The Bayou Classic is the most significant in-state football rivalry in Louisiana and the most significant historically black football rivalry in the nation. What follows is the story of the game and its role as Cissy Segall’s “happening.” It tracks the development of the schools, the teams, the bands, and the fans, and it frames them as elements of that culmination—that theater for cultural, political, and athletic negotiations. What follows, in other words, is not a history of the game. It is a history of the game’s meaning.



Competitive Disadvantages

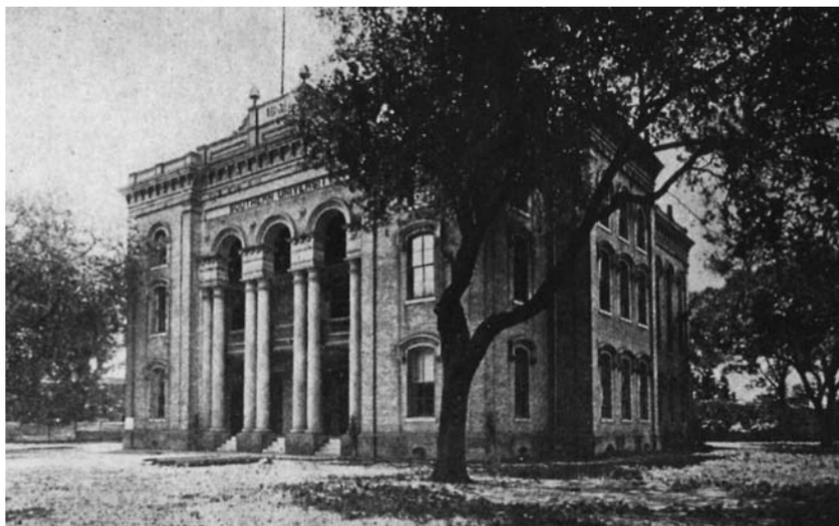
There had been guns. Plenty of guns. And death. The Civil War had freed black Louisiana, but the promises inherent in the idea of freedom didn't follow. The state's regimented Black Codes and convict-lease system still provided the tools by which white Louisiana maintained its hegemony. In 1866, police fired into an unarmed crowd of protesters at the state's Constitutional Convention, leaving thirty-seven dead and dozens more wounded. It was slavery by any other name.

The federal government responded by limiting the voting rights of former Confederates and enhancing those of the newly freed African American population, ushering in Louisiana's first Republican government in 1868. The state had a black majority that year, and it welcomed Reconstruction with both praise and desperate cries for help. It was here that the rudiments of modern black education developed. The federal Freedmen's Bureau promoted secondary, normal, and industrial education in the former Confederate states, and Louisiana responded by formulating a slipshod but relatively sincere attempt at implementation. When the postwar Constitutional Convention met, black delegates urged educational improvements, noting that black illiteracy topped 40 percent in New Orleans and was even higher in rural outlying areas, where there wasn't a significant free black population prior to emancipation. But while the government did create Union Normal School in New Orleans, its efforts were otherwise focused squarely on elementary and secondary education. Three small private colleges—Leland University, Straight University, and New Orleans University—all opened in the early 1870s, largely the creatures of northern religious investment. Leland, for example, was sponsored by northern Baptists, who used the school in the years following Reconstruction as the flagship of fifteen primary education academies throughout the

state. Each affiliated academy then funneled students to Leland, which provided secondary, normal, and college courses. The network existed entirely independently of the state government, which saw the school as “over-bookish.” Black education should train students for work, the state argued, not for higher thinking. When white legislators had their chance to once again dominate the legislature, they would try to create a school better suited to the perceived needs of their black charges.¹

Southern, unlike its private forebears, would be a creature of Reconstruction’s demise. As a component of the Compromise of 1877, which gave the presidency to Ohio Republican Rutherford Hayes, the federal government removed the last vestiges of martial law from Louisiana. Worried about the legacy of black Louisiana’s Reconstruction political power, white Democrats courted the support of former African American lieutenant governor P. B. S. Pinchback. Governor Francis Nicholls would support black education if Pinchback supported Nicholls. Pinchback agreed, and as a member of the 1879 Constitutional Convention’s Committee on Public Education, he initiated and passed the article providing for a state-funded black university in New Orleans. As promised, Nicholls gave the appropriation his endorsement. Southern University opened the following year (1880).²

In 1914, Southern moved to Scotlandville, five miles north of Baton



Prior to its move to Scotlandville, Southern University had its home on Magazine Street in New Orleans. Founded in 1880, the campus would move west in 1914.

Photo courtesy State Library of Louisiana



P. B. S. Pinchback was integral to the development of Southern University's original New Orleans campus. The former lieutenant governor also briefly served as the nation's first African American governor following the impeachment of Louisiana's Reconstruction-era governor, Henry Clay Warmoth.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection, LC-BH826-3467

Rouge. The possibility had been debated for five years. Joseph Samuel Clark, president of the Louisiana State Colored Teachers Association, first broached the subject of moving the state's public university to a location more accessible to the predominantly rural black population of Louisiana. After being named Southern's president in September 1913, he began seeking new locations for the school. His first choice, ironically enough, was to move the campus to the small north Louisiana town of Grambling, where a fledgling industrial school already existed. White resistance kept Clark away, and eventually Scotlandville was chosen from three potential locations on the outskirts of Baton Rouge. Various controversies and

disagreements ensued, largely concerning the cost of funding the move, but eventually the state government sanctioned the endeavor, adding a significant agricultural component to the university's mission now that it would be housed in a rural setting. Clark was satisfied with the school's new home, but the initial trials of the university move took their toll. Funding and facilities were inadequate in the new location, leaving Clark and the board of trustees to scrounge for private donations to begin the necessary addition projects soon after the new school opened.³

The successful reputations of Clark and Southern grew symbiotically. At its opening, the "new" Southern enrolled seventy students, featuring practical education in the mold of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Clark traveled to Tuskegee and similar universities to study their practice and actively recruited faculty from all over the country. Funding was a constant problem and white education always received the bulk of state funds, so Clark solicited the aid of philanthropic endowments such as the Julius Rosenwald Fund to boost the school's coffers. By the 1920s, his work had paid off. His school was accredited, was attracting new faculty, and was generally recognized as the leading black educational institution in the state.⁴

Clark was not only an education activist and president of the university. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover appointed him chairman of the Combined Colored Relief Forces for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas in the aftermath of the devastating 1927 Mississippi River flood. He served the U.S. Department of Education as an advisor on "Negro Colleges in America." When Hoover became president, Clark began to receive federal special commission appointments. Southern, meanwhile, became the most important black institution in the state. Baton Rouge had grown, and continued to grow, spilling over its borders and getting closer and closer to Scotlandville, giving the school far more urban advantages than it had originally expected. Shelby Jackson, state superintendent of public education, estimated in 1960 that from 1924 to 1936, "seventy-five percent of all negro schools, fifty percent of all principals, eighty percent of all home demonstration agents, ninety percent of all agriculture workers in the State were graduates of Southern." He also noted that the majority of black professionals, doctors, and nurses had attended Southern as well.⁵

The status of Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute in the early 1930s was far more tenuous. It was a twentieth-century creation with twentieth-century problems. There was, above all, the Depression. And Normal lacked Southern's legacy and stature, making it difficult to compete with its older counterpart for scant funds from an all-white legisla-



J. S. Clark, former president of the Louisiana State Colored Teachers Association, oversaw Southern's move from New Orleans to Scotlandville, and became Louisiana's most influential African American in the process. This statue marking his contribution to Southern University rests in front of the campus administration building.

Photo taken by author

ture. Historian Michael Hurd has described the early situation of Normal as a “student body of rural poor [in] the shadow of elitist all-black Southern University.” That it was. But the geneses of Normal and its hometown were rooted in their rural natures. Grambling began as a settlement of former slaves following the Civil War. Freedmen in north Louisiana—most from neighboring plantations outside of Ruston—bought small tracts of land from their former masters and established a farming community designed to stave off the harsh realities of Reconstruction and Bourbon Louisiana. In 1896, reformer and farm relief organizer Lafayette Richmond convinced Grambling's residents to found the North Louisiana Colored Agricultural Relief Association Union. It was the relief association that decided the town needed industrial education, and to that end, early



Charles Adams was selected by Booker T. Washington to help create a school in rural north Louisiana. Adams would ultimately hire Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones, who would later take over his position as president of the institute.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

in 1901, Richmond and other leaders wrote to Booker T. Washington at his Tuskegee Institute, asking for a qualified candidate to help them establish and operate a school. Washington chose recent graduate Charles Phillip Adams.⁶

Adams arrived in August and opened the new Allen Green Normal and Industrial Institute, three teachers strong, soon after. Internecine disputes between board members and Adams led to a split four years later, prompting Adams and his supporters to relocate the college to Grambling's present-day location. There, in 1905, opened the North Louisiana

Agricultural and Industrial School.⁷ The school operated on private funds until 1912, when funding was taken over by the Lincoln Parish school board.⁸

In all of its various incarnations in these early years, Normal was a two-year institution, but Adams devoted himself to the institute in much the same way Clark did with Southern. He assembled a board of trustees and reached out to powerful whites to serve on it, currying favor with the powerful in a decidedly racist area. Adams wasn't able to reach very far for faculty, but using his connections with the parish school board, he ensured that the number of teachers grew with the school's enrollment. But by the mid-1920s, it seemed that Normal was becoming a victim of its own success. With students coming in from outside Lincoln Parish, the school board balked on providing funds for more teachers. Adams knew that if the school was going to sustain its growth, it would need to become a state institution.⁹

In 1928, Huey Long was elected governor. Robert B. Knott was elected state senator for a district that housed Lincoln Parish. After Adams convinced Knott to sponsor legislation making the school a state institution, both lobbied Long, using as a carrot the political support of black north Louisiana. Long agreed, and in 1928, the now-named Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute became a state college. Still, though the institute fell under state auspices, the state provided no funding. The Lincoln Parish school board still purchased textbooks. The faculty and students pooled money to buy athletic equipment for the football team, and what funds they did provide proved inadequate to the task of fully outfitting the squad. As of the fall of 1932, the semester of Normal's first football game against vaunted Southern, the institute did not yet have full water and electric facilities. The state provided a \$9,000 appropriation that year, the first of any such funding to reach Grambling, Louisiana, but more was needed. "One year the state simply left us out of the budget," said Calvin Wilkerson, a 1932 graduate. "They said, 'Sorry, we forgot. Do the best you can.' So, the faculty just stayed and worked for nothing."¹⁰

State spending on Grambling's Institute was far from rare for Louisiana's white legislature. During the 1929–1930 school year, for example, Louisiana's per capita expenditure for white students was \$40.64. For black students it was \$7.84. Nevertheless, the state's black schools made significant progress. In 1890, the black literacy rate in Louisiana was 27.9 percent. By 1930, it was 76.7 percent. But as the funding numbers shrank and the literacy rates rose, football remained a constant.¹¹

Though the two-year school was smaller and younger than the mighty



An early Allen Green baseball team. Participation in sports was as old as the university itself.

Photo collected by Thelma Smith Williams and reproduced courtesy Grambling State University Archive

four-year Southern, and though it was located far from the big city in the small cotton-farming town of Grambling, it managed in 1926, two years prior to its conversion to a state institution, to field its first football team and form the Tiger Marching Band. The architect of Normal's fledgling athletic program was Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones. Charles Adams hired Jones, a 1925 graduate of Southern, to teach and coach at the institute. But there was, as of yet, no team. Jones was responsible for culling a group of players, finding equipment, even piecing together the rudiments of a marching band. Of course, with inadequate academic funding, athletic funding was even scarcer, generally running off private and faculty donations.

Athletics found its way into university life even earlier at Southern. The state university joined an intercollegiate baseball league while still in New Orleans with its three private counterparts—Leland, Straight, and New Orleans—but chronically failed to produce any nineteenth-century athletic success. The new Southern University at Scotlandville revived baseball in 1916, but the effort was overshadowed by another development that season. In 1916, Southern began playing football. In its early development, the team played local high schools as well as the private black colleges in New Orleans. But as the years progressed, Southern's ability—and thus its state stature—blossomed. The football team had four one-loss

seasons between 1923 and 1930. In 1928, the school's board hired Brice Taylor, a former offensive guard at the University of Southern California and the Trojans' first All-American, to coach the team. The hire only bolstered the program's status and helped lead in 1931 to Southern's first undefeated season. By the early 1930s, Southern was the state's major power, the grandfather of Louisiana's African American academic institutions. As such, it became the pride of the state's black population, serving the traditional role that larger southern state universities played for the white population—a source of identity for groups with few cultural, economic, or political advantages.¹²

It was a rare phenomenon for black universities.

Organized intercollegiate athletics at historically black colleges began in the 1890s. The first recorded game between North Carolina's Livingstone and Biddle colleges was played on December 27, 1892, and the sport's popularity grew quickly. Rivalries soon developed between Howard and Lincoln universities, between Atlanta and Tuskegee universities, but the early development of black college football did not include the state-loyalty component that was common for the large white southern state universities. The contests were disorganized, the talent and game knowledge of the players was substandard. The mainstream (white) press either ignored the games or treated them with overt cynicism. "When competent physical directors and equal training facilities are afforded the colored youth," cried black commentator Edwin B. Henderson in 1911, "the white athlete will find an equal or superior in nearly every line of athletic endeavor." Those training facilities would come slowly, hurt particularly by inadequate funding from white southern congressmen. But things were beginning to change. That same year, Henderson chose the nation's first black All-America football team. In 1912, the Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) became the first athletic conference for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), followed by the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) in 1913.¹³

Those conferences were situated in the American Southeast, but even with their litany of disadvantages, they were still in a far more advantageous position than their counterparts west of the Mississippi. In 1920, six colleges from Texas formed a conference of their own, the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC). Southern University was a common non-conference opponent for member schools such as Wiley, Paul Quinn, and Bishop colleges, but would not officially join the group until 1934. Instead, the school from Scotlandville joined Straight University, the University of New Orleans, and the Roman Catholic Xavier University of New Orleans

in the Gulf Coast Athletic Association, a conglomeration of small schools in Louisiana and Mississippi.¹⁴

But Southern was the state's largest black draw, an African American counterpart to Tulane and LSU. Still, Tulane and LSU were white, Southern was not.¹⁵ Despite its stature among black Louisianans, the Scotlandville campus underwent much the same athletic funding campaigns as Normal just to ensure the team was outfitted properly. There was a glaring discrepancy in facilities, funding, and coaching between the white and black college teams, fed by the Jim Crow assumptions plaguing a Louisiana legislature responsible for doling out the money for such endeavors.

Southern, however, kept playing. Normal did, too. The importance of college football to southerners—of any color, of any cultural heritage—should be obvious in these spending discrepancies. Even with a poor student body and inadequate state funding, Normal and Southern both maintained football teams. Education was there for those few with the brains, resolve, and money to see it through. But football: that was for everyone.¹⁶

2

The Direction of Depression and Progress 1932-1939

In the 1920s and 1930s, Americans celebrated November 11 with parades and parties. With bright-colored streamers and the soft, patient reflection that comes from winning a major war. But throughout the country—and throughout the South in particular—they also celebrated with sports. Armistice Day was for football. Special high school and college games were scheduled throughout the country for the national holiday.

On Armistice Day 1932, the Southern University Bushmen football team left Baton Rouge and traveled to Monroe, Louisiana—a burgeoning cotton and natural gas hub in the northeast corner of the state—to play the Tigers of Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute for the first time.

The week prior to their Armistice Day contest with Normal, Southern lost a game to the Alabama State University Hornets in Montgomery. It was, reported the school's newspaper, "Southern's first defeat in two years and the second in three years."¹ And so, flush with success and following the lead of LSU, Southern University embarked on a practice of playing select games in Shreveport, usually corresponding with the late November state fair. In 1932, the Bushmen, like LSU's Tigers, went to Monroe, but unlike LSU, they couldn't play in Brown Stadium, the new home of Monroe's Ouachita Junior College football team. Black traveling baseball games, boxing matches, and other events all took place in the city's Casino Park.

Of course, Grambling was much closer to Monroe than was Baton Rouge. Founded in 1820, Monroe developed into the largest city in the northeast portion of the state and a supply and shipping center for the region's cotton farmers. The bulk of its prosperity, however, came from

gas. Home (at alternating intervals, ever competing with a similar formation in Texas) to the largest natural gas field in the world, Monroe became a hub for carbon black and other petroleum derivatives as well. It brought hundreds of jobs for black and white workers in the region, and it brought oil and gas men from throughout the nation. One of them, entrepreneur Fred Stovall, spent his profits and his free time building a black baseball team, the Monroe Monarchs, first using his gas-worker employees, then moving on to purchase the talents of some of the country's best players. He built Casino Park for his team, but also for the larger black community—partly for profit, but partly because he employed so many black workers.²

The ballfield was situated just outside of Monroe's city limits in what had come to be called the town's Booker T. Washington district.³ In early November, baseball season was over and the stadium had been commandeered—as it customarily was—by the Monroe Colored High School football team.⁴ Baseball, however, still lingered. The 1932 season saw Stovall's Monarchs reach the Negro World Series with the Pittsburgh Crawfords, giving Monroe and Casino Park the broadest national and state sports exposure that either had ever received. It was, more than likely, that exposure that convinced promoters to bring the Southern-Normal football game to Monroe. (That and the fact that Normal simply didn't have the facilities to house Southern's rabid fan base.)⁵

"All eyes will be focused on the grid battle to be played Armistice Day," wrote Ralph Jones in the *Shreveport Sun*, "between the mighty Bushmen



The 1932 Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute football team was the first Grambling team to take on vaunted Southern. The underdogs lost to the Bushmen 20–0 in Monroe.

Photo collected by Thelma Smith Williams and reproduced courtesy Grambling State University Archive



Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones served as football and baseball coach, professor, and ultimately president of the north Louisiana university, a position he would hold for more than forty years.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

of Southern University and the Tigers of La. Colored Normal.” Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones was not a reporter for Shreveport’s black weekly. He was Normal’s head football coach, and his report made it clear that he thought his team capable of giving the Scotlandville powerhouse a run for its money. He noted that his team ran the “famous military shift, made so by the footballers of New York University,” which would counter Southern’s “squirrel-cage shift,” used to greatest effect by the University of Southern California. Both offenses were variations of the single-wing that dominated the football thinking of the era’s college coaches. Jones cited the punters of both teams as being valuable strengths, arguing that “the outcome of the game may depend largely upon the toe of one of these great punters.” In a final admission, Jones acknowledged (in the third person) that he was, in fact,

a Southern alum, “but he expects to come out of the battle with the scalp of the Bushmen tied to his belt.”⁶

And then there was silence. Black newspapers of the era, working with severely limited budgets, did most of their local sports “reporting” by publishing notices sent from coaches, managers, and athletic directors. Jones wasn’t interested in touting an outcome that didn’t match his pregame enthusiasm. Southern University’s school newspaper reported on the contest prior to the game. “November 11, Armistice Day, will find the Bushmen in Monroe, facing Coaches Jones and Joyner with their Louisiana Normal aggregation. This game will be played at night and the business fans of the City of Monroe and neighboring towns will have an opportunity to witness the gridiron battle.” But the paper, published every other week, used the space allotted for football in its next edition to lament the school’s loss to Alabama State the week prior. Though it acknowledged the Normal game’s existence, it did not report on its outcome.⁷

The teams met at Monroe’s Casino Park as scheduled on November 11 in front of what was, most probably, a packed house. (The game was not, however, played at night, as the park had yet to install lights.) The stadium had remained full for baseball season, and Normal’s proximity and Southern’s largesse surely made the contest compelling for the locals. Normal did its best to mimic the offense of NYU. Southern was more successful at running through the paces of USC. Halftime of the contest more than likely included a “rabble,” a common feature of early twentieth-century black football contests where students of each university joined their respective band on the field—many with their own instruments—to dance and perform for those in the stands.⁸ But Jones’s obscure reference on the sports page of an obscure black weekly is almost the only evidence that the game existed. Monroe’s white dailies didn’t cover the game, and Southern University coach Cliff Purnell did not feel the need to write his own promotional article. He didn’t have to. His team was the darling of the state’s black community, en route to a 3–3–1 season. The Bushmen entered the Armistice Day contest having trounced their only other state opponent, New Orleans University, 41–0, to open the season.⁹ Normal, meanwhile, played local black high schools more often than it played universities. Ralph Jones’s confidence was not able to compensate for the discrepancy in talent and experience. The Bushmen won 20–0.¹⁰

They repeated the performance in 1933. But the Bushmen’s second 20–0 victory over Normal would come amid dire circumstances. Purnell’s Bushmen were not having the sort of season that Scotlandville fans had come to expect. The Alabama State Hornets managed to shut out South-

ern's offense in a mid-October road game in Montgomery. The Bushmen barely rallied to take a game against New Orleans. Then another shutout loss to Prairie View. Purnell's squirrel-cage shift required consistent back-field motion to create confusion before the play, and the seeming complexity of the formations led to a series of procedure penalties that hurt the team's chances to score. A late-season victory over Xavier gave the Bushmen a share of the championship in the tiny Gulf Coast Conference, but the quasi-championship did not meet the fans' lofty expectations for the season.¹¹ The burden on Southern to represent and defend the state's broader black population was unlike any other in African American college sports at that time. And the topsy-turvy 1933 season was not the representation fans were looking for.

But concerns about the state's struggling black football team were tempered by the broader, more dire realities that existed in 1933. In every issue, the *Louisiana Weekly* chronicled the continuous litany of lynchings and race violence throughout Louisiana and the South. On October 11, for example, sixteen-year-old Brother Moore was lynched in Labadieville after being accused of attacking seventeen-year-old Annie Mae LaRose. A sign on his body announced, "This nigger was lynched on account of raping a white woman." The next week, another man barely avoided the rope when a family friend intervened. In both acts, Labadieville's deputy sheriff, Fednor Richard, led the mob. No one was arrested for the crimes.¹²

And then there was the Depression. "Times are hard," said a *Louisiana Weekly* advertisement, "but you can't improve conditions by making the world more conscious of its ills. The period of hardship has about worn itself out. Now it is our turn." But others were not so optimistic. "The Negro was born in depression," said Clifford Burke, a community volunteer who described his Depression experience for Studs Terkel. "It only became official when it hit the white man."¹³

But the Depression affected everyone. In 1929, the estimated national income was \$83 billion. In 1932, it was \$39 billion. In 1929, there were 513 American millionaires. In 1932, there were 20. In 1929, average per capita income was \$1,475. In 1932, it was \$1,119. Three percent of the labor force—1.6 million people—was unemployed in 1929. By 1933, that number had grown to 12.8 million, a full 25 percent of workers. In the first 4 years of the Depression, more than 9,000 banks closed. Through the first 10 years of the Depression, one-fourth of all southerners were tenants or sharecroppers, as were half of all southern farmers. By June 1933, farm prices had dropped to 52 percent of the 1909–1914 average. At the same time, farmers paid taxes 166 percent higher than in 1914.¹⁴

With race violence and crushing poverty, fans throughout the state would look to Southern's 1934 season (and those in Lincoln Parish would look to Louisiana Negro Normal's) to give them a vicarious form of success. It was a role that Louisiana's black college football teams would continue to play in the decades to come.

And there would be changes.

First, Southern would now be playing officially as the Jaguar Cats. In 1933, the Associated Negro Press had used "Cats" interchangeably with "Bushmen" when describing Southern's football team, but by 1934, "Bushmen" had been dropped in favor of the school's new mascot. More substantially, Coach Cliff Purnell attended a coaching clinic at Illinois over the offseason, using the experience to develop new offensive innovations for his team. The Cats would open their season in early October with a home game against their upstart rivals from the north, and Normal hadn't scored a point against Southern in either of their first two meetings. Surely this first contest would be easy.¹⁵

Southern's quarterback in 1934 was Billy Purnell, younger brother of the head coach, and in the first quarter he combined with fullback Charlie Guthrie on a methodical drive down the field, eventually scoring on a quarterback keeper. It was 7-0. The season, it seemed, was off to a great start. But on an ensuing drive, the younger Purnell was tackled in his own endzone, giving the Tigers their first 2 points against the Cats. Then, on the second play of the second quarter, Normal surprised everyone on the field and in the stands by throwing a deep touchdown pass. At halftime, the upstarts were ahead 9-7.¹⁶

Still, as shocking as the halftime score was, Southern's athletes were bigger, stronger, faster. The Jaguar ground game wore on the smaller Tigers in the second half, and in the early fourth quarter, Southern again took the lead. They would score 18 points in the final period, giving the home team a 25-9 victory.¹⁷ It was a strong late-game performance, but Normal, too, had reasons to be hopeful. They had scored defensively and offensively. They maintained a lead for three quarters. And it seemed, even at that early date, that the series might not remain lopsided forever.

But things weren't going to change just yet. The following week, Normal lost to New Orleans 31-6, while Southern swamped Kentwood 74-0. The Tigers' most notable performance of the season (besides their early-game success against Southern) was a 0-0 tie versus Straight. But the Jaguars continued their dominance and closed the season with long-awaited redemption against Prairie View.

The athletic gap between Southern and Normal was wide, but a gap

was apparent in other venues as well. In 1934, Southern had 700 students, a \$10,000 increase in operating revenue, and 11 new faculty members—all records for the university—and president J. S. Clark announced that the school had received a Grade A rating among black southern colleges. Two weeks after the Normal game, Clark spoke to an interracial capacity crowd at LSU on the state of race relations in Depression-era Louisiana.¹⁸

This growth in enrollment, budget, and prestige, combined with continued athletic success, led Southern to consider a new affiliation. In late October 1934, Cliff Purnell attended the annual Southwestern Athletic Conference meeting. It wasn't the first time. At the end of the 1933 season, Purnell and his counterparts from Arkansas AM&N of Pine Bluff attended the SWAC meeting to lobby for entry. The six-team conference was struggling under the weight of the Depression, and members had joined together to file a formal protest against Bishop College, which, they alleged, had been using ineligible players. The time seemed auspicious for gaining membership. Bishop would be temporarily suspended from the organization, and in October, after extensive negotiations, the SWAC took on a new team. In 1935, Southern would begin its football season as a full member of the conference.¹⁹

In the zero-sum game of college football, however, Scotlandville's success was Normal's loss. Scheduling conflicts due to Southern's new conference affiliation stopped the game in 1935, as the school's ten-game schedule left no room for a relatively noncompetitive opponent. Southern, meanwhile, had an inauspicious start in its first SWAC season, losing handily to Alabama State and falling to reinstated Bishop. The team finished the year with a 2–7–1 record.²⁰ It was a season in which the Jaguars could have used the confidence bred by defeating an in-state rival. They were sure to include Normal on their schedule the following season.

Normal's return to the schedule, however, wouldn't be the only change at Southern. "For the first time in many years," noted a Southern press release, "the eyes of the Negro football world will be focused upon Southern University. To say that the public will expect big things of the team this season will be only putting it mildly." The cause of all this expectation was the team's new coach. Arnett Mumford had spent the past five seasons at Texas College, where he won two conference championships. The second of those, in his final season at Texas, accompanied a Black National Championship, as named by the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Mumford had grown up in tiny Buckhannon, West Virginia, before playing his college career at Wilberforce University in Ohio. He received his master's degree at USC. When he was twenty-six years old, Mumford began his coaching

career at Jarvis Christian College, then moved on to Bishop before taking the job at Texas College. In 1936, he took the job at Southern.²¹

The expectation would be justified. Mumford, the university's most successful head coach with a record of 169-57-14, would stay at Southern until 1961.

Normal was undergoing changes of its own. Coach Ralph Jones had been replaced in 1933 by Ira Smith, who was replaced by Joe Williams, who was replaced by Osiah Johnson. In 1935, Emory Hines joined the staff and would remain until 1941. At the beginning of the 1936 school term, Ralph Jones, who had stayed at the institute as a teacher and baseball coach, became Normal's president. That year, the 2-year school had 120 students and 17 faculty members. "Prez" Jones would stay at Grambling until 1977, overseeing the exponential growth of the small two-year school into a full-fledged university.²²

Jones argued that his employment at Normal was the result of a hiring mistake by Charles Adams. He graduated from Southern in 1925, one of a graduating class of five. Adams came to interview all five. "He believed in size," said Jones. "He was about 6-10 and 300 pounds and I was tiny, about 125 pounds or less at that time. He just said a few words to me trying to be polite and went on his way. But when he went back home, he got all of us confused, and later he sent for me." Jones not only coached. He taught math, biology, chemistry, and physics. He acted as registrar. He hauled firewood. When Adams retired as president in 1936, Jones took over those duties as well. When he retired in 1977, the four-year state university had more than four thousand students.²³

Southern and Normal were supposed to meet on September 26, 1936, the opening game of the season for both teams, but the contest wasn't played. Mumford was frustrated with the practice of his team, and chose to make the next week's scheduled game with Alcorn his first of the season. Instead, the in-state rivalry was moved to October 31, Halloween, the first time the Jaguars would ever play in tiny Grambling, Louisiana. "The spirit on Normal's campus is running high," noted a Normal press release, "and preparations are being made to welcome all supporters of the two schools in a most cordial way."²⁴

It was homecoming for the Tigers, and fans in the region seemed optimistic. But Osiah Johnson was worried about his team's blocking, which had failed them miserably in a loss to Philander Smith. He would prove a more accurate judge than the fans. Mumford's Jaguars won 39-0.²⁵

That 1936 season saw Southern shock the black college football world by beating favored Bishop. But losses to Wiley, Prairie View, Arkansas

AM&N, and Langston tempered the hyperbole that opened the season.²⁶ Meanwhile, Normal struggled through mediocrity on the football field and increasing racial violence in Lincoln Parish. In early October, 5 white youths ranging in age from 15 to 23 entered the home of 25-year-old Ellis Barner, shooting and beating the man and his 80-year-old father. Their eventual imprisonment did little to alleviate the racial tension in the region.²⁷

Meanwhile, Southern continued to grow. The next year, 1937, it opened its school session with almost one thousand students. The gap between the schools was continuing to widen. Both, for example, played Dillard in 1937. Southern defeated the Blue Devils 39–0, Normal lost to them 33–0. With such an obvious talent discrepancy, and after the 39–0 drubbing in 1936, the two schools did not compete in 1937.²⁸

But they did in 1938. The vaunted Jaguars returned fourteen lettermen from a strong 1937 team. Again big things were expected. Again the team made the long, slow trip north, returning to Grambling on October 22 for another early-season warm-up against their north Louisiana counterparts. In the first quarter, junior quarterback Frank Walker ran off-tackle 37 yards for a touchdown, then passed for a 25-yard score on the ensuing drive. Another touchdown in the third quarter ensured a Southern victory. The other standout was sophomore Raymond “Pelican” Hill, whose only blemish on the day was a fumble on the Normal goal line, keeping the Jaguars from another score. Osiah Johnson and Emory Hines had no answer for the Southern offense, and they had no offense of their own. The Tigers completed one pass and made only two first downs. Southern won 20–0.²⁹

That season, Southern tied Langston for a share of the Southwestern Athletic Conference title, its first conference championship. Meanwhile, fans of Normal suffered through another losing season and more racial violence. Accused of murdering a white man and assaulting his female companion, nineteen-year-old W. C. Williams was taken from his grandmother’s home, hung from a tree, and raped with a hot shard of metal. The culprits, of course, were not caught. They almost never were. A local sheriff, a state police sergeant, and a lieutenant in the National Guard were all present at the lynching, and they were not eager to arrest themselves.³⁰ Such was the norm in northeast Louisiana, known nationwide as one of the most racially intransigent regions in the South. Nearby Monroe had received the moniker “lynch law center of Louisiana” from the New Orleans press after a particularly egregious 1919 lynching. Between 1889 and 1922, Monroe’s Ouachita Parish witnessed more lynchings than any



Originally built in 1939, University Stadium was later renamed for legendary coach Arnett “Ace” Mumford. Seen here soon after its construction, the stadium was the premier black football facility in the state.

Photo courtesy State Library of Louisiana

other county in the nation, and though the murder totals in north Louisiana had decreased, the stifling racism had not.³¹

The two teams entered the 1939 season going in two very different directions. The Southwestern Conference co-champion would dedicate a new stadium on its November 18 homecoming versus Tuskegee. Normal was still struggling to find its feet. It came as no surprise, then, that on an unseasonably hot October 24, Southern again traveled to Grambling and again destroyed the Tigers 53–7. Still, there were signs. For only the second game in the series, Normal scored. For the third time, the Jaguars played Normal on the Grambling campus. And because of the inherent draw of Southern University, approximately 2,000 fans attended the game.³² For Southern, this wasn’t rare. Depression-era Scotlandville crowds averaged between 1,500 and 3,000 fans. But in small, impoverished Grambling, attendance numbers usually hovered around 500.

Despite these strides, the teams were clearly unevenly matched. Normal was able to handle Dillard, but fell to Leland 26–0. The Tigers ended the season with 4 wins and 4 losses. Southern’s record wasn’t much better at 4–5–1, but the Jaguars’ schedule was far more competitive and the team’s star, Raymond “Pelican” Hill, took first-team All Southwestern Confer-



Southern quarterback “Red” Wilson was a star performer in 1939. Here he is shown intercepting a pass intended for Mozelle Ellerbee while Southern tailback Green looks on. Wilson helped lead the Jaguars to a 53-7 victory over Grambling.

Courtesy Louisiana Weekly



Halfback Cleveland Woodson (1), tackle Captain Walker (2), and linemen Norman Tadlock and Robert Hodge (3) all took a back seat in popularity to Southern’s All-American fullback, Raymond “Pelican” Hill (4).

Courtesy Louisiana Weekly

ence honors as the best running back in the region.³³ Southern's domination of Normal in 1939 would be its last of the Depression era. The two would not play again until 1946.

More than eight thousand fans attended Southern's homecoming later that season to see the dedication of the Jaguars' new stadium. The president of the Alumni Federation made a dedicatory address, as did new university president Felton G. Clark, the son of now-emeritus president J. S. Clark. The team christened the stadium in style, defeating Tuskegee 26–12.³⁴

Thus Southern University and Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute ended the difficult decade of the 1930s in decidedly different states of being. Normal remained a struggling two-year institution, unable to touch the academic, financial, or football prowess of its south Louisiana counterpart. Southern—despite intransigent racism, Jim Crow, and a disastrous economy—closed the decade by dedicating a stadium valued at more than \$150,000. Enrollment was up, the budget continued to grow under the leadership of the Clarks, and the football team seemed close to championship form.

Still, the glimmer of improvement demonstrated by Normal in the 1939 Southern game indicated that the status of football inequality could possibly change—*would* possibly change—if the Tigers continued to press on.

3

The Birth and Death of a Legitimate Rivalry 1940-1948

The 1940 season did not go well for Normal. The team didn't have to contend with Southern, but they still only managed two victories in an eight-game season. On other fronts, however, things seemed to be improving. In February 1941, an interracial meeting between the students and faculty of Normal and nearby Louisiana Polytechnic Institute was held in the Grambling auditorium. The Negro History Week event marked the first interracial gathering on campus. "Unlike anything the oldest residents of this quiet little hamlet had ever seen," noted an article in the *Shreveport Sun*, "whites and blacks sat down adjacent to each other and discussed intelligently the common problems of both." It was marked progress for the school and the region. Louisiana Tech was the dominant college in Lincoln Parish. The *Ruston Daily Leader*, Lincoln's largest newspaper, reported diligently on the Bulldog football team but never found room to report on the young program from nearby Grambling. The schools were separated by only four miles, but they were worlds apart. Until that meeting.¹

Improved race relations weren't the only change affecting Normal's campus. Grambling was in the process of transition. After adding a third year to the curriculum in 1939, the school added a fourth in 1940. It built its first five permanent campus buildings that year as well.² And then, prior to the 1941 season, Prez Jones hired a new football coach. Coach Emory Hines had taken a job as baseball and assistant football coach at Southern. Jones had early pinpointed the young Eddie Robinson as a possible replacement.

Edward Gay Robinson was born February 13, 1919, in rural Jackson,



Black fans were allowed in Tiger Stadium, but their segregated seats were far from the action, reinforcing the exclusion that most already felt. Eddie Robinson grew up in Baton Rouge and cheered for both LSU and Southern, but this kind of treatment kept the true devotion of Robinson and many like him on the black university across town. This picture is from the 1938 LSU-Tulane football game.

Photo courtesy State Library of Louisiana

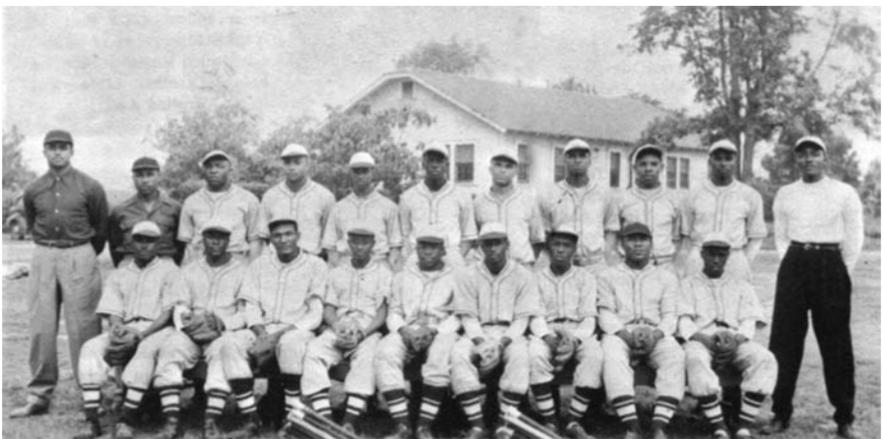
Louisiana, the son of a sharecropper. Frustration with farming and an abusive grandfather led Robinson's father to move in 1925 to Baton Rouge to work for Standard Oil. And then there was school. "Third grade changed my life," wrote Robinson. "It was that year that football became my obsession and I fell in love with football." He organized street leagues with his friends and attended Southern and LSU games whenever he was able. But Baton Rouge, too, opened Robinson's eyes to race. "I didn't ever see it too much, but the police had a reputation for manhandling black people." After a successful stint as a McKinley High quarterback, Robinson attended the same Southern University he idolized as a youth. For ten days. Feeling out of place, he decided to transfer to smaller Leland College. He acted as an assistant coach while playing his junior and senior years and graduated in 1941.³

Robinson's Leland team had been successful against the Tigers, and the young player/coach seemed the perfect candidate to take over a job

that more established coaches surely would have rejected. “I had never thought about Grambling,” wrote Robinson, “that’s probably about the last place that I thought that I might have been coaching until the job came open. But when it came open, I was really excited because I knew how much I wanted to coach.” Jones interviewed Robinson’s friends and colleagues, then, feeling reassured, contacted the recent graduate. The interview began icily, Robinson recalled, with Jones informing the applicant “that he hadn’t made me an offer and [saying] straight-up that he didn’t think I could lead the football team to win.” But both liked baseball, and the conversation quickly veered to that. Soon, Jones challenged Robinson. He could strike out the Leland man with ease. The coach took the challenge, and the two headed outside. On the makeshift baseball diamond, Jones offered Robinson the job.⁴

Then he sent him north. The new coach attended an offseason coaching clinic at Northwestern University before returning for his first season at Normal. First, however, there was one more clinic to attend. Lincoln Parish hosted an event for north Louisiana high school coaches, organized by M. H. Carroll, teacher and football coach at Monroe Colored High. The still-green Robinson remained an observer as Ralph Jones and Southern’s Arnett Mumford coached the coaches.⁵

But after Mumford returned south and the season began, Robinson took charge. Even without vaunted Southern on the schedule, the new coach was sure to take his lumps, but his 3–5 record was more than respectable in his opening campaign. The following season—again, without



The newly hired Eddie Robinson (*far left*) also coached baseball at his new institution.
 Photo collected by Thelma Smith Williams and reproduced courtesy Grambling State University Archive



Robinson's early Grambling teams overcame their disadvantages through hard work.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

having to face the Jaguars—Robinson took Normal to an 8–0 undefeated season.⁶

Meanwhile, Southern was experiencing a transition of its own. In 1940, Southern elected Felton Clark as the school's permanent president. The football team charged to an 8–1 record and a share of the SWAC championship with Langston.⁷ But the possibility of success in 1941 seemed far less certain. It would be the Jaguars' first season without star running back Raymond "Pelican" Hill. Hill had graduated the previous May, followed Robinson halfway up the state of Illinois to the University of Illinois Coaching School, then returned to Louisiana to begin coaching Webster Parish's segregated black high school. As the 1941 season began, Mumford had yet to find a suitable replacement. "I can't see a thing but another dismal season," he told reporters. "When you lose two men like Hill and [star center Ulysses] Jones, it's just like losing your right arm." The highlight of the season was the Jaguars' first night game under artificial lights, in Shreveport against Wiley College.⁸

Artificial lighting, however, was small consolation. As the 1941 season closed, the country went to war, taking hundreds of thousands of college-age men with it. When fall camp opened at Scotlandville on September 1, 1942, only twenty students reported for Mumford's team. Normal would have similar problems in the coming years. Only nine male students enrolled for classes in 1943, and the Louisiana state board of education ac-

tually canceled Normal's football program for 1943 and 1944. The reduced schedules of both teams during the war included games against local military barracks.⁹

With Adolf Hitler defeated and the recruits back in school, 1946 began well for Normal. Prez Jones spoke to the Louisiana legislature in regular session, elaborating on the school's growth and the change in mission that necessarily comes from evolving into a four-year institution. With new, more ambitious students, the school needed a name change. Normal was popularly referred to as "Grambling" anyway. Why not make it official? "Besides all that," he argued, "the name is too long. When we are playing football and the other team has the ball on our five yard line, the other team has already scored by the time our cheerleaders can say 'hold that line, Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute.'" On July 4, 1946, Normal officially became Grambling College of Louisiana.¹⁰

Three months later, the football team would travel south for a long-awaited meeting with its archrival. "Southern University Jaguar Cats will meet the very strong Grambling eleven [in Baton Rouge] Saturday, Oct. 5, at 2:30 P.M.," reported the *Louisiana Weekly*. "This will mark a game long looked for by grid fans all over the state and should set an attendance record. Being a sister institution, with graduates and former students at each school the rivalry is at its zenith."¹¹

Sure, Grambling had been pummeled by Tuskegee the week before and was still a small fish in a relatively large pond, but in the world of Louisiana black college football, the frequency of student and faculty cross-pollination dominated the thinking of the fans. Grambling's quarterback, Jesse Sims, was a transfer from Southern. So, too, was "Boots" Moore. Sporty Watkins had come from Southern to join the Grambling athletic staff. Tiger assistant I. V. Billis first made his name as a star defensive end for the Jaguars. It was the first official game between the now-named Grambling and Southern. And it was the first time Southern would face Eddie Robinson, the young coach who had grown up in the shadow of Scotlandville, rooted for the Jaguars, and even attended the school for ten days.¹²

A record opening-day crowd came to Scotlandville to see the renewal of the two schools' rivalry. In the first quarter, Sims and Moore seemed to have some early success, but they weren't able to produce any points. They did in the second quarter. And in the third. Southern was dominating, and Mumford decided to put in his backups in the fourth quarter. They, too, were successful. "Flash" Morgan managed a 13-yard touchdown run,



Mumford (indicated by arrow) and his Southern Jaguars on the sidelines of the Grambling game in 1946, the first game in the renewal of the rivalry.

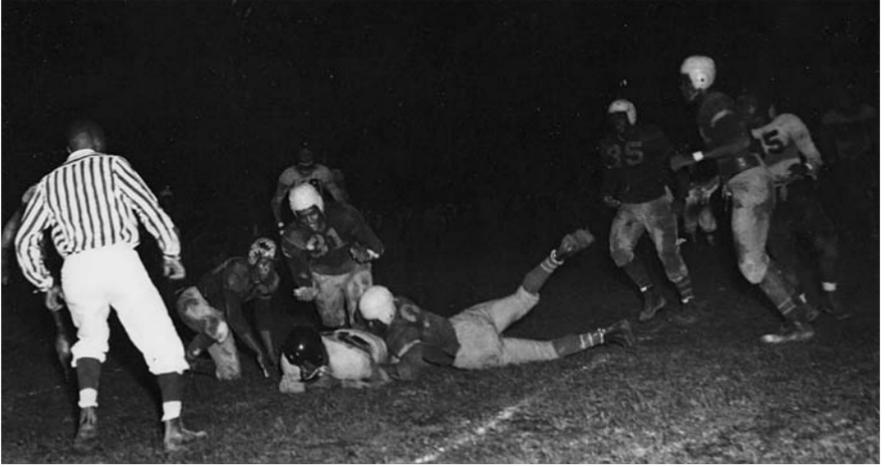
Courtesy Louisiana Weekly

then—playing both ways—intercepted a Tiger pass and returned it for yet another score. Grambling only managed 6 first downs and 148 total yards. Despite the anticipation for a competitive game, the Jaguars won 38–0.¹³

Southern was still Southern, and Grambling wasn't quite ready. Southern would end the 1946 season with an 8–2–1 record and its first outright SWAC championship.¹⁴

The beginning of the 1947 school year saw Scotlandville's enrollment grow to record numbers, with students from twenty-five states. More than six hundred freshmen reported for the fall semester. New Ph.D.s from all over the country took over as department chairs. Surely, thought the Jaguars, that growth would translate to the football field. More than one hundred players, after all, reported for Southern's opening practices.¹⁵ If nothing else, the team would have an easy start against its upstate rival, in Grambling on October 8. The Tigers, in fact, had scored only 16 points against the Jaguars in the history of the series. The Jaguars had scored 210. The game against Grambling would be a nice warm-up for the bulk of a difficult Southwestern Athletic Conference season. But then . . .

"A pall of gloom enshrouded the moss-hung bayous of Louisiana," wrote Collie J. Nicholson, "and the usually reliable Southwest Conference, deflated but unbowed, was rallying to regain its momentum after the Gramb-



Grambling's first victory over Southern came in 1947.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

ling College Tigers ambushed the Southern University Jaguar Cats, 21–6, Saturday night on the Tigers' field before 5,000 jubilant fans who viewed the proceedings with collective admiration and reverence.”¹⁶

As shocking as the victory was to Southern University and the broader black college football community, Grambling had come into the game with high expectations. A preseason press release noted that the Tigers “plan to demonstrate their present-day stature to five rivals from the robust Southwest Conference and thereby earn themselves an invitation to become a member of that distinguished group.” 1947 Grambling quarterback Leglian Moore later validated this desire. “They couldn’t keep us out,” he said, “because we had beaten most of the other teams in the conference.”¹⁷

As the game started, it seemed like more of the same for Grambling. Jaguar running backs Marshall Keys, Harold Milton, and Henry “Snow” Taylor marched 78 yards down the field, culminating in Taylor’s 41-yard touchdown run. But the Tigers blocked the extra point and used the play to steal momentum. In the second quarter, “Boots” Moore completed a short pass to tight end Gussie Williams, who ran 55 yards after the catch and scored the first Grambling points. The extra point was good, and Southern went into the locker room at halftime down 7–6.¹⁸

After a scoreless third, Grambling opened the fourth quarter with a methodical 77-yard drive, highlighted by a 45-yard pass from Robert Ens-



Grambling's growth continued through the late 1940s and early 1950s, guided by a conscientious Robinson.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

ley to Lem Bassett, setting up a short touchdown run by Albany Jones. When the Tigers got the ball back again, tailback Roy Givens broke a 60-yard run, putting the game out of reach. When the final gun sounded, the Tigers had won 21–6.¹⁹ Grambling had arrived.

The Tigers lost only one regular season game in 1947, a close 19–6 defeat by Tuskegee. Their success led to an invitation to play in Birmingham's New Year's Day Vulcan Bowl against Wilberforce. Though the Bulldogs made a late-game rally to beat the Tigers 27–21, the simple fact of a bowl invitation demonstrated the power that a victory over Southern carried.²⁰ It would still be another ten years before the Tigers officially joined the Southwestern Conference in 1958, but no longer was Grambling a small, no-name school in obscure, rural north Louisiana. It was a legitimate force in small college football.

As much as the victory inspired the fans of north Louisiana, it decimated those in the south. And Mumford wouldn't let the team forget. The Jaguars parlayed the anger and frustration that came from the shocking loss into a series of victories that would end in a Southwest Conference championship. Their only other loss of the season was to eventual Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference champion Florida A&M, and that was a close 13–9 game.²¹ It was a successful season by any measure, but when fans reflected on 1947, the Grambling loss was paramount. The early season rematch at Southern in 1948 would be an opportunity for the champions to find redemption.

But it would be more than just that.

“At Scotlandville,” wrote *Louisiana Weekly* sports editor Charles L. de Lay, “two of the nation’s grid giants face each other in a game which might well determine the national champions of ’48.” Not only had Grambling defeated Southern in 1947, but also both teams had seen remarkable success in their remaining schedules. It was “the nation’s number one game of the week.” Indeed. Perhaps the most significant outgrowth of Grambling’s victory was that it broadened the rivalry outside the bounds of the state. It was now a game that mattered to the whole of the black college football nation.²²

So it was that on October 2, Southern and Grambling met in Scotlandville in front of ten thousand fans, the largest crowd to date to witness a Grambling-Southern contest. And in the first half, the teams seemed evenly matched, playing to a scoreless tie. As the third quarter began, however, Southern’s Henry Gaines blocked a Grambling punt and ran the ball into the endzone for a Jaguar touchdown. After another frustrated Tiger drive, Southern halfback Aaron Thompson ran off-tackle for a 55-yard touchdown. At the end of the third quarter, the Jaguars were in control, leading 12–0.²³

Grambling quarterback Johnny Christophe, running back Paul “Tank” Younger, and freshman backup Odessa Patterson all performed well but couldn’t seem to convert their drives into touchdowns. Both backs were pressed into more duty than normal when, on the second play of the game, Tiger All-American fullback Albany Jones went out with a season-ending injury. Nothing seemed to be going right for the team from north Louisiana. In the fourth quarter, Southern added insult to injury when quarterback Warren Braden completed a 4-yard touchdown pass to Eugene Wade. When the game ended, Southern had won, 18–0.²⁴

“Southern University’s star-studded grid machine proved to pack too much power for the Grambling Tigers last Saturday,” wrote Charles de Lay.

“The Tigers were either over-confident or out of condition, their vaunted running attack failing to get started and the line play appearing to be sluggish.” Still, it was clear to de Lay and others that though Grambling was unable to score, both teams were in the highest echelon of southern black football. The following week, Grambling annihilated Texas State 61–0. Southern slammed Sam Houston 41–0. When the season came to a close, the Jaguars were the undefeated champions of the SWAC, but the Tigers’ 9–2 mark demonstrated the team’s newfound prowess.²⁵

Southern fans were grateful for the redemption that the 1948 game provided, and after securing the upper hand in the rivalry, they were in no hurry to play their upstate rival any time soon. The games were drawing the interest of the college football world. They were bringing record crowds to both Grambling and Scotlandville. But the benefits accrued through sustaining the rivalry did not, for the Southern University administration, outweigh the shame of falling to the north Louisiana upstart. Southern’s reputation as the premier academic and athletic institution in the state was at stake. Their traditional place had taken a significant hit in 1947, and they were in no hurry to test their status against the increasingly powerful Tigers. Grambling and Southern would not play again for eleven years.

4

Civilities and Civil Rights 1959-1965

When the Grambling-Southern rivalry resumed in 1959, Louisiana was far different from what it had been in the 1940s. The postwar climate was a study in contradictions. In 1947, for example, a state court ruled that Iberville Parish's practice of paying different wages to white and black teachers did not properly fulfill the "merit system," leading ultimately to a far more equitable pay scale for black teachers throughout the state. At the same time, however, black schools still suffered from inadequate resources doled out by white Louisiana school boards. White citizen violence and lynchings still resonated throughout Louisiana, as did police brutality, but so, too, did black activism.¹

From 1947 to the end of the decade, 25 new branches of the NAACP arose in the state to accompany the 33 already established—in reaction to wartime lynchings at home and military segregation abroad. The association had more than 12,000 Louisiana members at the century's halfway point. In the fall of 1950, LSU admitted a black student without violence, the first major state university in the Deep South to do so. Monroe, Shreveport, Lafayette, and Lake Charles all began hiring black policemen. In the decade following the close of World War II, the number of black registrants on the voter rolls in Louisiana rose from 7,000 to 161,000.²

And then, in 1954, there was *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The Louisiana legislature responded to *Brown* with public denunciations and a flurry of laws designed to circumvent its decree that public schools must be integrated—that separate could not be equal. Here, too, was contradiction. The Supreme Court's *Brown* decision removed the final plank

in the legal platform of the 1898 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision validating Jim Crow segregation. It is generally credited as the birth of the postwar first-wave civil rights movement. But just as the founding principles of its argument inspired what would become the Montgomery bus boycott the following year, it also inspired a new vigor in white reaction to black citizenship rights. After *Brown*, Louisiana witnessed the birth and growth of two powerful segregation advocacy groups—the Southern Gentlemen in Baton Rouge and the Florida parishes, and the White Citizens' Council, which predominated in the north of the state. One was in Southern's backyard. The other was in Grambling's.³

Led by arch-segregationists Willie Rainach and Leander Perez, the Association of Citizens' Councils of Louisiana's charter—written in a Monroe motel room in January 1956—promised to protect “our historical Southern Social Institutions in all of their aspects,” and “to reject the assault which is constantly being waged upon our institutions by the Socialistic and Communistic forces in this country.” The intransigence of Rainach, Perez, and their allies would lead to a long, protracted, and often violent civil rights struggle in Louisiana and would seem to pose a real threat to the state's two dominant black universities.⁴

But again there were contradictions. Prior to LSU's 1950 integration and the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision, the Louisiana legislature desperately hoped to stem the tide of integrationist sentiment by giving the appearance of equality at black schools. Black primary and secondary enrollment was up in the late 1940s, as was the length of the black school year, which had traditionally been far shorter than that of white students. Funding for Grambling and Southern increased heavily in the postwar years, an effort to keep black students happy in their black colleges, lest they attempt to enroll at white ones. In 1947, the year of the Jaguars' first loss to the Tigers, the state legislature established a law school at Southern, again hoping to protect the white purity of the LSU law school across town.⁵

Still, though Grambling and Southern clearly saw a windfall from white paranoia about integration, both served as the dominant houses of black intellectual leadership in the state and were therefore stationed on the front lines of civil rights advocacy. But it wouldn't be easy. Rainach, Perez, and others led a successful charge to purge the voter rolls of black registrants, as would be demonstrated in the 1959–1960 gubernatorial election, when black voters all but disappeared from the final election returns.

And so the 1959 Grambling-Southern game, the first in eleven years,

would take place amid a maelstrom of segregation and civil rights agitation. The schools were pressed by a desire for integration and equality but also by the realization that they, too, were creatures of segregation. Without white racism, HBCUs wouldn't exist. If LSU had been open to integrating its campus at the end of World War II, Southern wouldn't have received its law school appropriation. The students and faculty of historically black colleges often led the way in integration activism, but they studied and served at institutions that depended on segregation—voluntary or otherwise—for survival. Again the contradictions.

On the football field, however, things were far less convoluted. The postwar years had been kind to both of Louisiana's black football powers. Grambling had a strong season in 1949, but perhaps the school's most distinctive point of pride that year happened in Southern California, where on September 23, former Tiger Paul "Tank" Younger started for the Los Angeles Rams, becoming the first black college player to participate in an NFL game. The success only continued from there, with successful seasons throughout the early 1950s, culminating in 1955, when the Tigers had their own undefeated season, a 10–0 mark that gave them the *Pittsburgh Courier's* Black National Championship. By 1958, Grambling was playing as an associate member of the SWAC, and would join the organization officially after season's end. The Tigers also opened the 1958 season with a new stadium, which the university described as "one of the finest small-college units in the country." It sat 12,000 fans and included among the traditional locker rooms, concession areas, showers, and laundry facilities a visitors' dorm, conference rooms, artificial lights, and film room, as well as lockers and conference rooms for officiating crews. The team's opener against Alcorn drew a massive crowd and began what would become a 6–3 season for the Tigers.⁶

Meanwhile, Southern was also seeing success. For all the hype about Younger's NFL debut, the Jaguars actually won the SWAC championship in 1949, and repeated the following season. During Grambling's 1955 championship season, Southern would again win the conference. Of course, the Scotlandville campus would be no stranger to championships. The Jaguars wouldn't lose a game from 1948 to 1950, winning the *Courier's* Black National Championship outright in 1948, then sharing a split crown in both 1949 and 1950. They would share another in 1954. Prospects again looked good for Southern in 1958. Though the Jaguars were beaten by Texas College in early November, shattering the team's unbeaten record, their offense was setting the SWAC pace. Southern averaged more than 184 passing yards per game and more than 381 yards in total offense. At

the close of the 1958 season, Arnett Mumford's twenty-second at Southern, the team's head football coach and athletic director was named to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletes Hall of Fame.⁷

In 1959, both teams had reason for optimism. "This weekend," wrote the *Louisiana Weekly's* Jim Hall, "cars, buses and airplanes loaded down with grid fans will be heading for Grambling, La., to witness the renewal of the rock 'em, sock 'em pigskin classic between the two Louisiana institutions, Grambling and Southern. It's been eleven years since the warriors of A.W. Mumford and Eddie Robinson butted helmets in football contact on the century turf." Hall noted the excitement for the contest that permeated the state, but at the same time, he set a precedent of misreporting that would continue throughout the breadth of the series. Hall cited the 1936 game as the first between the two schools. He argued that the 1946, 1947, and 1948 games were the only games played between the Jaguars and Tigers in consecutive seasons. This misinformation would continue to dominate, as every known modern account of the rivalry omits various games from the 1930s.⁸

Regardless, fans in Louisiana were ready for the rivalry's renewal. "A crowd of 20,000—one of the largest in small college football—will watch the arch foes premiere here Saturday night," the *Weekly* reported. "Optimism abounds in both camps and the game has become a favorite conversation topic all over the state. These discussions will rage with increasing intensity until kickoff time. Over-zealous supporters from both schools are unyielding. To mention a Jaguar or Tiger name in the wrong crowd is enough to rally spirits to the dueling point."⁹

Such conversations were far easier for Southern fans. The Jaguars had ended the 1958 season with a high national ranking, and All-American quarterback John Thomas had thrown for more than 1,000 yards that season. Meanwhile, the Tigers fielded a roster dominated by underclassmen. Robinson's team had twenty-two freshmen, nineteen sophomores, nine juniors, and four seniors. Still, both teams entered the game undefeated, Southern pummeling Texas Southern, Grambling escaping Texas College. The teams appeared ready.¹⁰

But the crowd of more than 18,500 fans that crammed themselves into Grambling's 12,000-seat stadium in 1959 was supposed to be larger. Saturday morning, October 3, five south Louisiana school teachers were en route to Grambling on Highway 90 when a tire blew, sending the speeding car out of control before it crashed into a bridge embankment near Opelousas. All five were killed.¹¹ The tragedy would become part of the lore surrounding the 1959 game, but when the teams kicked off at 7:30 P.M.,

news of the deaths hadn't traveled to the stadium. The celebration was still on.

The celebration was also becoming increasingly national in its scope. Among the journalists crowding Grambling's press box were the *Pittsburgh Courier's* Bill Nunn and the *Atlanta Daily World's* Marion Jackson.¹² It wasn't just a state rivalry anymore.

The game would live up to its billing. With just over 2 minutes left in the first half, Southern's freshman halfback Lloyd Harris ran 21 yards for a touchdown, and after Grambling's Joe Hall blocked the extra point, the Jaguars were up 6–0. On their next possession, following a Henry Johnson fumble, the Cats did it again, with Harris running 2 yards for the score. The animosity between the two teams was palpable, and Harris's second score was set up by an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

Still, Grambling managed a second-quarter touchdown, and at half-time the score was 12–6. But defense would dominate the game, and the two played to a scoreless tie in the second half, giving Southern the victory. Grambling managed only 25 passing yards. The Tigers turned the ball over six times. The Grambling defense, seen before the contest as the true source of the team's weakness, allowed 304 total yards. Still, the Tigers intercepted three Southern passes and recovered one fumble; they held the vaunted Southern offense to only 12 points.¹³ With a relatively strong showing and the glut of underclassmen, Grambling's future appeared bright. As did Southern's. The Jaguars went on to win the SWAC that season.

Their *football* futures appeared bright, that is.

In Greensboro, North Carolina, four students from North Carolina A&T sat down at a Woolworth's lunch counter and began what became a burgeoning sit-in movement intended to force desegregation of public facilities in the South. From that moment on, February 1, 1960, sit-ins spread swiftly across the region.

At Southern, President Felton Clark was far more concerned with the rise of such student activism than he was with his football team's success. The appropriations for his university came from the white legislature, and he had no desire to see the flow of money into Southern stanch because of student unrest. In response to an early March civil rights rally in the school auditorium, Clark declared that students participating in sit-in activism would be expelled. He met with local civil rights leaders in an attempt to head off any organizing. But those leaders had already entered into negotiations with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which helped prepare the campus for its own sit-ins. Clark had been outmaneuvered.¹⁴

On March 28, 1960, seven Southern students sat at the segregated lunch counter of a Baton Rouge Kress, and after being arrested and released on bail, they were fêted by motorcade through campus. On March 29, nine more students sat in at Sitman's drug store and the local Greyhound bus terminal. The inspired student body left their classes in droves the following day to participate in a march to the state capitol.¹⁵

Clark responded by suspending the sixteen original activists indefinitely, indicating that they might be reinstated at a later date. The students responded by boycotting their classes. Throughout April, the drama built. Some suspended students asked for the boycott to end, others encouraged its continuation. Clark threatened the Southern faculty with dismissal if they supported the students. As the month wore to a close, many of the students had returned to class and the boycott ended with a whimper. Still, around seven hundred students left the university, never to return. Clark was largely reviled in the national black press, but locally he put up a brave defense. "A Negro President of a university in the South must be battling all the time. He is between the fire of Negro people and elected officials, who happen, most of the time, to be white. And without losing one's integrity one must walk a straight and narrow path." Clark was his father's child, the direct descendant of the founder of the university. It was Southern's interest—more than public facilities' interest, black Baton Rouge's interest, or CORE's interest—that concerned him most. Many of the alumni agreed. Clark's actions were generally seen as wrongheaded, but stemmed from a true devotion to Southern's financial survival.¹⁶

But the most divisive racial issue confronting black Louisiana in 1960 was sixty miles away from Clark's campus—the integration of New Orleans public schools. A dramatic call-and-response of legislative and legal action bled through the summer of 1960, into the warm Louisiana fall.

The drama culminated well into football season, November 14, 1960, when two New Orleans public schools integrated. By the end of the week, white parents had pulled their children from the schools and either enrolled them in private schools or kept them out altogether. On November 15, the White Citizens' Council held a rally that drew more than five thousand people. Leander Perez and others whipped the crowd into such a frenzy that the next day a white mob began marching to the school board. The New Orleans Police Department turned water hoses on them, which kept them from the school board but only made them angrier. Instead, they turned their attention to black bystanders, injuring almost twenty black citizens.¹⁷

New Orleans mayor deLesseps Morrison had been trying to ignore the problem, hoping the crisis would resolve itself without his intervention.



Student protest was nothing new at Southern. Building off previous lunch counter protests in the late 1950s and the more famous actions at North Carolina A&T in February 1960, Southern University students began a late March sit-in protest at the Kress department store in Baton Rouge, before the movement spread to other local businesses with white-only sections. It was neither the first nor the last time Southern students would participate in civil rights demonstrations in the city.

Courtesy East Baton Rouge Parish Library

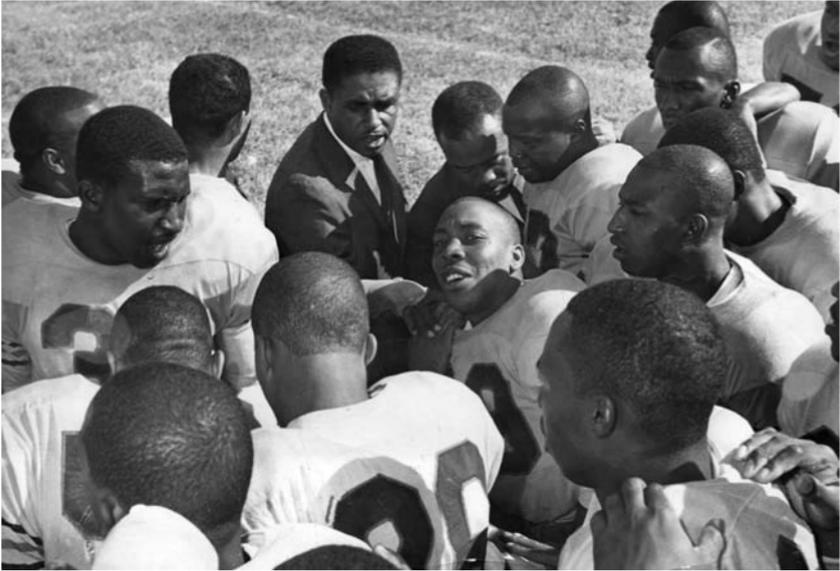
Now, though, he knew he had to do something. Morrison went on television and tried to calm the white rebels by assuring them that the police would not enforce the integration order. The move was a gross miscalculation, only shifting the growing anger to the black population. The next night, November 17, embattled black New Orleans residents took to the streets as well. Though no one died in the riots, there were more than 100 casualties and 250 arrests. Almost all of those arrested were black.¹⁸

The New Orleans crisis dominated state news headlines as the 1960 football season began. And sit-ins and segregation would remain on the front pages throughout the fall. But sports had historically served as a welcome respite from white southern intransigence. Professional baseball and football, for example, were demonstrating that black athletes could thrive in integrated settings. As preseason practice got underway in Louisiana, seventeen-year-old Arthur Ashe—still a senior in high school—won the American Tennis Association national championship.¹⁹

Far from the violence of New Orleans, Grambling players entered the first day of preseason practice with optimism. The new season promised to erase the memories of the 4–6 1959 season and divert from the racial tumult that enveloped them. They would find, however, a different kind of distraction that would loom throughout the season. Twenty-three-year-old tackle Pleasant Matthew, Jr., suffered a heat stroke during that first afternoon and was rushed to a Ruston hospital. Despite doctors' best efforts, Matthew died. "His death brought a vast and uncomfortable silence to the north Louisiana campus already decimated by the graduation of key personnel," reported school spokesman Collie J. Nicholson. "It festooned the college in black and reduced the team to a 'dark horse' designate." The entire team attended the funeral, and selected players and coaches served as pallbearers. The memory of Matthew would remain an inspirational force throughout the season.²⁰

Meanwhile, the Southern squad was doing its best to put campus unrest behind it. The Jaguars were defending SWAC champions, and the team was returning twenty-one lettermen—at least one at every position. Included in the bunch was All-SWAC halfback Robert Williams and Lloyd Harris, who had scored both touchdowns against Grambling in 1959.²¹

"The tremendous emotional impact football has on a vast legion of followers is expected to hit the jackpot Saturday afternoon in Southern University Stadium, when the Jaguar Cats clash with the Grambling Tigers in a 3600 second head-knocking session with helmets and shoulders," wrote Jim Hall. "Frankly, there is nothing in sports that stirs up as much general excitement as football, especially if the Cats and the Tigers are playing." The *Louisiana Weekly* hailed the contest in its preview as the Pelican



Robinson (*top center*) was an expert at both preparing his teams to play and motivating them through adversity.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

State Classic, the first time the game would be given an honorary name. And it promised again to live up to its billing. Southern had shut out Texas Southern in its only game of the season, and Grambling had won its first two games against Bishop and Texas College by a combined score of 127–6. The Tigers had been given an additional boost in the week leading up to the game when sophomore track star Stone Johnson returned from the Olympic Games. Johnson hadn't performed well in the games, but was hailed as a hero throughout the Grambling campus, elevating that pride of place that circumscribes athletic devotion. In addition, his return from Europe allowed Johnson to join the football team just in time for the game against Southern. Tickets were scarce, and a massive crowd was expected to converge on Scotlandville for the contest.²²

Converge they did. The crush of fans was such that stadium ushers were overwhelmed, allowing general admission ticket holders into more expensive, reserved seats. The resulting confusion led many reserved ticket holders to lose the seats for which they had paid, in many cases losing a seat altogether. Some stood. Some left the stadium in disgust. The confusion in the stands, however, would not be replicated on the field.

On the second play of the game, Southern running back Robert Wil-

liams took a pitch from quarterback Cyrus Lancaster and sprinted 78 yards for a touchdown. The play deflated the Tigers and set the tone for the rest of the afternoon. Before the quarter had ended, the Jaguars were winning 13–0. A field goal on an ensuing drive then made it 16–0. The Olympian Johnson, obviously out of practice, only gained 2 yards rushing for the Tigers. Late in the fourth quarter, running back Howard McCowan dove into the endzone for a token score after a Southern fumble put Grambling in scoring position, but the touchdown was too little too late. The Jaguars won with relative ease, 16–6.²³

The rest of the season went well for both teams. Grambling never lost again, becoming the highest-scoring team in SWAC history, amassing 417 points in 10 games—a feat made all the more impressive considering the Tigers had only managed 6 against Southern. Meanwhile, the Jaguars entered the final game of the season against Prairie View undefeated and confident. They had defeated the Panthers at the close of the 1959 season to take the outright SWAC title. But in the cold of late November, Prairie View scored a 23–15 victory, leaving the Panthers, Jaguars, and Tigers in a three-way tie for conference honors. Though Grambling had lost the Pelican State Classic, it tied Southern for the championship.²⁴

Such an outcome, however dependent it was upon Prairie View's upset, gave both teams a measure of confidence entering 1961. It also ensured that the game's popularity would only continue to grow.

But as the civil rights revolution raged all around them, the coaches of Grambling and Southern seemed to be in two very different places in 1961. In late August, Arnett Mumford was granted the Football Writers Association of America's small-college service award. His all-time winning percentage of .734 put him behind only Oklahoma's Bud Wilkinson, Missouri's Dan Devine, Ole Miss's John Vaught, and Ohio State's Woody Hayes. He had won 223 games, lost 81, and tied 24. At Southern, he had won 169, lost 57, and tied 14. He had led the Jaguars to 11 SWAC titles. His teams had been voted Black National Champions 5 times. He had coached 40 All-Americans. The Football Writers Association of America award was just the latest in a long litany of well-deserved honors. The 1961 season would be his last in a long and illustrious career.²⁵

Meanwhile, Eddie Robinson was visibly frustrated. He castigated Southwestern Athletic Conference officials for "conspiracy to purge vocal opposition to friendship politics." Grambling's basketball team had been fined \$600 by the conference for playing more than the allotted 26 games, and Robinson saw hypocrisy. "We didn't violate a conference regulation because no such rule or regulation exists in the SWAC constitution." Further-

more, Arkansas AM&N, Wiley, and Southern had all played more than twenty-six games in the 1959 and 1960 seasons. It was no coincidence, he thought, that both Wiley and Southern had representatives on the conference compliance committee. They were saving themselves and intentionally and unfairly punishing their conference competition. Why else would Southern not be penalized for holding a 43-day spring football practice session in violation of conference regulations? "Neither was it coincidental," he continued, "that a fine was levied and later rescinded by the compliance committee over use of an ineligible baseball player by the Jaguars."²⁶

Robinson's anger seemed justified. "Unlike other athletic conferences, we never have an agenda of business to follow."²⁷ Robinson's condemnation spread to the whole of conference policy making and decision making, but it was clear who his main target was. Southern was on the compliance committee. Southern had overplayed the basketball schedule. Southern had held illegal spring football practices. Southern had used ineligible baseball players. And Southern had never been fined for any of it.

The accusations wouldn't lead to new fines, but they would surely intensify a state rivalry that was already at the boiling point.

The 1961 Tigers returned a number of players from the 1960 season, but they lost mammoth 290-pound offensive lineman Ernie Ladd and star fullback Preston Powell. "We will have to tread carefully," said Robinson. Still, Grambling was chosen as the preseason favorite to win the SWAC title, most pundits taking the coach's usual false modesty as a calculated ruse. The Tigers opened the season with a convincing 59-0 win over Texas College. Meanwhile, Mumford's Jaguars seemed to have taken a step backward in the coach's final season. Despite the coach's preseason awards, Mumford's team dropped its opening game to Texas Southern. "For every three straight opening game wins Southern can put together," commented the *Louisiana Weekly*, "leave it to Texas Southern to spoil it."²⁸

The loss, however, did nothing to diminish Jaguar fans' confidence going into the Grambling game, traditionally the second game of the season. "Supporters on Southern's merry-go-round are tabbing the Jaguars virtual shoo-ins, despite last week's 14-6 setback by Texas Southern, while Grambling war whoops boast that the Tigers will leave claw-marks on the visitor's backside." Mumford's preseason plaudits and Robinson's frustrated accusations only intensified the feeling among the fans, as 18,232 settled into Grambling's small stadium on a hot, sunny Halloween afternoon.²⁹

The first half seemed to have all the defensive intensity one might expect from the play of two bitter rivals, and as the teams left the field at

the halfway point, the game was tied 3–3. In the third quarter, the favored Tigers moved ahead when running back Howard McCowan ran for a 35-yard touchdown. But the 9–3 score wouldn't hold. Southern quarterback Gerald Kimble found his stride late in the third quarter, passing first for a 6-yard touchdown to Elijah Harris then running for a 1-yard touchdown. A late field goal made the final score 20–9. The Tigers' 9-game winning streak was over. They had lost to the Jaguars again.³⁰

While both teams ended their conference campaigns behind champion Jackson State, Grambling clearly had the stronger team. In mid-November, Southern had lost to Wiley 21–19. The following week, Grambling defeated the same team 71–28.³¹ If there was any talent gap between the teams, it was, perhaps for the first time, in favor of Grambling. But the psychological gap—the one that continually reminded the Tigers that they were little Grambling from rural northeast Louisiana and that the Jaguars were the premier state university—had never gone away. Despite Eddie Robinson's success at remaking the Tigers into a national power, he was, with the exception of 1947, unable to hurdle his one south Louisiana obstacle, whether on the SWAC competition committee or on the football field.

As the 1962 school year got underway, Robinson and Grambling remained focused on Southern. Still, no one on campus was blind to the civil rights fury moving all around them. As hundreds of black students registered at Grambling and Southern, one black student, a twenty-nine-year-old Air Force veteran named James H. Meredith, registered at the University of Mississippi. It was the culmination of a long series of court battles, and the riots that ensued after his registration brought 2 deaths, more than 75 casualties, more than 150 arrests, and the federalized National Guard to the northwest Mississippi campus.³²

Oxford, Mississippi, wasn't that much farther from Grambling than was Baton Rouge, and the continued campus violence was surely not lost on the Tiger football team. Still, the players showed no ill effects in their first game of the season, a 55–0 drubbing of Benedict College. The crowd of six thousand and the team on the field chanted, "Beat Southern," early and often. It was the second game of the season that was the true opener—the game that would be the real barometer of the team's worth. Fans and players alike were consumed with rectifying the team's consistent failure against the Jaguars. Robinson was, too, but his typical pessimism tempered his anticipation. When asked his thoughts after reviewing the game film from 1961's loss, Robinson told reporters, "It looked like a horror movie."³³



James Meredith's integration of the University of Mississippi sparked riots across campus and forced renewed attention to the collegiate education of black southerners. Its proximity to Louisiana only heightened awareness of the event at Grambling and Southern. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, U.S. News & World Report Magazine Collection, photo by Marion S. Trikosko*

Southern, meanwhile, was struggling. Bob Lee replaced the legendary Arnett Mumford, and the Jaguars demonstrated the obvious birth pangs of a new administration. The team opened the season with another loss to Texas Southern. As Grambling and its fans poured into Southern's University Stadium on September 29, the Jaguars appeared vulnerable.

But once again, the Southern defense rallied against its rival. In the first half, Grambling only ran 13 plays from scrimmage and never advanced the ball past its own 42-yard line. Still, Grambling had, if nothing else, resolve. Beat Southern, Beat Southern, Beat Southern. With 4 minutes left in the first quarter, Grambling's J. D. Garrett intercepted a pass from Southern halfback Verdis Theus and returned it 47 yards for a touchdown. Then, after a second-quarter Jaguar field goal, Southern attempted an on-side kick. Grambling end Charles Cook came out of the ensuing scrum with the football, then returned it 61 yards for the Tigers' second score of the half. Both teams played to a scoreless second-half tie, and when the final gun sounded, the Tigers were on top, 14-3.³⁴

Beat Southern, Beat Southern, Beat Southern.

Both teams struggled through the rest of the 1962 season, but for the

Tigers the year was an unqualified success. For the first time since 1947, and the second time ever, they had beaten the Jaguars.³⁵

But the sustenance of success that typically lasted through the off-season would dissipate in the cloud of violence that erupted in the summer of 1963. Most of it was centered in Birmingham, Alabama. White police officers, led by the infamous “Bull” Connor, unleashed dogs and water hoses on black protesters. Compounding the tension, four young girls were killed when white radicals bombed Birmingham’s 16th Street Baptist Church. When thousands of Birmingham residents protested the city’s lack of action after the bombing, the city’s police killed two more children in the resulting melee.

Birmingham was far from Louisiana, but the violence entered the homes of everyone in Grambling and Scotlandville—the homes of everyone in the nation, the homes of everyone in the world—through television. Later in the summer, on August 28, 1963, an integrated group of more than two hundred thousand people marched through Washington, D.C., to the Lincoln Memorial. There, in the heat of the late afternoon sun, Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. He noted that 1963 was the centennial of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. “But one hundred years later,” he announced, “the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we’ve come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.”³⁶

The students and fans of Grambling and Southern knew full well the state of that shameful condition, and they—like everyone else in the country—saw King’s televised speech as a fitting punctuation to a turbulent summer. It didn’t compensate for the deaths of civil rights protesters. It didn’t compensate for the murder of four innocent girls. But “I Have a Dream” did validate the work of civil rights workers and did provide a measure of spiritual justification for the turmoil that unfolded throughout the summer. At the same time, it heightened racial tensions throughout the South.

Both Southern and Grambling football teams, then, entered fall camp in a fundamentally different world from the one of twelve months prior. If racial prospects looked tenuously bright, however, the Tigers’ prospects for success did not. Grambling lost eight of its 1962 players to the pro-

fessional ranks, and pundits were unsure about their replacements. Still, the stature that came from placing so many collegians into professional sports had only magnified the reputation of the school. By 1963, enrollment reached 3,100, but the growth of the student body did not match the exponential rate at which Tiger athletes excelled professionally. A university spokesman announced before the 1963 football season that “ex-Tigers will receive in excess of \$250,000 in bonuses and salaries from AFL [American Football League], NFL, national basketball association and major league baseball teams this year.” Such success would be a strong recruiting tool in years to come, but in 1963, it just meant a lack of experience on the football team.³⁷

Southern, meanwhile, seemed poised for revenge. “It’s as if all of the frustrations and heartbreaks which plagued the Jaguars during last season, have been carefully bundled and dropped into the nearby Mississippi River from which depths they shall never return,” reported the *Louisiana Weekly*. “As head coach Bob Lee starts his second season at the helm, surrounded by a staff of veteran assistants who started the venture with him, the outlook appears very bright.” Star senior receiver Sidney Williams was back, as were quarterbacks Carrol Holman and Alfred Simpson. In anticipation of record crowds at home games, Southern sports information director Bennie Thomas announced a shuttle service to University Stadium and a box-lunch program for those who traveled from out of town. Fans were confident, and the Jaguars validated the preseason hype by finally downing their traditional first game opponent, Texas Southern.³⁸

But the following weekend, September 28, the test would be far different. Southern had owned Grambling in the overall series, but with Grambling’s second victory against their south Louisiana counterparts in 1962, and with the Tigers’ growing reputation for developing professional prospects, that north Louisiana inferiority complex had all but disappeared. In anticipation of a large Lincoln Parish crowd, Grambling officials moved the game from two o’clock to seven. For the first time in the series, the north Louisiana turnstiles would turn more than twenty thousand times.³⁹

The game that the 20,129 rabid fans witnessed would be the closest in the history of the series to date, intensifying an already heated rivalry that threatened to brim past the boiling point. After a scoreless first quarter, Grambling fullback Henry Dyer led the Tigers on an early 69-yard second-quarter drive, capped by an 8-yard touchdown pass from Ron Pennington to Leonard Griffin. But the Jaguars would answer when Carrol Holman reached John Clayton in the endzone, tying the score 7–7 at halftime.⁴⁰

Southern seemed to find its footing in the early third quarter, taking the opening drive 66 yards for an Alvin Haymond 1-yard touchdown dive. The Tigers responded with a march of their own. Then another. Late in the fourth quarter, the home fans reveled in a 21–14 lead. Whispers through the crowd echoed in the packed stadium. Can we really do it twice in a row? Beat Southern, Beat Southern, Beat Southern.⁴¹

The Jaguars, however, were the ones with the chip on their shoulders this season, and, more important, they were the ones with the ball. Carrol Holman led his team 64 yards down the field in fits and starts. It wasn't a dominating drive, but it continued to creep forward, forward, eventually to the 9-yard line. From there, the quarterback threw to Frank Pitts for a closing touchdown. It was 21–20.⁴²

So now what? The safe play would certainly have been an extra point. After last year's debacle, a tie would have been a victory in and of itself. But Lee's lack of success in his first season was exacerbated by the shadow of Arnett Mumford, whose overwhelming victory total—and pristine record against Grambling—still loomed over the football program. Besides, this was Southern, the traditional state academic and athletic power. There were no moral victories at Southern, particularly against the archrival Tigers. Coach Lee sent the offense back onto the field.

The decision electrified the crowd. They're going for 2! Stop them here and we win! Would Mumford have gone for 2? Can we stop them? Beat Southern, Beat Southern, Beat Southern.

Holman took the ball from the 3-yard line and tossed it forward to Frank Huddleston. Two points. Game over. 21–22. "Southern University," wrote Collie Nicholson, "is still the villain in Grambling's football life."⁴³

More important for Bob Lee, the victory served as a validation of his employment. The growing pains of a new administration are rarely tolerated in competitive athletics, and the coach's 5–5 opening season and loss to Grambling had won him few friends in Scotlandville. But now the Jags were once again undefeated after the first two games of the season. In fact, Lee's team would win their first seven games. But then it all fell apart. Southern lost its last three games to close with a 7–3 record. Grambling also stumbled, but that was little consolation in south Louisiana.⁴⁴

Consolation was in short supply in late 1963. Less than two months after the Grambling-Southern game, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, leaving the entire country monumentally shaken. Kennedy wasn't the civil rights visionary he claimed to be, but he was friends with Martin Luther King, Jr. Though his successor, Lyndon Johnson, would initiate sweeping civil and voting rights legislation, Kennedy's death was

interpreted as a blow to the black rights cause. As 1963 faded into the depths of 1964, the violence of Birmingham inched closer to the Louisiana border when the Freedom Summer voter registration and education drive began in Mississippi in June 1964. Thousands of volunteers, white and black, descended upon the state to register voters, provide alternative education, and fill the rolls of a new potential delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City.

But there was violence. The murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman again littered the national headlines with tales of white southern atavism. Throughout the summer, four civil rights workers were killed. There were more than eighty casualties and one thousand arrests. More than sixty black churches, homes, and businesses were bombed.

Both universities were deeply affected by the activism nearby. At Southern, for example, Felton Clark expelled a group of students in early 1962 for participating in nonviolent protests in Baton Rouge, leading to a massive boycott of classes. Protests at swimming pools and businesses in the city in 1963 prompted less action from Southern authorities, probably because they happened during the summer. Grambling was just as sympathetic to the civil rights cause, though less demonstrative. Radical protest wouldn't begin in earnest until later in the decade. The campus was cloistered in a small black town, and though there was staunch segregation in the parish seat of Ruston, the city of Grambling itself proved a relative barrier to many of its harsher dictates.⁴⁵

As summer gave way to fall, both Grambling and Southern began pre-season practice in a state of racial tension, with the nationally televised violence creeping nearer to the banks of the Mississippi River. The fans of both teams found catharsis in their respective schools, seeing in the pre-season punditry and discussion an example of successful black autonomy and an escape from the pressures of being the hated in a hate-filled white South. The football teams provided continuity in a time of overwhelming change.

Of course, football was not static. The year 1964 was a watershed in small college football, as a new rule change allowed unlimited substitutions during game stoppages. Any time the clock stopped running, coaches could replace players at will. Between plays, even as the clock continued to run, up to two players could be substituted.⁴⁶ The cumulative effect of the new substitution rules was to create a faster, more specialized game. Players, who still often played both offense and defense in the 1960s, could now get more rest. Or they could remain on one side of the ball, spelled by re-

placements after injuries or a series of particularly taxing plays. The platoon system that the new rules created fundamentally changed the game. Prior to 1964, teams like Grambling and Southern would send in full replacement units for specific drives, using a line system similar to that still practiced in hockey. Now, coaches could focus on specific matchups, could strategically change personnel to fit the needs of certain plays. The creativity and complexity of offenses and defenses—and particularly of defenses—would grow exponentially after the change.

Bob Lee seemed confident that Southern would see a windfall from the new rules. “Even though there will be a lot of work to be done in the readying process, those of us on the coaching staff feel that we will be helped by the new substitution rule.” Still, as fall practice opened, it seemed the Jaguars would need more help than that. Seventeen lettermen were gone from the 1963 team. And then there was the weight of last season’s end. Sports information director Bennie Thomas called it “the burden of history,” reminding fans that “like it or not, the Jaguars are forced to begin the season with the stigma of a three game losing streak at their backs.”⁴⁷ The burdens, of history or otherwise, seemed to be everywhere.

Eddie Robinson returned twenty-seven lettermen and didn’t have a late-season losing streak playing on the psyche of his team, but he remained typically pessimistic about his chances. The schedule was more difficult than that of 1963, and the distribution of returning players left significant gaps that needed to be filled. The freshman recruiting class was talented but unproven.⁴⁸

The opening games of the season demonstrated that Lee’s concerns were well placed and that Robinson’s were typical bluster. The Jaguars eked out a road victory over Texas Southern, while Grambling stomped Alcorn State.⁴⁹ The following Saturday would be the true test for both teams.

“A special brand of Alumna Madness grips Louisiana this weekend,” the *Louisiana Weekly* reported. More than 17,000 packed Southern’s University Stadium in anticipation of the now-annual contest. And what they saw was discouraging in the first half. Grambling running back Leroy Carter ran roughshod over the Jaguars, scoring on touchdown runs of 56 yards in the first quarter and 8 in the second. The home team couldn’t seem to muster any offense. At intermission, the Jaguars left the field down 13–0.

But in the second half, Southern’s fortunes started to turn. A field goal and a Davis Huddleston 69-yard punt return made the score 13–10. The

offense still wasn't working, but the Jags were scoring nonetheless. After a Grambling fumble on its own 25, the Jaguars found themselves in the lead after Laurie Green's quarterback dive from the 1-yard line. It was 13–17 in the fourth quarter. Another comeback! Southern was going to do it again! Time was evaporating in the final period, and Grambling was again forced to punt. The crowd was frenzied. Huddleston had already returned one punt for a touchdown. Could he do it again? Could he?

No. As so often happens in sports, the hero turned goat very quickly. Huddleston fumbled the punt and gave the Tigers the ball on the Jaguar 40-yard line. Seven plays later, fullback Henry Dyer ran 13 yards for the game-winning score. The deflated crowd sat stunned as the scoreboard showed the final score. 20–17.⁵⁰

As it had so many times before, the Grambling-Southern game served as a barometer for the rest of the season. Though the Jaguars would pull a remarkable late November upset of undefeated Florida A&M, the season was a disaster for them in total. The new substitution rules didn't help. Southern finished at the bottom of the conference standings with a 2–5 record.⁵¹

Meanwhile, Grambling cruised to an 8–1 record and a second-place SWAC finish. And then there was the Sugar Cup Classic. At the beginning of the season, Grambling negotiated to play a neutral-site game in New Orleans at City Park Stadium to close the Tigers' season. The opponent for this Sugar Cup Classic would be determined later. Ten years prior to the birth of the Bayou Classic, Robinson and the athletic department were already plotting to play high-level neutral-site contests to broaden the school's prestige. In the inaugural event, Grambling's opponent was Gulf Coast Athletic Conference champion Bishop. Though rain kept attendance modest, Grambling won handily, 42–6, and the Tigers' first New Orleans game was a success.⁵²

But the postseason games weren't finished. The Tigers also accepted a bid to play in the thirty-second annual Orange Blossom Classic in Miami against Florida A&M. The Orange Blossom was the Rattlers' postseason showcase, the prototype for the Sugar Cup, and the home team proved its dominance 42–15.⁵³ More important, however, the game demonstrated Grambling's eagerness to play in such public exhibitions. The Tigers would come to rely on such contests for both exposure and revenue in the years to come, and when the opportunity arose in the next decade to make their heated rivalry with Southern a neutral-site showcase, they would jump at the opportunity.

The same would be true in 1965, but before Grambling or Southern could get to postseason showcase games, they had to survive the season. Of course, before they could survive the season, they had simply to survive. In another tumultuous year for civil rights advocacy, the headlines in Louisiana were dominated instead by the weather.

In early September, a powerful storm touched North Carolina before moving south to Miami, and through to the Gulf of Mexico. It then made its way through the Gulf toward the mouth of the Mississippi. At more than 300 miles in diameter, with winds over 150 miles per hour, Hurricane Betsy plowed through Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and Orleans parishes on September 9. There was little warning. There was no time for large-scale evacuations.⁵⁴

The winds leveled 98 percent of the town of Grand Isle. Cars and houses were destroyed throughout the various parishes. In New Orleans, the storm uprooted trees and destroyed buildings, telephone poles, and other communications and power equipment. But even with little warning and no large-scale evacuation, there didn't seem to be any deaths. On the morning of September 10, the worst seemed to have passed. But then the water came. The hurricane had pushed a huge tidal wave through the canals around New Orleans, feeding water over the levees and into homes and businesses. Desperate people began racing for higher ground, moving to ceilings and attics. For many, even that didn't work.⁵⁵

More than 160,000 homes were damaged in and around New Orleans by the flooding resulting from Hurricane Betsy. Whole towns were wiped off the map. The storm affected New Orleans' Ninth Ward most dramatically, where tens of thousands of homes of lower-income black families were either ruined or completely destroyed by the water and wind. Total property damage in Louisiana was more than \$1 billion. The hurricane killed eighty-two people officially, though many maintain that the number was actually in the hundreds. The lack of death reporting, it was charged, was the result of racism, as was the fact that lower-income black homes were more dramatically affected. Of course, they were closest to the levees, but they were also some of the last to experience the rescue missions.⁵⁶

Both Baton Rouge and northeast Louisiana would be inundated with evacuees after Hurricane Betsy, as the relationship between race and weather dominated the headlines. The storm damaged buildings on Southern's campus, including University Stadium, and school officials were unsure if the season's home opener against Texas Southern could be played. Forty

years later, a similar disaster and similar discussions would have an even greater impact on the Grambling-Southern rivalry. But in 1965, a desperate Louisiana population looked to football to salve its wounds.

As fall practice began, Grambling again looked strong and Southern again appeared weak. Bob Lee's relatively unsuccessful stint as Jaguar head football coach had ended, giving way to the new leadership of Robert Smith. Smitty (as he was known) had molded Southern's track and field team into a national power, and fans hoped he could do the same with the grid squad. Still, you needed athletes, and the Jaguars didn't seem to have them. "But since it takes recruiting to get there firstest-with-the-mostest," argued Negro Press International's Lloyd Wells, "Southern, being the richest school in the loop, is going to come up with a blue chipper soon." Meanwhile, Grambling was loaded with blue chip recruits and potential NFL talent.⁵⁷

The season's opening week demonstrated this discrepancy. Southern's Texas Southern game did go on as scheduled, but the night game was played during the day, as the storm had demolished the stadium's lighting system. The Jaguars only managed a tie. At the same time, Grambling earned a road win at Alcorn State. But there was still reason for optimism in Scotlandville. "Naturally I wanted to win this one real bad," admitted Coach Smith, "but I have nothing but pride and praise for the squad." Texas Southern was a popular choice among pundits to take the 1965 SWAC title. The tie was far better than most experts expected.⁵⁸

While Southern regrouped, Grambling enjoyed the limelight. "Grambling is literally bulging with talent scouts who judiciously follow players with their scientifically refined systems," reported the *Louisiana Weekly*. Seventeen different AFL and NFL scouts kept contact with the team, and at least seven Tigers were expected to appear in the December drafts. "It is unlikely," noted one report, "that the song writer who wrote the lyrics for 'Saturday Night is the Loneliest Night in the Week,' could accept his own premise if he were to make a visit to Grambling College during the football season."⁵⁹

The future pros, however, would have to wait for their shot at archrival Southern. The gravity of the interstate contest led organizers to place it for the first time at the end of the schedule in 1965, rather than keeping it as the second game of the season. There it would stay. In the run-up to late November, the Jaguars suffered through another tumultuous season, but Grambling lost only two games. A victory against Southern would give the team its first outright SWAC championship. It would also mark the first time the Tigers won the game in consecutive seasons. North Loui-

siana fans were desperate for both marks, and 19,310 crammed into the Tigers' stadium to see it happen. More than twenty of those in attendance were professional scouts.

They wouldn't be disappointed. Unlike previous seasons, the game wouldn't be close. By halftime, the Tigers were up 20–0, paced by All-American fullback Henry Dyer, who ran for 152 yards and a touchdown in the rout. But Dyer wasn't alone in the backfield. Halfbacks Leroy Carter, Charles Washington, and Goldie Sellers all had the scouts drooling. With tackles Frank Cornish and Norman Davis and guard Willie Young, each legitimate professional prospects in their own right, opening holes for them, the burden on quarterback Eddie Robinson, Jr., was minimal. Southern did manage two fourth-quarter scores, but the effort was too little too late. The Grambling stars emerged victorious, 34–14.⁶⁰

The Tigers went on to demolish Lincoln College in the Sugar Cup Classic, earning them a bid in the Abilene, Texas, Pecan Bowl in December. After the Lincoln victory, a group of fans and alumni announced that the Grambling coach would be honored in April with a special "Eddie Robinson Day" for his spectacular twenty-five-year career. Southern, meanwhile, was left licking its wounds.⁶¹ The state's traditional power had, since Mumford's retirement, taken a backseat to the north Louisiana upstarts. Grambling had completed its hurdle of the psychological obstacle that Southern placed in front of them. From now on, despite the up-and-down vagaries of seasons good and bad, the teams would meet definitively as equals.

The year 1965 was a watershed in civil rights. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 rectified some of the inadequacies of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, providing the ballot to hundreds of thousands of formerly disfranchised black southern voters. At the same time, however, the civil rights movement was in the process of a radical turn, slowly shedding the doctrine of peaceful nonviolence for a new philosophy of armed resistance. The contradictions inherent in the state of civil rights seemed to mirror those of Grambling and Southern. The success of one seemed the demise of the other. Still, the rivalry wasn't a zero-sum gain. The cyclical nature of college football success ensured that rumors of Southern's demise were greatly exaggerated. After losing two games in a row to Grambling, the Jaguars were no longer the lone light at the top of the Louisiana black football pantheon. But neither had they burned out.

5

Black Power, White Power 1966-1971

On July 10, 1964, in tiny Jonesboro, Louisiana, the Deacons for Defense and Justice met for the first time. The Deacons, a group dominated by World War II and Korean War military veterans, sought to protect civil rights workers from segregationist violence. What set them apart from the other groups of the era was their blatant carrying of firearms. They described themselves as the bodyguards of the movement.

So it was that in the summer of 1966 James Meredith, who had integrated Ole Miss in 1962, began a protest march from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi. His “March Against Fear,” however, came to an abrupt end when he was shot by a white Mississippi segregationist and hospitalized. In response, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), CORE, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) all volunteered to continue the march for him. But while the Mississippi Highway Patrol provided token protection for the group, their most effective defense came from the Deacons, who crossed the Mississippi River to ensure that no other marchers would meet with violence.

The very fact of their presence indicated that the tide was turning among many in the movement. Perhaps peaceful nonviolence wasn’t the way to go. Participants had been marching for thirteen years. And still they were marching. It was a hot night in the marchers’ camp when young Stokely Carmichael, leader of SNCC, gave a powerful speech with a new message: “Black Power!” he screamed. “Black Power!” The crowd called back to him, echoing a new mantra that would fundamentally change the dominant strategy of civil rights activism. As the 1960s bore on, Louisiana’s Deacons would not be the only armed reformers.

But even as civil rights workers turned their frustration at the slow pace of change into new arguments for armed self-resistance, black colleges were seeking to return the favor of integration. “All-white and all-colored athletic competition is gradually fading from the scene in the world of sports,” wrote the *Norfolk Journal and Guide’s* Cal Jacox. He reported in late June 1966 that Bill Archie, head football coach of Norfolk State, was actively searching for white athletes. Archie believed in integration, but that wasn’t why he was enlarging his recruiting scope. With more and more large state universities recruiting black athletes, the once-cloistered talent pool from which universities like Norfolk, Grambling, or Southern recruited was dwindling away. Black athletes began choosing to attend universities that would provide them more professional exposure and a more universally recognized degree. The two dominant mainstream southern conferences, the Southeastern and Southwestern, had yet to integrate. But they were the final major conference holdouts, and the rapid expansion of integrated collegiate football placed smaller all-black universities like Grambling and Southern at a competitive disadvantage. “With their rosters thinned by this invasion of what was once an apparently limited source of personnel the colored college can no longer ignore the challenge that confronts them,” chided Jacox. “Integration, as this corner constantly contends, is a two-way street.”¹

In early September, Norfolk State made it official. The football program admitted three white northern football recruits from Pleasantville, New Jersey. At the same time, the Virginia Union football team also accepted four white athletes from New York and New Hampshire.² It was both a clarion call and a sign of surrender. As many of the leaders of black activism began advocating the benefits of African American autonomy, the leaders of black football teams began opening their programs to integration. This was, in part, the logical outgrowth of fourteen years of civil rights advocacy since *Brown*—the next step in a movement that had been arguing insistently for interracial equality in social life. At the same time, it seemed to be a move away from the new Black Power militancy sweeping through the civil rights movement, which argued that keeping black institutions sacrosanct—keeping them fundamentally black—was vital to maintaining African American cultural identity.

Still, white recruiting at black colleges and universities was also an acknowledgment of the Black Power argument. Integration caused inherent problems for autonomous black institutions, often marginalizing them to the point of irrelevance. The last vestiges of Negro League baseball, for example, had dissipated in 1960 because the integration of the

major leagues had made alternatives unnecessary or uninteresting to spectators. Similarly, the integration of major college football only enhanced the product that those universities could sell to fans. And in the zero-sum game of college recruiting, their benefit was the necessary detriment of smaller black colleges that in one way or another depended on segregation for their powerful football teams.

When Virginia's black universities began to integrate, the writing was on the wall. Change or die.

For the 1966 season, however, Louisiana's black college football teams would remain, as always, black. Eddie Robinson, too, would keep in usual form. His preseason predictions were typically dire. The team was young, the schedule was difficult. Breaking even would be a marked success. "Despite the sideline consensus that the tactical status remains quo," reported the *Louisiana Weekly*, "Robinson insists that graduation, poor grades, professional football and the Viet Nam war have evaporated large chunks of his working capital."³

Of course, while professional football tended to hit Grambling harder than most small college teams, graduation and poor grades were problems that all teams faced. So, too, was Vietnam. Though the military draft lottery would not begin until 1969, many college students, including athletes, were part of the National Guard. Most were called to some form of active duty.

Southern coach Robert Smith dealt with the same problems as Robinson, but he remained far more optimistic. A number of Jaguars from the 1965 team made professional rosters and the schedule appeared difficult, but hopes were high. Work commenced throughout the summer on University Stadium's lights—damaged as they had been by Hurricane Betsy—and the team's home opener was defiantly scheduled as a night game. "I just don't see where we need to take a back seat to any team on the schedule," said Smith.⁴

The hope for both teams, however, was shaken the first week of the season. Southern fell to Texas State, and though Grambling would open a week later, they, too, felt an opening season sting. The Sugar Cup Classic, it appeared, was on shaky ground. Grambling had blown out its first two opponents in the game, and if the contest was to continue, a much stronger opponent would need to be scheduled.⁵

Three weeks later, the Tigers were 1–1–1 with no marquee opponent for their New Orleans game. The sponsors reneged. Grambling's first attempt at an annual game in New Orleans was dead. The idea, however, of an annual neutral-site game in the state's largest city was planted firmly in

the minds of Robinson and other Grambling officials. In fact, the machinations that would ultimately bring the Tigers their new annual New Orleans game were already in the works. In 1966, New Orleans football news was dominated by the city's new professional team, the Saints. And, ultimately, it would be the birth of the Saints that helped give rise to the Sugar Cup's inheritor, the Bayou Classic.⁶

But that was yet to come. As New Orleans was accepting a new professional franchise, Grambling was trying to recover from the frustrations of a disappointing early season. Southern had far more dire concerns. In early November, Shirley Mae Johnson, a Southern student, was murdered by her husband, a 1965 Southern graduate, in the couple's apartment adjacent to campus. The incident rocked the school and was sure to cast a pall over the coming contest with rival Grambling. Again Southern's fans would find solace in football, would hide away in the game that meant so much to them.⁷

On November 19, more than twenty thousand packed University Stadium to see the Jaguars take on the Tigers. Grambling had recovered from its early season stumbles and was undefeated in conference play, but Southern was undefeated at home and with a win could claim a share of the SWAC championship.

The Jaguars drove the crowd into a frenzy, relying on their defense to beat back the memories of two early-season losses and the nearby Johnson murder to claim their piece of the conference crown. Southern quarterback Joe Williams led an opening drive for a touchdown, passing to Rhome Nixon for a 12-yard score. But Grambling countered with an 84-yard strike from James Harris to Esses Johnson, and late in the first quarter, the Tigers were driving again and seemed poised for another score. But Jaguar defensive back Ray Jones would have none of that. He intercepted a Harris pass, his first of two on the day, and returned it 84 yards for another Southern touchdown. Williams followed in the second quarter with a touchdown run and another touchdown pass. At halftime Southern had a 31–7 lead, and its defense, led by All-Americans Pete Barnes and Alfred Beauchamp, ensured that the lead would hold. At game's end the score was 41–14, but Grambling's final touchdown was a virtually meaningless score with only 14 seconds left to play. On the day, Southern's defense intercepted Grambling five times—led by star defensive back Melvin Blount, who had three interceptions—and recovered three fumbles. The unprecedented eight turnovers gave Southern its share of a championship with the Tigers.⁸

But though the two were technically co-champions, Southern's victory



Grambling tackle Norman Davis was one of the Tigers' seemingly endless parade of stars and professional prospects.

Courtesy Louisiana Weekly

made the team an undisputed victor to its fans. This was precisely why the game was moved to the end of the season, why it was given a place of prominence on the schedule. Southern would enter 1967 as co-champion of the conference, but it would be the acknowledged champion of Louisiana.

As Southern dismantled Grambling in 1966, a thousand miles from Scotlandville, in tiny Alcoa, Tennessee, Albert Davis was completing his senior season as the star fullback for Alcoa High School. Coaches for the University of Tennessee Volunteers, members of the lily-white Southeastern Conference, had attended every game. In June 1967, the Vols signed Davis, making him the first black football recruit in the conference. There were also rumors that the University of Florida was enamored with a black quarterback at Gainesville's integrated public high school. Again the threats to the black college talent pool encroached.⁹

But black colleges had even more to worry about that summer. *Ebony* magazine's August issue included a scathing manifesto by former Howard

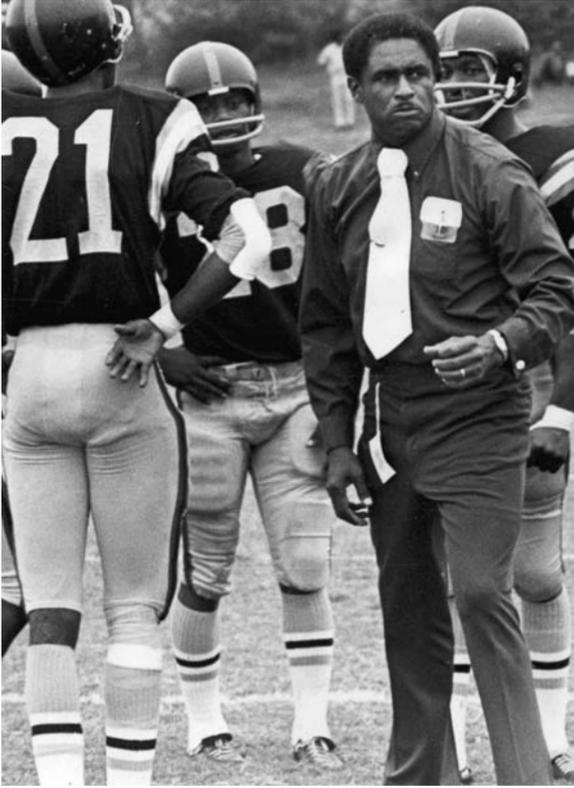
professor and Black Power advocate Nathan Hare, who castigated HBCUs as “caricatures of the most conspicuous aspects of white college trivia—perfunctory learning, grandiose ‘hooded’ ceremonies, fraternity fanfare, and a panorama of adolescent pursuits.” These schools, Hare argued, were creatures of white attempts to keep their black counterparts in a state of subservience, or to allay slaveowner guilt at the procreation of bastard children. “Today there are more than 100 Negro colleges housing about 150,000 students,” he argued. “These colleges, in the minds of many of their students, represent in almost every way a total failure.”¹⁰

White college integration, student unrest, and attacks on the academic rigor of black colleges had taken their toll. It didn’t help that black southern athletes were failing entrance exams for northern colleges that recruited them. In late October, the *Chicago Defender* suggested that major colleges in the South recruit northern black athletes, who, it argued, received a far superior secondary education. *Louisiana Weekly* editor Jim Hall fired back. There were plenty of southern black high school athletes who could pass major university entrance exams. Those major universities, however, recruited students with poor academic records intentionally, allowing them to argue that the school made an effort, but that black students simply couldn’t compete academically.¹¹

Inherent in this scapegoating, however, was a more insidious critique. Both the *Defender* in its attack and the *Weekly* in its defense seemed to validate Hare’s contention that the academic rigor of black universities wasn’t very rigorous at all. And it was in this desultory climate that Louisiana’s two premier black universities began their 1967 football season.

The reputation of black colleges had taken a series of hits, and it left them licking their wounds. Grambling’s football team entered the season with wounds of its own after closing its last campaign by being blown out by rival Southern. Still, the Tigers were two-time defending SWAC champions and starting junior quarterback James Harris was returning, along with lettermen at most positions. The program managed to deflect some of the broader criticism hitting black athletic teams when the UPI reported before the season that Grambling led the nation in number of active players on AFL professional rosters, edging out Southern California, Michigan State, and even LSU. Robinson was typically dire in his outlook for the season, and in late August defensive backs Al Dunn and Charles Addison were injured in a car accident.¹²

When the coaches’ preseason ballots came in, it was Southern, not Grambling, they picked to repeat as conference champions. The Jaguars returned both of the quarterbacks in their dual system. Joe Williams and



Robinson's pessimistic demeanor with the press turned into motivation on the practice field.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

Willie Johnson were both adept at running and passing. “Southern,” remarked one commentator, “will have outstanding quarterbacking and hard to match horses in the backfield which makes them a solid threat to repeat as SWAC champions.”¹³

But Southern's relationship to its conference, despite the success, was tenuous. The Jaguar track and field program had always been successful. The team's Willie Davenport had that summer won his third straight Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) 120-yard high hurdles championship and was expected to be a member of the 1968 Olympic team. It was this success in track, along with Southern's sustained high standard of football play, that led university president Felton Clark to announce the school was considering abandoning the SWAC for what he described as “newer and

larger opportunities.” Of course, the criticism and controversy swirling around black college academics and athletics certainly had something to do with his announcement. “We need a freshness that wider, newer, and more comprehensive competition would give us,” he argued. “We need, as is true for all schools which have been competing only among themselves for years, to rid ourselves of the deep emotional involvements and rivalries which are inherent in such a situation.”¹⁴

The admonition about ending rivalries surely perked the ears of many in the state. But this was, above all else, integration talk. The man who had been so opposed to sit-ins was now far more fearful of the new militancy that threatened the reputation of his university. “In its proper perspective in an academic community,” he said, “we need to make athletics a respectable vehicle for growth, understanding, and fellowship among peoples of climes, geography, cultures, races, and environments. This is what our colleges are doing in other fields, so, why not in athletics?”¹⁵

It was into this charged environment, with black colleges under fire and Southern threatening to abandon the conference, that the two teams entered their annual contest. As in 1966, Grambling, with yet another successful season, could win the conference outright with a victory, while Southern could salvage a share of the title by defeating the first-place Tigers. The 27,171 fans that packed the stadium on the Grambling campus were confident. Not only was Southern a traditional rival, but now it was threatening to weaken the conference through secession.

That confidence didn't last long, as the Jaguars' Robert Holmes opened the game with a 9-yard touchdown run. But Grambling scored a touchdown of its own soon after, before both teams traded field goals. Another Tiger touchdown run by fullback Henry Jones put Grambling up 17-13 at halftime. In the third quarter, Southern's Marcus Allen gave the Jaguars a 20-17 lead on an 11-yard run, but the fourth quarter would belong to the home team. The Tigers scored 10 unanswered points en route to a 27-20 victory. Grambling was SWAC champion for the third year in a row. After a victory over Florida A&M in the Orange Blossom Classic, Grambling was named by the *Pittsburgh Courier* to a share of the Black National Championship along with Morgan State.¹⁶ Perhaps more important, any attempt by Southern to abscond from the league would now appear to be surrender rather than a search for a more diverse and competitive opponent pool. Grambling had won, and so had the Southwestern Athletic Conference. Southern would stay.

But the climate in which they played was becoming more heated as 1967 gave way to tumultuous 1968. In early April 1968, Martin Luther

King, Jr., was killed in Memphis. President Lyndon Johnson declared a national day of mourning, but the gesture couldn't stem a wave of polarizing riots across the country.

The polarization, not surprisingly, bled liberally into the world of sports. In July, *Sports Illustrated* began a five-part series titled "The Black Athlete—A Shameful Story." Author Jack Olsen gave a scathing indictment of the common assumption that sports provided a legitimate route out of poverty for African Americans. "At the most," he argued, "sports has led a few thousand Negroes into a better life while substituting a meaningless dream for hundreds of thousands of others. It has helped to perpetuate an oppressive system." By encouraging black children to emphasize athletics, the system in place kept them from dreaming of being doctors, lawyers, or other desperately needed black professionals. Furthermore, major college football programs often recruited athletes, not students. Black recruits were typically discouraged from taking difficult courses or majoring in challenging subjects, the dominant argument being that the black athlete's best chance at success was through the team, not the classroom.¹⁷

Black colleges, of course, avoided the latter criticism, but they, too, had problems. Southern sports information director Bennie Thomas decried the presence of professional sports agents creeping through black campuses, preying on any athlete with potential to make it to the pros, "causing woes to coaches of football, basketball and baseball who are already beset with problems of recruiting, budgets, and winning." The coaches, according to Thomas, were kept in the dark. The players were tricked by agents into illegally signing contracts before their collegiate eligibility had run its course.¹⁸ Inherent in Thomas's critique was the same argument made by Olsen. Black students—on campuses white or black—were being duped by a white power structure.

The white power structure in Louisiana, at least as it related to sports, was the Louisiana State Athletic Commission, and it was a lily-white institution. *Louisiana Weekly* sports editor Jim Hall called in late July for the commission to be integrated, arguing that "sports in Louisiana, for the most part, has been integrated, with only a few loopholes here and there."¹⁹ The demand fell on deaf ears. In 1966, the University of Southwestern Louisiana basketball team attempted to integrate, but the Athletic Commission refused to allow the school to grant scholarships to black players. In response, the team's coach, Beryl Shipley, began to raise money for the scholarships in the Lafayette community—a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) violation. The Athletic Commission immediately reported the incident to the NCAA, which in 1968 placed the uni-

versity on probation. The Louisiana State Athletic Commission, filled as it was by gubernatorial appointees, was to remain white for the foreseeable future.

Still, the “loopholes” of which Hall spoke were glaringly obvious. The state’s largest and most storied football team was LSU, which would be the last Southeastern Conference team to integrate, waiting until 1972. Tulane would take even longer than that. The other nationally recognized football programs, Grambling and Southern, were also segregated.

Until 1968.

The insistent debate about black autonomy and integration finally led Eddie Robinson to begin recruiting white athletes. The college had accepted a handful of white exchange students in the mid-1960s. With other black colleges taking the step, and with major southern colleges beginning the process of integration, and thus siphoning off talented black recruits, the time seemed right. “If our program at Grambling is as good as they say it is, why isn’t it good enough for some whites?” asked Robinson. “I can’t stand up and preach and tell another guy what he has to do if I don’t do it myself.”²⁰

Arthur Calloway left Grambling after his playing career and took a job as an assistant football coach at Corcoran High School in Corcoran, California. It wasn’t rare for former Grambling players to become high school coaches, and it wasn’t rare for the new coaches to scout potential talent for Robinson’s team. But Calloway and head coach Edwin Stevens found a very different player for the Tigers.

Jim Gregory was Corcoran’s star quarterback, though he hadn’t attracted much attention from larger universities. But after his performance at the Tulare-Kings All-Star game in the summer of 1968, Calloway and Stevens convinced Robinson that Gregory was the player to integrate the Grambling team. Along with Gregory’s athletic scholarship, the college offered twelve academic scholarships to other Corcoran students. When fall football practice began in 1968, Grambling was integrated.²¹

But integration wouldn’t be Grambling’s only response to the tumult of 1968. In both 1967 and 1968, the campus was rocked by protests. In 1967, approximately eight hundred students walked out of classes, ostensibly protesting Grambling’s overemphasis on the football team and arguing that such aggrandizement hurt its academic mission. President Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones was aghast. He worked with Governor John McKeithen, who called in the National Guard. The protests were revived in the fall of 1968, the students this time frustrated with the administration for cowing to the white state board of education and seeking cur-



Eddie Robinson paces the sidelines at one of Grambling's large neutral-site venues, Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium, home of the professional Kansas City Chiefs.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

riculum changes that more readily addressed the black experience in the civil rights South. Again President Jones responded by requesting state aid and approving a National Guard contingent on campus. Then he expelled twenty-nine students.²²

News of a white Tiger resonated throughout the state and nation, as did the news of campus unrest, but so, too, did Grambling's new publicity push. Ever in search of prime national neutral-site venues, Grambling announced that the team would play Morgan State at New York's Yankee Stadium in September. In July, ABC aired a documentary produced by Howard Cosell titled *Grambling College: 100 Yards to Glory*, which centered upon the work of Prez Jones and Robinson and celebrated the Tigers as the premier black football team in the nation. As in most reports, the documentary began its story in 1936, with Jones's ascension to the school's presidency. It completely ignored Grambling's pre-1936 football teams, including those that played their first games against Southern.²³

The documentary, the Yankee Stadium game, the integration publicity, and the consecutive championships all rankled the Jaguars. For three decades, Southern had competed with Grambling as Louisiana's foremost

black institution. Southern was urban, Grambling was rural. Southern was relatively well funded by the white legislature, Grambling was not. Now, the Tigers received national acclaim at every turn, celebrated as the quintessential black football team. Their coach was revered. Their games were taking place in huge national venues. The balance of power had shifted.

Never mind that fourteen former Jaguars were in professional football camps. Or that the university had been around since the nineteenth century. Or that Bob Smith was toiling successfully in the long shadow of Southern's own legendary coach, Arnett Mumford. Southern entered the season with far more questions than answers, coming off a disappointing 1967 campaign. "But the Jaguars," the school assured, "operating with endless enthusiasm and displaying a mental attitude which more than pleases Coach Smith, seem to relish the 'pretenders for the title' role, and will be out to prove that even titans stumble or are bumped off and what the prognosticators set forth isn't necessarily so." Perhaps. But the frustration of Jaguar fans belied any of the team's "endless enthusiasm."²⁴

Southern's football woes were compounded throughout the fall semester by academic scandal. John J. Hedgemon, the university registrar, was indicted for income tax evasion early in the semester, and evidence in the trial demonstrated that he fixed grades, gave credit for courses not taken, and allowed illegal late registrations, all for a price.²⁵ The scandal was devastating to Southern. Not only did it tarnish the school's reputation, but it seemed to validate Nathan Hare's *Ebony* criticisms of the previous year. Could a degree from Southern be trusted? And where did that leave honest students who were working toward completion of their studies?

If that weren't enough, Southern, like Grambling, was laid low by student unrest. The Black Power movement had arrived on campus. Renewed protests in 1966 and 1967 had led to the dismissal of three white faculty members seen as abetting the activism.²⁶ The following year, groups at both the Baton Rouge and New Orleans campuses of Southern demanded a department of black studies. New president Leon Netterville not only refused the request but refused to acknowledge it existed. In 1969, students on the New Orleans campus would replace the American flag with a Black Liberation flag, leading to a police crackdown and twenty arrests. Another boycott of classes. More demonstrations. The National Guard would occupy both campuses for weeks to keep order.²⁷

In the wake of scandal and protest, a pall hung over the university less than two weeks after the Hedgemon indictment, when Grambling

arrived in Scotlandville. The losses, the scandal, and the broader inferiority complex that developed throughout the decade had taken their toll. Still, Southern appeared game. Star kicker Mark Samples kicked two first-quarter field goals to keep the Jags close, and the Southern defense held the vaunted Tiger offense to two first-half touchdowns. Southern responded with a touchdown of its own in the second quarter, and at half-time, the Jaguars had a 15-13 lead. But Grambling responded with two touchdowns in the third quarter. By the fourth quarter's midway point, the Tigers were up 34-26. But this was Grambling, rival Grambling, and the Jaguars were determined to overcome poor play and myriad distractions to defeat their northern counterparts. The team's signature fourth-quarter drive ended with 8:39 showing on the clock, when fullback Simon Profit dove into the endzone from 1 yard out to bring the score to 34-32.

The crowd assumed that Southern would attempt a 2-point conversion, bringing the game to a tie, but instead the team lined up for a traditional extra point. That would keep the Jaguars 1 point down. Murmurs permeated the Scotlandville crowd. What was Coach Smith doing? What he was doing was attempting a fake, using the point try as a distraction to run the ball in for 2 points. But as the teams lined up, the Grambling defenders began to call out, warning teammates of a possible trick. "The kids became frightened," Smith explained after the game, and so they went ahead with an actual kick, which missed its target. The gaff seemed a fitting end to Southern's troubled season. The Jaguars lost 34-32.²⁸

Grambling's victory gave the Tigers a share of the SWAC conference title, its fourth in as many years. The team again played in the postseason Pasadena Bowl, defeating Sacramento 34-7.²⁹ The humiliated Jaguars licked their wounds in the offseason and vowed to stem the tide in 1969.

First on the Jaguars' agenda was to find a new coach. The general lack of football success, combined with the scandal of not attempting a 2-point conversion to tie the game against the rival Tigers, led to Smith's ouster. In his place, Southern hired Alva Tabor, a former Jaguar assistant who had spent the previous two years as a scout for the New Orleans Saints. The team lost its quarterback and linebackers and was hard pressed to replace them, but there were still stalwart lettermen returning. Offensive lineman Artis Carroll and defensive end Alden Roche were potential All-Americans. Willie Davenport would also return for his senior season. Though Davenport missed the Olympic games in Mexico City, the hurdler was still a success in Southern's defensive backfield.³⁰

With a new coach and a new era that all such hires bring, hopes seemed high. Grambling would play in the Astrodome, but so, too, would South-

ern, the team scheduling its road opener with Prairie View for the Houston stadium. Off the field, Southern's reputation made an impressive recovery when four graduates took part in the Apollo 11 lunar mission. The three aerospace engineers and one technologist were cited by NASA as playing "important roles" in the mission.³¹

But Grambling wasn't sitting idly by. In August, the Chrysler Corporation Film Library issued a twenty-five-minute highlight film of Grambling's 1968 Pasadena Bowl victory. The team again scheduled a Yankee Stadium date with Morgan State and opened its run with Alcorn in the Los Angeles Coliseum.³² Again, however, the large-scale neutral-site venue proved unsuccessful for the Tigers. In front of more than sixty thousand Los Angeles fans, Grambling fell 28–7 to the Braves, led in 1969 by young coach Marino Casem.³³ The game was certain not to escape Southern's notice.

The Jaguars' opening game of the 1969 season, however, was a disappointing tie with Texas Southern. In addition, the Louisiana Sports Information Directors' Association researched the coaching records of the state's collegiate leaders and found that Eddie Robinson had won more games, 180, than any coach in Louisiana history, passing none other than Arnett Mumford to take the title. He was second in winning percentage to legendary Tulane coach Bernie Bierman, edging out Mumford, who was third.³⁴

Both teams had an up-and-down season in 1969, and when the two met in Grambling at season's end, there wasn't—for the first time in years—a championship on the line. But Grambling and Southern didn't need a championship to give their contest relevance. The home fans assumed they had passed their southern counterparts by. The visitors were out for revenge.

As the game began, however, revenge seemed far, far away. The Tigers capitalized on early Jaguar mistakes and took a quick 14-point lead. Halfback William O'Neal's first touchdown came following an errant Southern punt that gave the Tigers a short field. Frank Lewis ran for Grambling's second touchdown following a Ben Stephens interception. In the second half, first-time starting quarterback Robert Levergne led a furious Southern comeback, first running for a 7-yard score, then passing for an 85-yard touchdown to Hal Carmichael. After an early fourth-quarter Grambling field goal, Southern took possession late in the game. Again Levergne led his team down the field. Again he rolled out of the pocket to pass. This time he found no one open, choosing instead to tuck the ball and run. Fourteen yards later, the Jaguars had scored the winning touch-

down. When the final gun sounded, the score was 21–17.³⁵ Southern again had state bragging rights, reclaiming a measure of pride, wounded as it might have been during the tumultuous mid-1960s.

Grambling again attended the Orange Blossom Classic, the team's fame drawing them into such a contest even in less successful seasons. They lost to Florida A&M, much to the delight of Scotlandville fans. More important, however, the Tigers were not the Rattlers' first choice. Originally, the team invited California State–Hayward, a predominantly white team playing under the auspices of the NCAA. Again the goal was further integration of college football. But since the Orange Blossom wasn't an officially sanctioned NCAA event, Hayward was disallowed from attending. Grambling was the consolation prize.³⁶ Here again was the stain of illegitimacy. By not sanctioning black bowl games, the NCAA was complicit in the stereotyping of black collegiate inferiority. It seemed more than anything a fitting end to the confused and vitriolic 1960s.

Though Southern's season ended positively and its football future looked bright, the decade of the 1970s began for the Jaguars in much the same state as the troubling 1960s. Felton Clark had retired from the presidency of Southern after the 1969 spring semester, but he was still a university institution. He had made Southern the largest black university in the country and overseen decades of growth and success. In the summer of 1970, he died. When his father had taken over the school after its move to Scotlandville, the university had seven faculty members and less than fifty students. By the time of the younger Clark's death, Southern had a \$12 million annual budget and satellite branches in both Shreveport and New Orleans. It granted postgraduate degrees and employed more than one thousand faculty members. And now, at age sixty-six, Clark was gone.³⁷

While Southern mourned Clark's passing, the football team's potential seemed to do justice to the president's legacy. Al Tabor had garnered conference coach of the year honors in 1969 for steering the Jaguars to a second-place finish. Most of the players from that team were returning. "Al Tabor is a man whose plan doesn't really begin to unfold until the action starts," wrote sportswriter Chuck Siler. "Some people are even beginning to think that 1970 may be 'The year of the Jaguar.'"³⁸

Southern's schedule was also growing. Doing its best to keep up with rival Grambling, the Jaguars scheduled their season opener against North Carolina A&T in Yankee Stadium. They would play Arkansas AM&N in St. Louis's Busch Stadium, and they would close the season—following their annual game with Grambling—by playing Cal State–Hayward at California's Oakland Coliseum. The significance of the Jaguars' final game,

however, was not necessarily its location. Hayward was the predominantly white school barred from the Orange Blossom. It was rare that Southern would face such an opponent, and the move seemed more than anything else an homage to Clark, who had argued for expansiveness and inclusivity in scheduling years prior.³⁹

Further breaking barriers, the Jaguars' game against Florida A&M would take place at Tulane Stadium in New Orleans. It would be the first game between black opponents ever played on the storied field. Of course, the move was made possible not by a new racial tolerance among the leadership at Tulane. It came instead from the pros. The Saints played at Tulane until their monstrous new Dome was completed, placing interracial contests inside the stadium every other week. Southern's band often played at those games. The popularity of the Saints and New Orleans' willingness to tolerate the interracial nature of pro football made the use of the stadium by historically black colleges a logical next step. Ulysses S. Jones, Southern's athletic director, was suitably awed by the program's growth and hoped that it would lead to further interracial play. "This year for the first time, we will play a predominately-white team, California State College. We want to play other white colleges. In fact, we would like to have games against several other mostly-white Louisiana colleges and we think that day is coming. It'll be good for both of us."⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Grambling's stature was still growing. The Tigers planned six home games and five road games, with each of the five to be played in large-scale neutral-site venues. "After years of suffering among the impoverished," noted a Grambling press release, "the Tigers are completing a long transition that, hopefully, will culminate with the athletic department making big money from football receipts." The Tigers would open the season against Morgan State at Pittsburgh's new Three Rivers Stadium, the first college game to be played in the edifice. They would play Prairie View at Soldier Field in Chicago (though the game would ultimately be moved to Comiskey Park), Tiger Stadium in Detroit, Cleveland's Municipal Stadium, and the Astrodome in Houston. The team, like the Jaguars, also scheduled a post-Southern game with a predominantly white opponent, Cal State–Fullerton, which would make the trip to Grambling.⁴¹

The showcase games would only help the players' professional prospects, and the Tigers were littered with professional prospects. First among them was Frank Lewis, the team's halfback, who was pegged by a number of scouts to be the potential first pick in the postseason draft. Art Rooney, Jr., then personnel director of the Pittsburgh Steelers, argued that "Gramb-



Jim Gregory is seen here watching game action as a backup quarterback. Grambling alum Ernie Ladd is in the foreground with Eddie Robinson.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

ling will have its best team in history” in 1970. “They have pro prospects at every position.”⁴²

Both teams struggled with the difficult, expansive schedules they had set for themselves, and as the rivalry game approached, the Jaguars and Tigers limped to Scotlandville.⁴³ Fans arrived hours early for the sold-out game, ignoring the No Liquor signs posted on the University Stadium entrances. They swayed and danced and packed the stadium well before the scheduled kickoff. A large sign in the bleachers announced “Go to Hell, Grambling.” Both bands took the field before the game to intensify the already teeming emotion. They would do the same at halftime.⁴⁴

“Up in the hills of Tennessee,” reported the *Louisiana Weekly*, “the McCoys and the Hatfields are still fighting except on Sundays when they ‘all’ go to church. Here in Louisiana, the Tigers and Jaguars are still at each other, once every year on a Saturday.” And the teams were at each other early. Southern seemed to be driving the ball well as the game opened, to the delight of the home crowd, but missed two field goals in the first quarter. Instead, Grambling’s Eldrie Turner scored the game’s first touchdown after a Jaguar pass interference call placed the Tiger ball at the 1-yard line.⁴⁵

But Southern didn’t wilt. After a Frank Lewis fumble, the Jags moved methodically through the Tiger defense and scored on a 3-yard touchdown

pass from Jerome Bettis to Hal Carmichael. Another Grambling fumble then led to another Bettis touchdown pass. Another led to a Southern field goal. Grambling recovered its poise, however, and on its final two possessions of the half, it managed two more Turner touchdown runs, making the halftime score 20–17.

The Jaguars took the ball to open the second half and marched 75 yards down the field, only to find Grambling defensive back William Bryant intercept a Bettis pass on the 4-yard line. The Tigers' ensuing drive went 96 yards on an astounding 24 plays, culminating in a Virgil Robinson touchdown run. A field goal and an early fourth-quarter touchdown gave Grambling 37 points, and though Southern was able to score a touchdown late in the final period, it was cosmetic at best. The north Louisianans won, 37–24. After the game, the players stayed on the field for the presentation of the Mack Hill–Stone Johnson Memorial Trophy, given every year to the game's most valuable player. Grambling's Virgil Robinson, who amassed 93 yards on only 13 carries, was the recipient.⁴⁶

In their final games of the season, Southern lost to Hayward. The Tigers narrowly defeated Fullerton.⁴⁷ Those games, however, were less noteworthy for their outcomes than for the simple fact of their existence. Though Southern lost to Grambling, they were not embarrassed by them, and both the Tigers and the Jaguars were attempting in their final games to use their fame to erode the racial barriers that still existed in college football.

During that 1970 season, a white kicker at Florida A&M had quit the team, claiming he had been mercilessly harassed by campus militants among the student body. His teammates hadn't mistreated him, but the pressure of being the white student at the black college was an unrelenting siege—particularly in the age of Black Power militancy, when autonomous black institutions were celebrated by many activists as a check against the cultural capitulation that necessarily came with integration.⁴⁸

That 1970 season, Gregory and the Grambling program would come under intense scrutiny, too, as *Newark News* sports reporter Bruce Bahrenburg examined the team and its integration in his 1971 book, *My Little Brother's Coming Tomorrow*. While the book dealt deftly with the reverse racism that could occur on black college campuses when white students joined the team or the university, it centered most effectively on the personal relationship between Gregory and receiver Charles "Tank" Smith. With Smith excepted, however, the picture of white life at Grambling was not flattering. Robinson appeared typically heroic, lauding the necessity of integration and demonstrating his frustration at never being allowed

to compete against white Louisiana colleges. "I looked at LSU when I was a kid," he said, "and all I wanted was one day to beat that school in football."⁴⁹

Bahrenburg echoed earlier calls about the poor state of education in southern black schools. White students, he noted, complained that the core assignments were the general equivalent of what they were doing in high school. Still, "the intellectual problem at Grambling is not the teachers and the students," concluded Bahrenburg. "It is the student who often arrives at Grambling after preparation in dreadfully inadequate secondary schools that were either segregated or just barely integrated. The deficiencies of black education in rural Southern schools can be studied in the Grambling students. They can hardly be held accountable for their deficiencies." It was instead the white power structure of Louisiana that was causing the problems, both in Baton Rouge and throughout Lincoln Parish.⁵⁰

And the book did serve as a scathing indictment of the racial situation in Lincoln Parish. There was no bus system between Ruston, the parish seat, and Grambling. Though the Ruston movie theater, The Dixie, had a section for black patrons, they almost never attended for fear of white reprisal. When Louisiana Tech, integrated enough by 1970 to receive federal funding, gave an honorary degree to Prez Jones, the auditorium that watched the event was segregated. It was into this milieu that Gregory stepped, and he was given no preferential treatment by the Lincoln Parish white community. In fact, whites considered Gregory as black as anyone else who attended Grambling. Attempting to open a line of credit at a Ruston clothing store, for example, Gregory was told that such accounts were only for whites. That shop, and all of the Ruston shops, would treat him "like any other 'nigger' who comes from Grambling."⁵¹

But Gregory's high-profile integration of the school's legendary football team would have its long-term effects. In 1970, Grambling began a ten-year student exchange program with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and integration milestones would continue to come. Bahrenburg's book would eventually become a movie, *Grambling's White Tiger*, starring Bruce Jenner as Gregory. Though the film emphasized the role of reverse racism to an inordinate degree, it, too, interpreted the experiment as a success and further publicized Grambling to the rest of the country.⁵²

Lost in the interpretations of *My Little Brother's Coming Tomorrow*, however, is Bahrenburg's disparaging depiction of Southern's facilities. "Southern had spent a great deal of money recently on new buildings," he noted. "Little of it had gone into the upkeep of the locker rooms, however. By comparison, those at Grambling were palatial." There were no lockers, just

wooden shelves nailed to the wall. And there weren't enough of those. Players had to dress in the showers, fight for access to only three faucets under the light of three dim light bulbs. There was only one toilet, and it was clogged.⁵³

Again Grambling was lauded. Again Southern was embarrassed. The transfer of power and the resentment it caused would understandably bleed over into the 1971 season. It didn't help that the Tigers were once again loaded with talent. Not only that, but the team from north Louisiana would again play a coast-to-coast schedule filled with marquee neutral-site games. Their first, yet another contest with Morgan State at Yankee Stadium, was televised by ABC as the first national game of the season. It was the first time that a game played between two colleges not from major conferences would be presented on national television. Prior to the season, the school combined with Black Associated Sports Enterprises to create the Grambling Football Network, which would record, edit, and replay every Tiger football game on one hundred different television stations throughout the country. A documentary about the school, *Grambling College: The Living Legend*, also appeared on national television. "At one time it was automation, air pollution, drug abuse, and President Nixon's 90-day freeze plan," wrote Floyd Sandle, Jr., editor of Grambling's student newspaper, *The Gramblinite*. "Well, now the emphasis has taken an abrupt change . . . to 'Grambling Football.'"⁵⁴

But Grambling had lost much of its talent to graduation and the professional ranks. "The main problem," argued a preternaturally depressed Robinson, "at least in the early season, will be the lack of experience and a shortage of depth." The Tigers' loss was the Jaguars' gain, but Southern, too, had suffered losses. Much of the team's success would depend on a bevy of freshman running backs, "who have very impressive high school credentials but who are of unknown quality for the college game." The strength of the Southern team would be its veteran offensive line, which Tabor hoped would ease the freshman backs into success.⁵⁵

The fates of both teams in the young preseason, however, were overshadowed by news from Baton Rouge. LSU was going to integrate. Though the varsity team wouldn't technically integrate until 1972—making the Tigers (along with Georgia) the last Southeastern Conference team to do so—the freshman team began its integration the year prior. In August 1971, LSU coach Charlie McClendon announced that Covington High School defensive back Mike Williams would join the freshman squad. "We are delighted that Mike has made the decision to come to LSU," said McClendon. "His speed and ability as a defensive back should help him make a notable contribution to our football program."⁵⁶ Along with a boon to Louisi-



Grambling's largesse was built with both hard work and successful public relations. This publicity photo of a Tiger practice demonstrates both.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

ana State, however, Williams's decision was also a warning to Grambling and Southern: the competition for players in the state was only going to get tougher. To compete, the black colleges would need to play more big-venue games, find more television time, and continue to cultivate their images as black powerhouses.

It could be done. In an interview with Chicago reporter Bill Jauss, University of Illinois defensive tackle Tab Bennett noted that "those Grambling games on TV really impress kids in my neighborhood. I tell kids there I go to the University of Illinois, and they say 'okay.' They don't know it's in

the Big Ten. They ask, ‘When are you going to play Grambling or Florida A&M?’” Exposure, Bennett seemed to argue, could cure the woes of the small black college. As Jauss recounted, “You can’t imagine the impact this has on kids in ghettos of southern cities.”⁵⁷

Of course, the challenge of new competition seemed far easier for Grambling than for Southern. By the time the two teams met for their annual rivalry game, the Tigers had won seven games, the Jaguars only two.⁵⁸

The rivalry had produced many surprises over the years, but entering the late November contest, this matchup seemed as lopsided as it had since the days when Grambling was known as Louisiana Negro Normal. Almost 34,000 fans packed into the small stadium on the Grambling campus to watch the Tigers attempt to win a share of the SWAC title and Southern attempt to salvage a tarnished season.

But tarnished it would remain. Grambling tailback Herman Christophe ran for two touchdowns, and quarterback Matthew Reed both passed and ran for scores. By the start of the fourth quarter, it was 31–0 Grambling. The Jaguars avoided a shutout with a late field goal, but the damage was done. The 31–3 final gave Grambling yet another conference championship. It gave Southern yet another reason to question the direction of the football program. Though the Jaguars won their final game of the season against North Carolina A&T, only 4,150 fans showed up to see them.⁵⁹

The mid-1960s began with the broader black community undergoing a transition from peaceful nonviolence in aid of integration to Black Power in aid of salvaging black culture and autonomy. In the early 1970s, Grambling and Southern were in a transition period of their own. Integration had come to Grambling’s football team and integrated games had come to both schools. But integration had also seen its first vestiges at LSU. And with larger schools seeking talented black athletes for their football programs, and with insistent media criticism of the curriculum and mission of black universities, the Tigers and Jaguars were faced with new pressures above and beyond simply winning games. Grambling seemed far more poised than Southern to handle those pressures, but the administration of Southern, the grandfather of the state’s black institutions, was confident that the program could turn the tide. Both schools maintained a heady optimism in the face of this overwhelming change as they entered 1972. They would prove themselves on the football field against one another in their annual rivalry game—the one true measure of state dominance between the two.

But in 1972, there would be no game.

6

The Greatest Game Never Played 1972

The 1972 football season seemed destined to be fraught with the same off-field contradictions presented by the turbulent 1960s. The on-field expectations appeared similar as well. Grambling was considered a favorite yet again. The Tigers expanded their reach even farther that season, traveling to Honolulu to face the University of Hawaii. Southern, meanwhile, was still in the throes of a troubling down period with no realistic expectations of conference success.

Loss followed loss for the Jaguars, who never seemed to get on track. The team only managed two wins and a tie through September and October. Grambling stumbled early with 2 frustrating losses, but the Tigers regained their composure and by mid-season had a 4-game winning streak and a 6–2 record. And now they were headed for Hawaii! “That’s right,” reported *Ruston Daily Leader* sports editor O. K. Davis. “Honolulu, Hawaii. Palm trees, surfing, luaus, hula skirts, Diamond Head. The works.” Of course, Eddie Robinson was characteristically more sober than the press corps that traveled with the team. “We’re not going to have much time to worry about sightseeing at first,” he told reporters. “It’s going to be a wonderful experience playing out there, but we’ve got to be ready for the game. That’s why we’re going.”¹

It was another in a long line of frustrating seasons for Southern. It was another in a long line of successful ones for Grambling. The Tigers were in first place in the Southwestern Athletic Conference entering November. The team, noted Davis, “appears destined for victories during the remainder of the campaign unless something drastic happens.”²

And then something drastic happened.

The tumult of the civil rights movement had given birth to many other bodies of protest—a women's rights movement. A gay rights movement. A sexual revolution. Then there was Vietnam. Many groups were opposed to the Vietnam conflict, but the most vociferous antiwar partisans were college students, and their disillusionment led to a mistrust of all bureaucratic organizations. Bureaucracy had proven corrupt. Of course, college was one of those bureaucratic organizations, too, and students began reacting against the policies of their universities.

In May 1970, four students were killed in protests at Kent State University. The incident became a symbol of American discontent not only with Vietnam, but with the government's abuse of power—they were killing their young overseas *and* at home. Less than two weeks later, student protests at Jackson State College brought out the Mississippi State Police. The state troopers responded to the protests by firing more than three hundred rounds into the crowd and into a nearby dormitory. They wounded twelve and killed two students who had been watching events from the dorm windows. Of course, Jackson State had far more subtext than a standard anti-Vietnam protest. The students of the black college were met readily by a group of white Mississippi state troopers.

This sort of campus unrest—against Vietnam, against discrimination, or against what students perceived to be an unjust campus administration—proliferated all over the country. In 1972, it reached Grambling and Southern.

On November 1, as the Tiger football team was preparing to leave for Hawaii, a campus group headed by Student Government Association president Louis Scott presented a list of demands to Prez Jones and the university administration. The group wanted greater student participation in policy making. They wanted a say in faculty hiring. They wanted a department of black studies, more comprehensive mail and phone service, the removal of the school dress code. Finally, they wanted 75 percent representation on university disciplinary committees.³

On Thursday morning, however, Jones left for Hawaii with Robinson and the football team. There would be no capitulation when the Tigers had a game to play. As Thursday bore on, student groups continued to hold meetings and the administration braced for some sort of protest. While Grambling's security force would be in charge of maintaining order on campus, forces from the Ruston City Police, Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Department, Louisiana State Police, and Louisiana National Guard were on alert. When Jones touched down in Hawaii, school officials reached him and Jones sanctioned the security plan.⁴

Shortly after five o'clock, one of the student groups meeting in front



Southern students followed their March 1960 sit-in protests with a march to the state capitol, where more than 3,000 students demonstrated against the city's Jim Crow policies. The state board of education, frustrated by the broader civil rights and student movements, warned the presidents of all Louisiana colleges, white or black, to discourage such radicalism through "stern disciplinary action," and Southern president Felton Clark obliged. He expelled seventeen students, leading to more protests against the school's administration and hundreds of withdrawals from the campus. This kind of authoritarian administrative action would fester with students. That resentment would ultimately culminate in the violence of 1972.

Courtesy East Baton Rouge Parish Library

of the administration building began removing tables and chairs from the dining hall, using them to form a barricade blocking the street. Still, there didn't seem to be any systematic plan in place. Around nine o'clock, the violence started when a frustrated student threw a garbage can lid through a plate glass window at the student union. Students teemed into the building, looting clothing and jewelry from the student bookstore.⁵

Then the first shot was fired. A student blasted a glass door with a pistol, inciting students to destroy all of the glass windows and doors. The director of the student union, A. C. Carpenter, tried to reach the building but was stopped by the makeshift barricade.

The frenzied group moved on to Adams Hall, the women's dormitory.



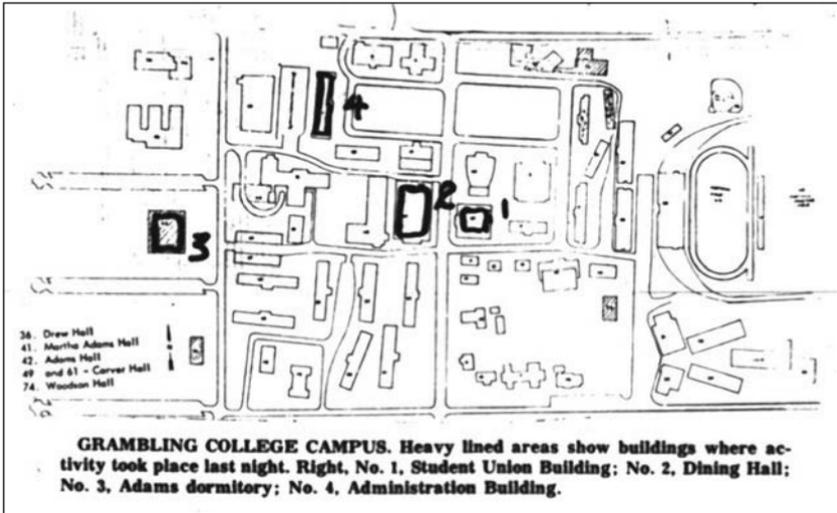
Broken glass and spent protest signs littered the sidewalks of Grambling.

Courtesy The Gramblinite

“Wake your dead up!” they shouted. They threw rocks into the dorm’s large glass windows before continuing on. At some point in the evening, members of the group overturned a Volkswagen. There was no order to the violence. No system. It all seemed so futile.

Grambling security patiently waited for backup, and with twelve units of the state police waiting on the edge of campus, they began making arrests. School business manager Kenneth Newman was on the scene. “We’ve got one of the bravest chief security officers in Frank Phillips you ever want to lay your hands on,” he said. “He put on his gas mask last night, and got him a jar of mace, and walked out all between them, and dusted them down.” By midnight, twelve students had been arrested and sent to the Lincoln Parish prison camp. The number totaled twenty-five by morning.⁶

By Friday, things on campus seemed calm, and classes went on as scheduled after custodial crews spent the early morning hours cleaning up the glass and debris from the streets. There was one more lone incident Friday night, as a group of students set fire to a small press box annex at the football stadium, but other than that isolated outburst, order seemed restored. The brief revolution had failed. The problem was that the core



This map was produced by the *Ruston Daily Leader* to diagram the path of the destruction for the residents of Ruston and Grambling.

Courtesy Ruston Daily Leader

group of approximately 150 student protesters couldn't marshal any sort of mass consciousness among a student body of more than 4,000. It left the group impotent, leaving only violence as a last recourse.⁷

More than anything else, the student unrest at Grambling seemed like an introduction, not a conclusion. The protest failed, but the protest, it seemed, wasn't over.

As some students sat in jail, unable to make the \$500 bond, and as others returned home for the weekend, shaken and scared by the violence, the Tiger football team took the field in Hawaii. It was a rout. "That's the worst beating I've ever experienced," commented Hawaii head football coach Dave Holmes. "They just beat the heck out of us. There was no junk, no question about it. I never would have expected it to be that bad." The final score was 46-7. When the team returned on Monday, the campus was quiet, and the football coach only wanted to talk about football. "Right now," said Robinson, "we're not thinking about a bowl game. We've got some games remaining. We play a 12-game schedule."⁸

After another win, the Tigers were 8-2 and being discussed as possible guests at the Bluebonnet Bowl or the Liberty Bowl. Maybe they would return to the Orange Blossom. But first, of course, there would be Southern.⁹

The Jaguars were headed in the opposite direction athletically, nestled in the bottom of the conference with a 2–6–1 record. “This season,” wrote Andrew Harris, sports editor for the *Baton Rouge News Leader*, “has not exactly been a bowl of cherries for the Jaguars.” Southern had replaced Al Tabor at the end of the disappointing 1971 season with Charlie Bates, but his first season was a frustrating continuation of previous years.¹⁰

In other ways, however, the trajectory of Southern doggedly turned in the same direction as its northern counterpart.

Throughout October, the students of Southern were fuming. The spirit of campus unrest had come to Scotlandville, leading disgruntled students to provide a list of demands to the administration late in the month. Their demands were similar to those of the Grambling students, so much so that it was assumed in Lincoln Parish that the Grambling letter was based heavily on the influence of the Southern letter of late October. They wanted changes in the curriculum, changes in the administration, and the resignation of G. Leon Netterville, the school’s president since the retirement and death of Felton Clark.¹¹ The university responded on October 24 by agreeing to make some changes and study others, but the concessions were not enough for most of the angry students.¹²

A group calling themselves Students United marched to the Louisiana board of education seeking restitution. Netterville, they argued, was out of touch and nonresponsive to student needs. The preamble to their list of grievances noted that “it has become incumbent upon us, the students, to move most directly toward eradicating the problems that confront us at this institution; problems we feel are systematically caused to stagger our move into the consciousness of nationhood.”¹³ The board was surprisingly receptive, proposing a three-week study of the campus situation at Scotlandville. Though many white southern boards might not have been so acquiescent, the proposal met with anger among the group, leading fifty to walk out of the negotiations. But the investigation went on as planned, and state education superintendent Louis J. Michot would ultimately follow the students, addressing the eight-thousand-member student body at the Scotlandville campus and recommending to Netterville in private negotiations that he resign.

Students United responded by issuing the investigatory board a list of twelve possible successors for university president, including the poet Amiri Baraka and radical professor Nathan Hare, who had launched his critique of black colleges in 1967.

Progress was slow, and there was no way the state board of education was going to approve Baraka or Hare as president. On Halloween night,

twenty-four short hours before Grambling's own stunted protest, two thousand students stormed the administration building and warned that if officials didn't vacate the building, they would "suffer bodily harm." Governor Edwin Edwards ordered the National Guard to report for duty, and with East Baton Rouge Parish sheriffs and units of the state police, law enforcement helped evacuate faculty and administrators from the campus. "In view of the extent of the disruption and seriousness of the situation," announced Netterville the following morning, "there remains no choice but to close the university as of 12 noon today, for an indefinite period."¹⁴

The "indefinite period" didn't last long, and on Monday, classes resumed. An unauthorized student meeting in the gymnasium brought four hundred deputies to the campus, but the meeting broke up peacefully. At Southern's New Orleans campus, unrest continued. The school remained closed. But at Scotlandville, peace seemed to return. Grambling students issued a statement saying that their protest had nothing to do with Southern's.¹⁵

Two weeks later, the state NAACP held its convention in the student union of the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette. The principal issue of the meeting was a proposal recommending the unification of Southern with LSU and Grambling with Louisiana Tech. The plan was part of the NAACP's larger national strategy to provide equal education to white and black college students in the former Confederate states, but LSU and Tech weren't the only institutions that decried the proposal. Grambling and Southern feared they would lose their names, their identity, their autonomy. The administrations of both schools were suffering under the weight of the Black Power message, but when push came to shove, the core elements of Black Power arguments suited their best interests. Though the NAACP narrowly passed the measure, Grambling and Southern would continue to reject the idea.¹⁶

But as Southern officials defended their interests against the NAACP in Lafayette, and both the Tigers and Jaguars prepared for their November 18 contest, events on the Scotlandville campus were once again spiraling out of control.

On Thursday, November 16, students occupied the Southern administration building for a second time. Administrators again called in sheriff's deputies and state police. The governor called out the National Guard. This time, however, the protest wouldn't end with a whimper.¹⁷

There were approximately two thousand students in and around the administration building when the police arrived. Almost immediately,

the area was inundated with tear gas. Confusion. Screaming. With their eyes red and burning, students began running from the administration building. There were loud explosions amid the haze, and when the smoke began to clear, two students lay dead in the street. "The students had small military bombs," announced Sheriff Al Amiss. "The two students were killed by the bombs thrown right by them from a building window." Governor Edwards acknowledged that no weapons were found in the administration building, but clearly sided with Amiss's version of events. "The first projectile fired came from the building where the students were," he said. "Then the officers began to return the tear gas." It was the protest that killed the students, not the police.¹⁸

Edwards's very presence at the press conference demonstrated the tension permeating the state capital. Flanked by ten bodyguards, the governor noted that "civil liberties are suffocated at times like these. We have understood that a group of ten students have banded together with the intention of killing me." The cryptic announcement only seemed to validate the state's line that it was the protesters who were the cause of the violence.

"At least 2,000 charged us," Amiss told reporters. The students had "overpowered a campus security guard, and that's where they got their tear gas." He had also seen the bombs. But in another statement, Amiss said, "We retreated back. The victims were shot as we were retreating to get our gas masks on." When pressed on the contradictory statements, Amiss suggested that perhaps the bombs had been filled with buckshot.

"The governor is a liar," said one student, speaking on condition of anonymity. "They were raiding the administration building. I saw them throw double canisters and I saw the students throw them back. We did not have tear gas and we did not have bombs. No one in the administration building was armed. No one."¹⁹ This seemed a far more plausible explanation. Student unrest had been fomenting since October, but no attacks had been reported. The notion that students would conclude that now was somehow the time for violence seems unlikely. The police had the resources to incite the violence. The constant frustration of white officers having to continually quell campus disturbances gave them motive. But in a war of words, the authority of the police (to say nothing of their whiteness) would clearly ensure that any and all officers would be protected.

The following week, attorney general William J. Guste, Jr., opened a special investigation into the deaths of Denver Smith and Leonard Brown, headed dually by white and black assistant attorney generals. The FBI, too,

would investigate to determine whether any federal laws had been broken in the melee. By that time, however, the jaded students were openly accusing Netterville and Edwards of premeditated murder. “They [the Sheriff’s deputies] fired once, picked up the cartridge release, put them in their pockets and fired again,” charged Fred Prejean, spokesman for Students United. “We have witnesses who saw this, and yet officers maintain no rounds were fired.” Another member of the group, Charlene Hardnett, charged, “We are aware of the fact that Dr. Netterville set the students up for mass slaughter.”²⁰

The disputes, however, were not only between black students and white officers. Rumors had continued throughout November that Students United was being fomented unnecessarily by forces that hoped to use the resulting chaos to position themselves for power after Netterville’s ouster. That they were dupes. After the NAACP’s Lafayette meeting, Stanley Morris, an assistant professor of physics, charged that there was another group that would clearly benefit from the violence—those who wanted the merger with LSU. The protests were the perfect excuse for the state’s white educational power structure to place a white leader at the head of the Southern University system. Circumstantial evidence seemed to validate such concerns. One student reported an incident where flyers were passed through the dormitories for an after-curfew meeting in the school gymnasium, a meeting not called by the leaders of Students United. Though the gathering didn’t result in violence, its genesis remained shrouded in mystery.

In response, Netterville moved to consolidate his power. Following the deaths, he fired six faculty members. “By serving as adviser to the dissident students,” his letter to the former employees read, “you have been instrumental in promoting activities which disrupted the normal education process of the University.” This sort of move was sure to reflect poorly on Netterville, but he stood defiantly by his decision.²¹

Nelson Johnson, president of the national Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU), declared that there was another, more insidious force maneuvering the student protesters. “White, radical, left-wing groups” had swooped in to bolster their own agendas. “As soon as the smoke cleared, white left-wing groups started parachuting in here trying to maneuver the students, among other things, to declare a massive mobilization on Washington, DC.” All this sort of action did, argued Johnson, was refocus students’ anger away from their own interests. “We consider such arrogant attempts to use the suffering and struggle of black people for their own ends, as the most blatant form of racism.” Never mind that YOBU, too,

was a national organization that swooped onto the Scotlandville campus. That it, too, was making a name for itself on the back of someone else's tragedy. But for Johnson, such concerns about YOBU were unfounded. It was a black group. It was playing "a supporting role." And, ultimately, it was "working to clarify the issues and the basic objectives of the students' struggle which is around the question of black education. That question, of course, centers around the re-definition of black education and the restructuring of those institutions that are supposed to provide it."²²

Meanwhile, the debate about motive and guilt continued. As the investigation got underway, the National Urban League, the SCLC, the Southern Conference Educational Fund, and the Community Organization for Urban Politics all issued statements denouncing the killings. So, too, did the Tulane University Associated Student Body. All demonstrated an abiding skepticism—to varying angry degrees—in the state's claim that Southern students caused the violence. But the moral force of their denunciations was not likely to carry weight in the official investigation.²³

Guste's investigatory committee included six whites and six blacks, who held interviews behind closed doors. In the heated, mistrustful climate of the Southern campus, however, it was unlikely that the students would be cooperative. Reports began to leak out almost immediately that requested interviewees were failing to appear.

While the Guste committee struggled through, destined to find evidence of intentional malfeasance by Amiss or his subordinates ultimately inconclusive, a separate, unofficial investigation by the makeshift Black People's Committee of Inquiry held public hearings with witnesses who were far more cooperative. The group wasn't local. Led by Berkeley, California, councilman (and Southern alum) D'Army Bailey and Georgia representative and civil rights veteran Julian Bond, the committee was designed to use the fame of its members to bring pressure on Louisiana to act. Even Governor Edwards appeared before the committee, hoping to salve the wounds of Baton Rouge's black community. He was unsuccessful. "I think you're going to find in the long run that this is just one of those things that happens when people flaunt authority," he told them. Edwards gave reassurance after reassurance that officers would be prosecuted if the official investigation found they had deliberately fired at students. Deliberately. What Edwards knew, and the Black People's Committee of Inquiry knew, and the Guste committee knew, and the Southern students knew, was that evidence of deliberation in such a setting was impossible to find, barring confession. There was a haze of tear gas. The students were out of control. It was a situation ripe for a violent accident. Ed-

wards's testimony before the committee was a tacit admission that none of the officers, much less Amiss, would be prosecuted.²⁴

Still, Edwards's testimony at an unofficial protest inquiry was a sign that he was trying to stanch the anger. He was a popular new governor, elected in part by Louisiana's black voting bloc, and had no intention of alienating a significant source of his power. The day of his testimony, a group of black students marched to the capitol, that tall edifice poking out of the Baton Rouge skyline, built by Huey Long, whose hand in black education had not been forgotten and whom Edwards considered a personal hero. In the grand tradition of such men of the people, the governor met with the students—surrounded by a wall of bodyguards. Again he misfired. "The so-called student leaders who refused to obey duly constituted authority are responsible. What made it happen was a refusal of a group of students to leave the building after having been ordered to do so by authorities." It was the same message black southerners had received from whites for hundreds of years: if you don't want to be murdered, obey white people. But though the students interpreted Edwards's defiance in a traditionally racist way, Edwards was not a traditional racist. He was a governor, and he was charged with keeping state property safe. "Let it be known right now," he told the students, "from now on there will be no students, black or white, taking over any building in Louisiana." There had been more than \$200,000 in damage at the Scotlandville campus alone. Burning buildings down, he assured them, "is not going to make Southern better."²⁵

Unsurprisingly, the Black People's Committee of Inquiry exonerated the students of any role in the violence. The students hadn't "occupied" the administration building. They were waiting there for Netterville for a previously agreed-upon meeting. The police officers incited the violence, and there was ample evidence for prosecution. But they weren't the only offenders. Members of the university administration refused to bring medical assistance to the critically injured students, one of whom most likely could have been saved with emergency care. Furthermore, in direct contradiction to those who believed the incident was itself an argument for merging LSU and Southern, the committee maintained that the tragedy underscored more than anything else the need for complete autonomy. "I'm convinced more than ever that our people are going to have to come to grips with the need to form independent Black educational institutions," said committee member Owusu Sadaukai. "A lot of things that the students are rhetoricizing about I doubt seriously can ever be attained at a place like Southern." If whites had no hand in the administra-

tion or governance of Southern, there never would have been a problem in the first place.

The committee had no force of law, but members considered it necessary for proper justice. "We must not allow white people to determine what actions are legitimate to be taken in our own behalf," said Sadaukai. "It is legitimate because Black people say it is."²⁶

Of course, the problem with this sort of argument is not its logic, but its reach. White Louisiana saw institutions like Southern as autonomous and black. Sure, Southern had an integrated administration and was funded by a white legislature. Sure, many in the administration had a history of cowing to white officials to secure funding. And sure, the university was established as a separate and fundamentally unequal educational center that kept black collegians off white campuses. But the Black People's Committee of Inquiry had no desire to explain the fine points. Rhetorical flourish that criticized the state's most hallowed black institution and the surreptitious copout that the attack was legitimate simply because it was black were not going to convince many in power that the committee's findings were rigorous or unbiased.²⁷

Such attacks only bolstered Edwards's inaction.

But while the report of the Black People's Committee of Inquiry came as no surprise, the report of the biracial Guste committee certainly did. The group found that the students were killed by shotgun, not by bomb. They found that the sheriff's deputies had incited the violence by lobbing tear gas at the protesters. It wasn't the students' fault.²⁸

Edwards took a hard line. He had seen the same evidence as had the Guste committee and he was unconvinced. He disputed the findings at every turn. Violence begets violence. Whatever happened on campus was the result of an out-of-control student protest. Besides, while the committee could determine the source of the tear gas, and while they could determine the cause of the students' death, they couldn't prove willful intent. Deliberately. Deliberately.

In his press conference, Sadaukai warned that a "judgment" needed to be made soon, that "Black people be informed before the whole thing is quickly forgotten, which is what usually happens in these cases."²⁹ He was right. Edwards's obstinacy assured that a judgment wouldn't be made anytime soon, and though Southern would never forget the incident, law enforcement quickly did. Neither Amiss nor his deputies were ever prosecuted for the murder of the two students. They were never prosecuted for professional misconduct. For dereliction of duty. For anything.

Two days after the killings, Southern was scheduled to host Gramb-

ling for the teams' annual rivalry game. Many wanted the game to continue. Throughout so many turbulent events in the past three decades, football had served as a cathartic outlet, an escape from the struggle of being black in Louisiana. Besides, this was the Grambling game, the most important on the schedule.

While Grambling's campus hadn't unanimously healed itself after its own November unrest, the violence had stopped. If the contest had been scheduled as a Grambling home game, it probably would have continued as planned. Even during the tumult of the north Louisiana campus, the Tigers continued to play football. But the game was scheduled for Scotlandville, a campus still in the throes of controversy and death. Officials scrambled to find a solution. Head coach Charlie Bates had suffered through a disastrous first season and looked forward to a measure of redemption against the Jaguars' upstate rival. School officials knew the unifying power of the game and originally hoped it could still be played.

Throughout Thursday, athletic director Ulysses Jones and other administration officials dealt with the consequences of the violence for the campus and for the football team. They first secured use of Baton Rouge's Municipal Stadium, an off-campus venue safely away from the student protests. But that seemed untenable, too. As news of the deaths spread, anger enveloped the whole of the Baton Rouge-area black population, and the packed stadium would provide a perfect venue for activists to make a public demonstration. The nightmare scenario for administration officials—white and black—was an angry mob of twenty thousand on campus, and the nightmare didn't abate simply because the mob was a few miles across town.³⁰

Southern canceled the game. It canceled the final game of the season, scheduled to be played in San Francisco against Santa Clara. It suspended classes for the rest of the semester. It pushed back the Jaguar basketball season until January. "I believe," said basketball coach Carl Steward, "that athletes, emotionally, are best equipped to transcend the kind of trauma we experienced on our campus on November 16." When school returned, athletics would return, and the athletes would be ready. "Speculation beyond this point would be dreaming; and I have always said that dreams occur at night and never come true."³¹

Grambling never made it to the Bluebonnet Bowl or the Liberty Bowl. Instead, the Tigers played in the inaugural Pelican Bowl in Durham, North Carolina, at Duke's Wallace Wade Stadium. There, in early December, they trounced North Carolina Central 56–6, winning the Black National Championship in the process. But the victory was hollow. There

was trouble at home; the crowd of 22,500 began filing out early as the home state team suffered under the weight of Grambling's prowess. The season of tumult and ire had ended.³²

And so Southern's football rivalry with Grambling would have to wait another year. But when it returned in 1973, the game would look far different than it ever had before. The campuses of Grambling and Southern were changing, and so, too, were their football programs.

7

The Second Battle of New Orleans 1973-1974

Collie J. Nicholson was always thinking. Scheming. Grambling's long-time sports information director had been just as responsible for the Tigers' national renown as had Eddie Robinson himself. He and Robinson worked together in the 1940s to persuade the NFL to scout black colleges for potential professional talent, and both would watch proudly in 1949 as star Grambling fullback Paul "Tank" Younger became the first black college athlete to play in the NFL. Younger would go on to make four Pro Bowls, convincing the NFL that black colleges, and Grambling in particular, were a hotbed of athletic talent.¹

It was also Nicholson who thought to parlay Grambling's local success into a national phenomenon. He had arranged the mega-games in New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Kansas City, Chicago. He brokered the Tigers' television contract. And now it was 1973. The Tigers had played in every major football venue in the country. The nation had watched. The world had watched. And now, nestled comfortably on the blue horizon of the New Orleans skyline, a monstrous new venue was under construction. It would be the envy of every other stadium in the country, and it was in Louisiana. It was to be the home of the professional Saints, thought Nicholson. But it would belong to Grambling.

From tiny Winnfield, Louisiana, Nicholson graduated high school in 1941 and traveled south to Southern. But tuition was expensive, and when Grambling offered him a baseball scholarship, he jumped at the opportunity. War, however, would eventually call him away. After serving with distinction as a war correspondent, Nicholson was honorably discharged

in 1946. He returned home and planned to finish his studies at the University of Wisconsin. But the bus ride from Winnfield to Madison went through Grambling. Prez Jones knew about Nicholson's writing, and hired him as the school's sports information director. On the spot, Nicholson never made it to Madison. Instead, two years later, he graduated from Grambling and immediately moved from a part-time to full-time position. The business of selling Tiger football had begun.²

But the idea of getting Grambling to New Orleans wasn't new. "We would like to see Southern and Grambling play one of their annual games in Sugar Bowl Stadium [Tulane] for the New Orleans Urban League Scholarship Fund each year," wrote the *Louisiana Weekly's* Jim Hall in the summer of 1971. They play everywhere else, he argued. Why not New Orleans? Hall laid out a plan whereby Southern would play a game in New Orleans one year, followed the next season by a Grambling game, with a game every third year between the Jaguars and Tigers. He began his campaign again in November. "We still feel that New Orleans should share in the Grambling-Southern football series." Again he suggested a plan where the teams would play the neutral-site game every third season. "If Grambling and Southern can play in New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Los Angeles, for civic groups in these various cities, then surely every third year, the state schools could play in New Orleans before an expected throng of fifty thousand (50,000) of fans, for a Louisiana scholarship fund from a share of the proceeds."³

Surely.

Still, it would be neither Hall nor Tulane that would ultimately bring Grambling and Southern to New Orleans. Like so many others in Louisiana, the Tigers and Jaguars would follow the Saints.

"A report last week from Gotham [New York] said New Orleans stands first in line for a Pro-Football franchise," announced Jim Hall in July 1966. "It is expected that when the local group seeking the franchise has the green light that a Super stadium will be erected, then the announcement concerning the franchise will follow at a later date."⁴ The stadium was the thing.

Professional football first came to New Orleans in 1925. It was a young and struggling game, but it first achieved national notoriety when University of Illinois superstar Harold "Red" Grange turned pro, agreeing to play a nineteen-game barnstorming tour with the NFL's Chicago Bears. The trip took Grange and the Bears to Miami, Tampa, and Jacksonville before arriving in New Orleans. There, the team scrimmaged against a

team of local college all-stars at the city's Heinemann Park. Professional football had arrived in the nation. And it had, however briefly, arrived in Louisiana.⁵

The city's effort to secure a professional football team of its own began in the late 1950s. Under the leadership of mayor and all-around civic booster deLesseps Morrison, New Orleans made overtures to the NFL before attempting to cast its lot as a new member of the inaugural American Football League. But the plan failed, largely because a new stadium plan had not been put in place. Tulane Stadium, home to the city's Green Wave and the annual Sugar Bowl, was legendary in its own right, but it was a college stadium. The gravity that professional football had achieved by the 1960s required of its member institutions that they play in signature stadiums designed for league members first and foremost. In 1964, Dave Dixon combined with other local leaders to create New Orleans Professional Football, Inc., and through that organization sought to include New Orleans in an early, failed attempt to create a third U.S. Football League.

Meanwhile, the NFL was feeling the heat from its upstart competitor. The resulting competition threatened to bankrupt both groups, and the two decided that a merger would be the best way to remain solvent. They announced the decision in June 1966.

A merger, however, wouldn't be easy. The only hope to overcome anti-trust laws was a congressional exemption. To grease the wheels, Louisiana senator Russell Long—a football fan and no stranger to backroom deals—met with Pete Rozelle for a quid pro quo. He would ensure its passage through the Senate. New Orleans congressman Hale Boggs would ensure its passage through the House. When the Football Merger Act of 1966 became law, New Orleans would receive the league's first expansion franchise.⁶

A month after the announced merger, in July 1966, the Louisiana legislature, anticipating the possible team and worried about potential competition from rival cities, passed a constitutional measure to support the funding of a new domed stadium.⁷

On November 1, Rozelle made his announcement. "Today, I'd like to announce that a professional franchise has been awarded to the State of Louisiana and the City of New Orleans." The timing was no coincidence. "This announcement is coming the week before the election because there's no question about the importance of next week's vote. A permanent facility is vital." With the prospect of an NFL franchise on the line, the stadium measure passed overwhelmingly. Originally, the Super-

dome was planned as a \$35 million, 55,000-seat stadium. But construction would prove problematic.⁸

The Saints, for their part, began their inaugural season in 1967. It was not a success. Neither was the next, nor the next. The frustrating play of the team, housed as they were in Tulane Stadium, mirrored the city's frustration at the logistical and construction problems associated with the Saints' new home. By the summer of 1970, Dixon's commission was still in the process of securing the 55-acre plot, displacing families from their homes and entrepreneurs from their businesses. The stadium's size had grown with its controversial location and was now slated to hold more than 75,000. "The domed stadium will be two generations beyond anything in existence in the world today," assured Governor John McKeithen, hoping to stanch state and league frustration over the seemingly failing effort.⁹

Things hadn't gotten much better in 1972, and in response, Rozelle sent a special commission—headed by his assistant Buddy Young—down to New Orleans to gauge the stadium's progress and push for a quick timetable for completion. He also called Collie Nicholson, asking him to join the Young group in New Orleans. They met with city officials, including New Orleans mayor Moon Landrieu, and Nicholson, ever on alert for an opportunity to publicize the Tiger football team, first broached the subject of Grambling playing an annual game in the new stadium.¹⁰

They had played in every other major stadium. They had a major in-state rival. Jim Hall had been calling for such a contest for years. And, perhaps most important, the Superdome was actively seeking marquee events to fill the stadium during the 347 days the Saints weren't playing. Even if the team won fourteen Super Bowls in a row, if the stadium couldn't attract other events and the attendant tourist dollars that came with them, the project would remain a fiscal disaster.

With provisional approval for use of the stadium, Nicholson then approached Southern. "Southern said, 'You must be kidding. We fill up our stadium. We don't want to go to New Orleans,'" said Russell Stockard, Nicholson's counterpart at Southern. "But, in 1973, it was Grambling's turn to host the game and Collie had gotten with the people at Tulane and the mayor of New Orleans and they agreed the game could be played there. Southern had no choice because it was Grambling's game. Collie, out of necessity, and because he was an innovator and pioneer, did these things and wasn't hesitant. He didn't pull back at all." President Netterville was just as skeptical. The annual rivalry overflowed both Grambling's and Southern's campuses, but the Superdome would top 75,000 seats. Would

they be able to fill it? And if they didn't, wouldn't it be an embarrassment? Particularly after the teams' successes in other large-market venues across the country?¹¹

Southern's concern seemed valid. It was a risk moving the game to New Orleans. But the school's argument that it didn't need the game for success—that they filled their stadium regularly—was a negotiating ploy more than anything else. The Jaguars were in the throes of a series of bad seasons. Their final game of the 1971 campaign didn't even draw five thousand fans. Not only had they lost three successive games to Grambling, but they lost the third in that series by forfeit because of violence on the campus. Meanwhile, Grambling had spent recent seasons traveling across the country. It signed a lucrative television contract. It won SWAC championships.

There were other reasons for Southern's skepticism. Though Grambling could fill the Los Angeles Coliseum, it often had trouble filling its own stadium—the Southern game excepted. The move seemed yet another effort by the Tigers to enhance the team's national reputation, this time on the back of its struggling rival from south Louisiana. The Jaguars had no desire to be a publicity vehicle for the school they used to regularly dominate.

The most effective tool Nicholson had at his disposal, however, wasn't his school's athletic success. The 1973 game was scheduled as a Grambling home game, and with the prerogative in the Tigers' hands, Southern reluctantly agreed to play the 1973 contest at Shreveport's State Fair Stadium. If the teams could fill the 42,000-seat venue, then the Jaguars would consent to play ensuing games in New Orleans.¹² It was to be the second neutral-site game in the history of the series, though no one mentioned it in 1973. The 1932 original contest in Monroe was still largely forgotten.

Southern fans focused on prospects for redemption. The university began its effort by holding a contest to create a new slogan for the 1973 season. "Be a Believer in Jaguar Fever" was the winner. Be a believer in Jaguar fever. Charlie Bates installed the Wishbone offense as Southern's principal offensive system, loading the backfield with runners and using misdirection to allow them open spaces through which to run. The Jaguars held the series edge over eight of its ten 1973 opponents. There seemed reason enough to be a believer in Jaguar fever. Though the team was 2–7–1 in 1972, it returned 43 lettermen, 4 of whom were all-conference performers. One of the new starters would be John Hale, a placekicker from Shreveport. Though kickers didn't often figure in the list of preseason

ballyhoo, Hale's place on the team was significant nonetheless. John Hale was white. Whether his position was treated by the press with less significance than that of Jim Gregory because Gregory integrated Grambling first or because Grambling had more national renown in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the seeming slight—particularly in light of the campus violence of fall 1972—didn't go unnoticed by the Jaguars. Be a believer in Jaguar fever.¹³

The belief paid off. Southern spent September and early October winning. At the season's midway point, the Jags were undefeated. But by that time, the team had other things on its mind. In mid-October, the National Education Association (NEA) issued its official report on the student deaths of 1972. The report cited the arrests of student protest leaders as the principal cause of the disorder. Netterville's teacher firings didn't help, either. "All evidence points to the conclusion that the untimely and extraordinary arrests robbed the demonstrations of much of their effective student leadership," the report noted, "and were the immediate cause of the confrontation that ended in death on the morning of Nov. 16."

That wasn't all. Netterville's authoritarianism certainly stoked the fire and was the cause of much of the student unrest. But "much of the substance of that protest involved matters over which the university administration itself has never had control." The Louisiana state board of education was all-white and had consistently provided inadequate financing to the state's black colleges, "impos[ing] on the black college student a sterile, conformist educational experience." It was a damning indictment of the state, the administrators, and Southern itself. The report came with myriad recommendations to fix the problems, running the gamut from integration of the state board of education to revamped student grievance procedures and clearly written firing criteria for faculty members.¹⁴ The document didn't have the force of law, but it had a different, more powerful force. A moral force all its own.

The following month, a new force would challenge the campus. In early November, the parents of Leonard Brown and Denver Smith filed a civil suit charging that the shootings were a "wanton, willful and malicious conduct perpetrated in concert with state officers and under color of state law in total disregard for the life of an unarmed student attempting to flee in order to avoid any harm to himself." It noted that every board of inquiry examining the case had determined that shots were fired from the general direction of East Baton Rouge Parish sheriff's deputies. And still no arrests had been made. The suit sought damages in excess of \$4.6 million, naming Governor Edwards, Netterville, Al Amiss, the state board

of education, and Baton Rouge mayor W. W. Dumas, among others, as taking part in a conspiracy to keep the shooter from coming to justice.¹⁵

The NEA report and the Brown-Smith lawsuit seemed to threaten another possible rift between the students and administrators, but it didn't. It vindicated the students, and administrators begrudgingly moved forward with attempts to correct the school's problems. On November 16—the anniversary of the violence—Southern held a memorial for Smith and Brown. More than two thousand students packed the gymnasium. Similar demonstrations occurred on Southern's New Orleans campus and at the state capitol, where a group of LSU students held a makeshift vigil. Dick Gregory spoke at the Southern gymnasium, encouraging pupils to focus on their studies, lest they not be adequately prepared to fight the injustice of institutionalized racism. "What happened here a year ago is just a warning . . . of some wrong, that needs to be dealt with and answered. But if you get mad at the warning cough, then you can't deal with the illness." Dedication and hard work would solve these problems in time. "You young people have the heaviest burden for future in the history of this country, perhaps the world. You don't have the luxury of games and the silliness of youth."¹⁶

The message was well received. But there was always time for games.

Unfortunately for the Jaguars, the games weren't going so well anymore. Whether suffering a hangover from the NEA report or not, or whether the team simply wasn't back to championship form after a series of bad seasons, the team began to lose.¹⁷

Grambling, meanwhile, continued to head in the opposite direction. "Eddie Robinson says he hasn't been able to sleep well since the wire service polls voted his team to the number two spot in the small college ratings," wrote Andrew Harris, sports editor of the *Shreveport Sun*. "Maybe Rob just doesn't know how to handle too much success. It seems that sleepless nights would come if his team was voted number 22. A number two team can, in most cases, fend for itself."¹⁸ Typically, the credits far outweighed the debits. By the time of the Southern game, the Tigers were 7–2. They led the Southwestern Athletic Conference in passing, rushing, and receiving. They were being considered for bowl games.¹⁹

Off the field, Grambling was working to avoid the unrest still soaking the Southern campus. Prez Jones announced a new development program in October, complete with additional scholarships, greater alumni activity in university affairs, and increased emphasis on student aid and community development. "Total development," said Edward F. Purvis, director of the school's Office of Development, "is what the new 1973 image of

Grambling College is all about. But not just total development, but also wholesome development.”²⁰ Entering rivalry week, Grambling seemed to be doing just fine.

Southern didn't. The campus that had endured so much witnessed catastrophe yet again in the week leading up to the game against the Tigers. On that Wednesday evening, Melvin Butler, chair of the Southern English Department, was murdered in his bedroom by a friend. Butler and Gregory Charles LeBoeuf had been arguing, shouting. They moved through the house loudly. Then, in the bedroom, LeBoeuf ended the fight by shooting Butler four times.²¹ The effects of the act lingered throughout the week, the semester, the year. Again Southern had an important game against Grambling. Again the campus was stricken with violence. First it was a car accident that killed five in 1959. Then student unrest in 1972. Now this.

Two hundred miles away in Shreveport, however, the murder was a footnote. The Tigers and Jaguars were coming! The *Shreveport Times*, the city's mainstream daily, included a special section dedicated to previewing the game, seeming to validate Nicholson's hunch about the potential success of a neutral-site game. Four decades prior, when Grambling and Southern played their first neutral-site game, one small article appeared in the city's black weekly, the *Shreveport Sun*. Now the mainstream paper—the white paper—included a thirty-page supplement that celebrated the contest. It was progress by any other name. That supplement, however, made no mention of the Butler murder. It made no mention of campus unrest. For the fans, it was the Jaguars, not their baggage, that were coming to town.

Of course, the Jags did bring their baggage with them. “Bates soon found out that sustaining success is somewhat more difficult than originating it as his Jaguars bit the dust three straight times,” reported the *Times*. “You might say that Southern University started the 1973 season with all the characteristics of an Apollo mission—fuming smoke and fire and rushing off to a 5–0 record before settling back to earth.” Prospects for defeating rival Grambling still seemed grim.²²

The Jaguars, however, would have the fans behind them. The university had satellite campuses in New Orleans and Shreveport, making the total university population more than 12,000. More important, it gave Shreveport a connection with Southern that Grambling didn't have and ensured that Jaguars fans would find themselves in the majority at State Fair Stadium.²³

But would the fans be enough to compensate for the team's deficien-

cies? The Jags were up against what Nicholson called the “Black Notre Dame,” and they hadn’t had much recent success. “Two college football programs produce more pro players than any others—Notre Dame and Grambling,” reported the *Greensboro Daily News’s* Larry Keech. “Two college football teams boast enough ‘subway alumni’ to enable them to attract crowds of 50,000-plus to any major league stadium regardless of the opposition—Notre Dame and Grambling. Two college football coaches are held in such prestige that they have been enlisted to make television commercials for nationally-advertised products—Notre Dame’s Ara Parseghian and Grambling’s Eddie Robinson. And two college football teams have been able to assemble nationwide networks to telecast videotape replays of their games—Notre Dame and Grambling.”²⁴

Keech was right. The Tigers had an amazing championship run. Howard Cosell not only produced a documentary on the program, but also mentioned the school in his autobiography and hailed Grambling at every chance he got. The team was 8–2 coming into the Southern game, playing 12 seniors in key roles.²⁵ Once more, the contest seemed lopsided. Grambling had the edge yet again.

Thirty-six thousand seats of the 42,000 capacity were originally made available for the game, and even more than that were taken by the two o’clock start time on November 17. At kickoff, the warm autumn sun was beating down on the largest crowd ever to witness a sporting event in north Louisiana.²⁶

Early, it threatened to be the blowout everyone expected. Grambling marched down the field in the first quarter, starting from its own 20 and ending with a touchdown. After a Southern fumble gave the Tigers a short field, they managed another touchdown on a 2-yard Edward Collins run. It was 13–0, and the first quarter wasn’t even over. The predominantly pro-Southern crowd was getting restless. Grambling was a passing team. Charlie Bates’s Jaguars were a running team. And the Wishbone didn’t lend itself to dramatic comebacks.

But in its final drive of the half, Southern finally found a weakness in the Grambling defense. Starting from its own 14-yard line, the Jaguars’ Johnny Jackson, Dale Scott, and Larry Burnett combined to methodically move the ball down the field. It was first-and-goal on the Grambling 2. Fullback dive. Unsuccessful. Fullback dive. Unsuccessful. Fullback dive. Unsuccessful. But on fourth down, Scott pitched to Henry Green, who ran right to score a touchdown. At halftime it was 13–7. The crowd was in a frenzy: this didn’t look like a blowout at all.²⁷

At halftime, another contest—almost as important as the game on the

field—took place, and it had been taking place since the rivalry's beginning. Marching bands had always played a prominent and dramatic role in the series, but long gone were the days of the rabbles, where students and fans joined the band on the field in a sort of all-inclusive makeshift halftime celebration. By 1973, the bands were business, too. "Get it on," wrote the *Shreveport Sun's* Andrew Harris. "That's what Southern University and Grambling College will be doing here come November 17 in what many believe will be the football equivalent of a dogfight. There will be fanfare, fun and frolic aplenty and there is little doubt that there will be many among the expected 40,000 fans who will be on hand to see who will win the battle of the bands."²⁸

Both Southern and Grambling created marching bands at the same time they created football teams—Southern in 1916, Grambling in 1926. Music was always part and parcel of the football event. It wasn't a game. It was a happening. And you can't have a happening without music. As the stature of the universities grew, and as the stature of the football teams grew, so, too, did the power and reputations of the college bands. In 1972, the Grambling College Band won the title of "Best Black College Show Band" in front of more than 22,000 in Dallas's new Texas Stadium. That January, band director Conrad Hutchinson had taken his group with First Lady Pat Nixon on a diplomatic mission to Liberia, where they played for the inauguration of President William Tolbert. They played at numerous charity events and professional football games. In 1964, Grambling played at the AFL championship game. Three years later, they played at the first Super Bowl.

Isaac Greggs's Marching Band from Jaguarland was up for the 1973 rivalry game. "Today around the Southwestern Athletic Conference," wrote Jim Hall, "halftimes take on, at times, as much competitive effort as the two thirty-minutes of body-bruising between their gridder-brothers." But even more was at stake for Greggs. He was also a Shreveport native. "If you know Dr. Greggs," wrote Andrew Harris, "you know he would like nothing better than to put on some kind of show for the home folks." The Jaguar band, too, had played at numerous professional games. They, too, had played in numerous venues throughout the country. They had played at the 1973 Super Bowl earlier in the year. Though they didn't win the Dallas band contest, many referred to them as "the best in the country."²⁹

There was no rivalry without the bands.

The contest was still informal in 1973, each school's marching band playing before the game and during halftime, concentrating their efforts on moving the fans, on making a better showing than their rival. The mu-



Dr. Isaac Greggs, a Shreveport native, went on to become a revered figure in Scotlandville, leading the Southern University band for decades.

Courtesy Ryan Paul Knight

sicians, band leaders, and fans all served as de facto judges, each proclaiming a winner, each placing part of their team pride in the performance of their chosen school's songs and marches. There was never an official victor, never a scoreboard to keep totals. But everyone knew who was best. It was a subjective process, and fans of the different schools often disagreed. That, however, was part of the fun. Without an official score to mark the event, everyone could claim victory. Everyone could defend his or her band as being superior.

After the dual performances, the teams took the field again, the crowd in a full lather after the show, and after seeing the Jaguar running game score a dramatic late first-half touchdown. The crowd, the band, the touchdown. Southern capitalized on all that momentum early in the second half when freshman running back Larry Burnett ran 66 yards to the Grambling 10-yard line. Johnny Jackson then ran for the touchdown. It was 13–13. “On came Shreveport product John Hale,” announced the *Shreveport Times*, “an outcast in this classic of black powerhouses, (he’s a white, 5-5, 155-pound placekicker). He booted his second PAT [point after touchdown] and the Jaguars were on top.”



Practices for the marching band usually rivaled the intensity of practice for the football team, a necessary measure when the “battle of the bands” was at stake. Here Southern’s marching band practices in July 1971.

Photo courtesy State Library of Louisiana

A late third-quarter Grambling touchdown run by Edward Collins made the score 19–14, but the crowd had reason for hope. Quarterback Joe Comeaux threw an interception deep in Southern territory. Tiger running back Dave Dixon led another drive to the 1-yard line, but a penalty brought back his long run. A 52-yard touchdown pass from Comeaux to William Bryant was also called back on a penalty. Grambling kicker Rodney Zeno missed a field goal and 2 of his extra points. Grambling’s offense was giving Southern every opportunity to return.

But Southern’s offense wasn’t doing much better. The Jaguars never got another first down after their opening second-half scoring drive. The one glimmer of hope, a 48-yard run by freshman Robert Ford, was negated by a clipping penalty. The crush of Southern fans returned disappointed. The Tigers left the field as SWAC champions. Again. Grambling won 19–14.

Southern had demonstrated, however, that it was on the road to recovery. Two wins in 1972 had given way to six in 1973. “The guy (Bates)

is doing a good job there,” said Robinson after the game. “He’s gonna give someone a lot of trouble.”³⁰ Southern had lost the game, but Southern was coming back.

Most important for the Southern University administration, however, wasn’t the strong performance of Charlie Bates’s Wishbone. It wasn’t the close score. It was the sellout. The game was a success, and it convinced Southern to agree to move the annual game to New Orleans. It was the crowd at Shreveport’s State Fair Stadium that created the Bayou Classic.

As preparations for the 1974 season got underway during the hot summer months, the move from Shreveport to New Orleans was a footnote to the construction of the game’s new home. The Superdome was scheduled to host the 1975 Super Bowl (following the 1974 season), but that would not happen. Work stoppages and spiraling construction costs kept the development of the Dome at a slow pace. As the 1974 season began, the Dome’s total cost had already topped \$163 million. “We will also be paying interest on the bonds to finance the construction well into the 21st century,” reminded the *Louisiana Weekly*, “and the total price tag will probably exceed \$300 million. You might want to remember that some day, sports fans. And there are still those who give you an even bet that the thing will collapse after a couple of years of use.”³¹

Meanwhile, it was during the interim between seasons that Grambling College received yet another name change. It was now Grambling State University. “Grambling State University?” asked the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*’s Fred Robinson. “Somehow it doesn’t sound the same as Grambling College. But whether the name sounds the same or not doesn’t really matter because the name of the game played in Grambling, La. hasn’t changed one bit.” The move was requested by Grambling and signed by the governor on July 12. University status was a validation of the school’s academic development and allowed it to expand its graduate programs. It was another in a long line of signs that Grambling was on the rise.³²

Robinson, however, was right. The game at Grambling hadn’t changed. The Tigers were 9–1 coming into the first annual Bayou Classic, their only loss coming to eventual conference champion Alcorn. Southern, too, had fallen to Alcorn. They had also fallen to Texas Southern. But in the third season of Charlie Bates’s Wishbone offense, those two losses were the only blemishes on the season. The Jaguars had been getting progressively better each year, and this, Southern fans believed, was the year they would return to form against their in-state rival.³³

For Southern, though, it was never so simple. Again, violence on campus would dominate the headlines and cast a pall over the now-successful

football season. In late October, Southern freshman Fulton Miles snuck into Fairview Hall, a girls' dormitory, to see his girlfriend Elois Ricks. Someone saw him, and campus security came looking for the interloper. When they found him hiding in a shower stall, he was brandishing a .22-caliber pistol. And he was not willing to go quietly. Miles shot both of the security guards and was arrested on two counts of attempted murder. Ricks was booked as his accessory.³⁴

Another football season. Another violent episode. Could the Jaguars see past the troubled campus and successfully turn their attentions to the Tigers?

The fans certainly thought so. "At last," trumpeted the *Louisiana Weekly*, "the Bayou Classic comes to the City that Care Forgot." The meeting between the two—the first officially known as the Bayou Classic—would not just be a football game. A parade featuring both of the university bands traveled from Elk Place, through Bourbon Street, up Canal to the Rivergate Convention Center. When everyone arrived at Rivergate, there was a beauty contest featuring co-eds from both schools. The media, as they always had, wrongly reported that it was the twenty-first meeting between the schools. (It was the twenty-fourth, not counting the 1972 forfeit.) But the pageantry and the history of the contest infected the City that Care Forgot with a new sort of care of its own.³⁵

The pageantry surrounding the game wasn't rare. Since the development of major black college football rivalries in the 1920s, the games had served as excuses for revelry among fans. Alumni dances, breakfasts and lunches, concerts, and parades dominated the social scene. The rivalry between Howard and Lincoln, for example, the most significant black college rivalry of the early century, was not solely a contest between two football powers. It was a contest to determine "the social center of the Negro universe."³⁶ Neither was the desire for a neutral site rare. Wiley and Langston often met at the Texas State Fair in Dallas during the 1920s, and each such southern contest reserved seats for white fans. But most neutral-site games were played in the North. Wilberforce and West Virginia Institute, for example, played their annual game in Cincinnati's Neil Park. Howard and Lincoln didn't play neutral-site games, but each university leased the professional stadium of its respective city to accommodate the surge of fans. This tradition—of neutral-site games, of football as a vehicle for social activity—continued from the 1920s through the century, setting a clear precedent for Grambling and Southern.³⁷

Again in 1974 the neutral-site contest was to be played in a city where Southern had a satellite campus, but Eddie Robinson shunted aside the

talk of any homefield advantage. After all, it was Grambling who had pushed for the neutral-site game in the first place.³⁸ Grambling's student newspaper wasn't so confident. "Aware that New Orleans is a 'Southern' town, *The Gramblinite* is urging all students, faculty, alumni, and friends to be at Tulane Stadium to render that loving support to the mighty G-men." Bates, for his part, lauded the Grambling program and argued that the running game would be the real key to victory. At the pregame press conference, Southern's coach was asked whether he had found any weakness in the Tigers. "Yeah," he told reporters, "they have further to travel than we do." Despite the distance, Robinson had far more to be confident about, but he seemed wholly incapable of confidence. "This is always our most important game alumniwise," he said. "I don't think that records really count. Because the team with the greatest desire will have a little edge." He chalked up Grambling's recent success to luck. Reporters dutifully took notes. But nobody believed him.³⁹

The mania surrounding the game reached a fever pitch Friday night, as the parade wound its way through downtown New Orleans to the Rivergate. There, the informal contest between the bands became more formal, as both Grambling and Southern met in a battle of the bands. There still wasn't any official judging criterion. It was an event that allowed fans to hear the music and see the show of two of the most decorated marching bands in the country. Fans chose a winner by applause; they hashed out the intricacies of the victory in conversations after the event. "The Battle of the Bands at the Rivergate Friday night turned into a massacre," wrote the *Times-Picayune's* Joyce M. Davis, "and although the Tigers fought gallantly, they were no match for the Jaguars." Even the Grambling fans in attendance begrudgingly admitted defeat. There was no trophy, no plaque. There was just the roar of the crowd. And the music. No one left unhappy. At that point, more than 73,000 tickets had been sold, ensuring that it would be the largest gathering ever to witness a game between two predominantly black universities.⁴⁰

In preparation for the event, *The Gramblinite* published a poem by student Nathaniel Stephens, "A Rumble in the Jungle":

While walking through the jungle, with a football in his hand,
 everyone knew the Tiger was rising sand.
 He was broad in the shoulder, narrow in the chest; and the jaguar
 knew he didn't take no mess.
 The Jaguar and the tiger arrived on the scene for the battle
 to take place down in New Orleans.

Up came the Jaguar from the bayou land with a second rate team
and a third rate band.
From the North came the Tiger who knew what to do, had kicked 9
a—— and still wasn't through.
The opponents took their place like two boxers in a ring as GSU
got ready to do its thing.
The Tiger punched the Jaguar and knocked him on his back. It
shook the ground so hard the Chinese thought it was a nuclear attack.
Then the Tiger swung the Jag by the tail, sent it off like a
letter being sent air mail.
People in South America saw the Jag fly in the sky, while people
in Africa kissed that cat's a—— good-bye.
The battle went on for three more days. The Jag was beat so bad
his mind was in a daze.
Up came some more cats to help the gold and blue. But the Tiger
beat Mama Jag, Papa Jag, and Baby Jag too;
The Battle went on though the football team was beat. Then the
band came on to whip some more of that meat.
Hutch and the boys made music so sweet and plain, that the
angels cried and stars flowed like rain.
The brightness of the sun there's none to compete, but the
brilliance of GSU made the sun take a second seat.
The Tiger band shook loose booty, both high and low. Even
Governor Edwards had to ask for more.
The hussies from Southern talked trash all night, Saying "jaguar's
bite is dyn-no-mite."
Well the Jag's bite wasn't even right. Cause GSU was skin tight.
As the battle drew to a close, there was no doubt that Latimore
and GSU had straightened it out.⁴¹

By kickoff early Saturday afternoon, the paid attendance reached 76,753 as a massive crowd descended on Tulane Stadium.⁴² Down on the field, actress Gail Fisher, star of the television series *Mannix*, hobnobbed with Neal Kaye, president of Schlitz Distributing. Marion Hall walked out to the center of the field, where she was presented a memorial plaque. Marion was the wife of longtime *Louisiana Weekly* sports editor Jim Hall, who had spent so many years calling for the Grambling-Southern game to come to New Orleans. Hall was also a public relations consultant for the New Orleans Saints, and his advocacy certainly had much to do with the eventual success of the series move, but Hall wouldn't live to see it. He had died in early July of that year.⁴³

An emotional Hall walked off the field. The sun beat down. The long



Fans packed into Tulane Stadium to watch the bands and await the first Bayou Classic, 1974. Photos such as these demonstrate that the *Times-Picayune's* coverage of the crowd was more accurate than that of the *Louisiana Weekly*, which stated that the crowd was much thinner than originally reported.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

weekend of pregame festivities was over; the teams took the field. Chants of “Beat Southern! Beat Southern! Beat Southern!” clashed with the Jaguars’ “Go back, go back, go back to the woods!” Finally, the first Bayou Classic game began.

Sort of.

“The battle of the century, really wasn’t any battle at all,” reported new *Louisiana Weekly* sports editor Bobby Hall. Grambling’s opening drive seemed to be progressing nicely, but quarterback Doug Williams threw an interception to Southern’s Elton Williams. In a scenario that would be all too familiar to Southern fans by the end of the afternoon, however, the Jaguar offense couldn’t capitalize. On the Tigers’ next drive, Williams connected with Dwight Scales for the game’s first touchdown. Williams’ success was a coup in and of itself. The freshman started the season as



The Grambling band waves flags and performs prior to kickoff of the first Bayou Classic in Tulane Stadium.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

Grambling's fourth-string quarterback. But after senior Joe Comeaux suffered a mid-season injury, Williams stepped into the breach. "Doug is a fine quarterback," said Robinson. "He calls all the plays on his own. We'll call the formation or give him some ideas, but he changes the plays at the line and calls what he wants to call."⁴⁴

Southern tried to recover after the touchdown pass, but fumbled the ensuing kickoff, setting up a short touchdown drive that ended with a 9-yard Dave Dixon run. At halftime, it was 14–0. In the third quarter, Southern seemed to gain some momentum. The Southern band had once again bested Grambling at halftime, and the crowd fed off of its energy, urging the Jaguars to move the ball down the field. And they did. Southern drove the ball down to the Grambling 1-yard line. But the Tiger defense held on fourth down, and the Jaguars were left without points. Compounding the Jaguar misery, the Tigers took the ensuing drive 99 yards down the field for its third score of the afternoon.



Game action during the first Bayou Classic as seen from the press box in the Sugar Bowl's upper deck.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

Southern simply had nothing left. They were overmatched in almost every facet of the game. Grambling held the ball as much as possible during the fourth quarter. The final score was 21–0. “It was unfortunate for Southern but they just didn’t get the kind of breaks we did,” said Robinson, typically humble in victory. He was careful to note, however, that the game remained incredibly significant even through the lopsided play. “It’s possible,” he said, “in its own way, this game could be history-making because this may be the largest crowd ever to witness a black football game. It may have meant more to me than to Bates because I’m from Louisiana and can remember playing when we didn’t even have stands and sometimes fields of our own. It would have been pretty difficult to figure them coming to this Sugar Bowl and packing it.”⁴⁵

While Southern returned to Scotlandville to lick its wounds, Grambling’s victory earned it a share of yet another SWAC championship and the right to stay in New Orleans for the December 7 Pelican Bowl. The Tigers

would play South Carolina State for the national black football championship. They won 28–7.⁴⁶

Again Grambling was on top of college football. Again Southern had suffered defeat.

Eddie Robinson had argued before the Bayou Classic that times were changing, and he was right. But the Jaguars—who had continually failed to best their in-state rivals, who continually felt the weight of campus violence—had trouble believing it.

At the same time that Grambling and Southern played in front of the largest crowd ever to see a black college football game, black college football games remained threatened by the possibility of broader national irrelevance. Seventy-six thousand people, however, were hard to ignore. The success of the first Bayou Classic football game ensured that it would return to New Orleans in seasons to come. And with a heated rivalry with decades of rich history, the two schools could rely on the force of their own momentum to beat back the creeping threat brought by conglomeration and parity in major college sports.

“Well,” summed up Bobby Hall, “it’s all over now and they will be back again next year to try it all over again. If the DOMED STADIUM is completed, the game will be played in the space provided in downtown New Orleans.”⁴⁷

That it would.

8

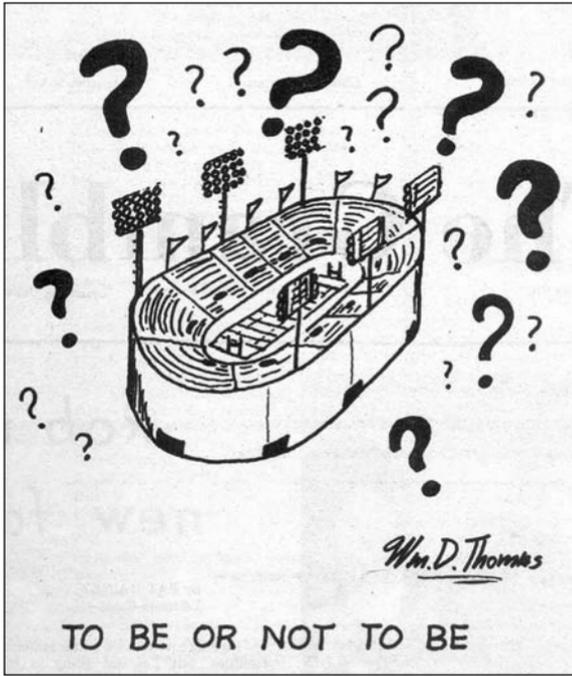
The Mother Ship Lands 1975-1979

The air was cool but calm on the night of November 17, two weeks before Grambling and Southern would meet for the first time in the now-opened Superdome. The young building was hosting Tulane that night in a game against the North Carolina Tarheels, but only two hundred Green Wave students decided to show up. The rest of the student body, along with thousands of Tulane fans, instead went to Tulane Stadium, where they watched a team culled from the business school take on the boys of Sigma Nu for the university intramural championship. The Student Senate allocated funds for the game. Tulane's band ignored the Carolina contest and played the halftime show. "I'm here," said Edward Comer, a professor of medicine, "to help support this protest against the mismanagement of the Superdome."

Ticket prices were now higher for Tulane games at the Superdome, as were refreshment prices. And the Superdome wouldn't allow fans to bring in their own snacks and alcohol. Fans couldn't go onto the field. If that weren't enough, the Green Wave got very little practice time in the Dome, functionally eliminating home field advantage. "We don't like the situation in the Dome," said Tulane student Andrew Martinez.¹

Would that they were the only ones. In truth, however, no one liked the situation in the Dome, and the controversy surrounding its first few years of operation would circumscribe the Bayou Classic for the remainder of the decade. At times, it threatened to kill the Classic entirely.

The Dome was scheduled to open in May 1975, but as early as January, executive director Ben Levy sent a confidential letter to the architect expressing grave doubt as to the optimistic deadline. In February, Levy an-



Concerns about stadium construction weren't limited to the New Orleans metropolitan area. Gambling students were wondering as well.

Courtesy The Gramblinite

nounced that mid-June was the next best chance. The city's Superdome Commission was dismayed. Who could provide a definitive open date? "I believe that's the Lord now," responded Jefferson Parish president Thomas Donelon. "We don't know." If the stadium wasn't completed by May 1 as originally projected, promised an angry Donelon, the commission would sue the contractors.²

By late March, the projected completion date had been moved to August 1, but Levy assured the city and the state that "Tulane and the Saints must be accommodated in that facility for a full season of football. Let there be no question about that in anybody's mind." Perhaps the Dome would still be in need of minor adjustments, but it would be football ready. Meanwhile, construction costs topped \$178 million, and the Superdome Commission was anxious about the Dome's ability to pay for itself. Both the Saints and the Green Wave signed contracts to play their games in the stadium. The New Orleans Jazz basketball team was expected to do the

same. But revenue projections estimated that the Dome would need to generate an average of \$30,000 a day to remain in the black. Events like the Bayou Classic would be paramount in allowing the stadium to keep its financial head above water. With all the talk among Grambling and Southern officials about the necessity of a large-venue neutral-site contest for revenue and recruiting, the game would be just as important to the Superdome.³

May passed. Then June. As August 1 approached, officials were confident that the building would be ready to open. Bayou Classic representatives also remained confident, as the game was scheduled for late in the season, but New Orleans residents were flummoxed by the controversy, the cost, and the delays. They remained skeptical of the bizarre monstrosity now visible in the downtown skyline. "No wonder we're getting reports about all those UFOs," remarked one doubtful cabdriver. "They're flying around that thing because they think it's their mother."⁴

And then, on Saturday, August 9, the Saints played and lost their first preseason game to the Houston Oilers, the first-ever sporting event in the new Superdome. A sellout crowd of more than 72,000 was awed by the stadium's large replay screens and their escape from the hot weather outside. Football, it seemed, had found a home in New Orleans.⁵

But the stadium's problems were just beginning. On August 22, one week before the Superdome's gala opening ceremony, former Dome advocate Dave Dixon announced he would file suit against the Saints for the team's proposed seating configuration in the stadium. The team was defrauding the public, he argued, and he wasn't going to let that happen.⁶ But the grand opening continued as scheduled. Bob Hope hosted the event, where city and state dignitaries joined a parade of celebrities to celebrate New Orleans' new architectural phenomenon. Among the musical guests was the Southern University Band.⁷ Surely, thought supporters, such a display would end the assorted controversies and distract detractors from the stadium's larger problems. Surely.

Management of the Dome was the responsibility of Superdome Services Incorporated (SSI), a predominantly black organization that relied heavily on Mayor Moon Landrieu to get and sustain its contract. "It is," said SSI executive Don Hubbard, "the first time to my knowledge that minorities on a large scale have had the assurance they can go to their own people for a job . . . and be treated with dignity." SSI carried an exclusive contract to provide maintenance, fire control, event preparation, ticket sales, tours, and security. They did not submit the low bid. In sweeping public pronouncements, legislative and executive officials were charg-

ing SSI with incompetence. Some, like attorney general William Guste, were claiming that the contract was invalid because it was a creature of Landrieu's patronage. It seemed obvious to Hubbard and SSI president Sherman Copelin that the claims were racially motivated. There were various interests trying to tear the company down, and "unfortunately, those interests have used race as one of the basic innuendoes, playing on the prejudice that because SSI is predominantly black, it is shiftless and incompetent."⁸ This was, after all, a football stadium, and everything about Louisiana football seemed tinged with racial controversy.

The problem for SSI was that—though race almost certainly played a role in the attacks—incompetence seemed to be the norm. New Orleans Jazz basketball fans, for example, had reported pigeon droppings and syrup on their seats. Landrieu responded by calling for patience. "General Motors didn't start overnight. U.S. Steel didn't either. They didn't reach that level the first day they went into business." Things would be no different, he argued, if the SSI employees were as white as the patrons. "For some reason we aren't quite that tolerant when it comes to involving minorities for the first time in a major kind of industry."⁹

Dixon wasn't convinced. "The Superdome is headed to be a disaster for the state, rather than the great thing it should be, and was designed to be," he said. "The Dome Commission just doesn't know any better at this point . . . can't comprehend how dire the need is for professional management. It's an emergency."¹⁰

In early November, with the Bayou Classic just weeks away, the commission held a massive meeting in the Superdome. Its decision not to launch an official investigation of SSI somewhat tempered its refusal to yield the floor to a black SSI employee who asked to speak on the organization's behalf. Even in its most protectionist stance, Superdome leadership appeared racist.¹¹

Regardless, everyone agreed that SSI wasn't living up to its contract. Governor Edwards called for an investigatory panel to assess the management of the stadium. Officials in state government, led by attorney general Guste, called loudly for the ouster of Copelin and Hubbard. The SSI management team responded that allegations against them were "racist." It was a standoff made all the more dire by the fact that both sides seemed to have legitimate claims.¹²

But on November 15, the critics' complaint gained credibility when a ten-year-old boy was mugged in the stadium during Tulane's game with North Carolina. The stadium was largely vacant, most of the Green Wave fans choosing to attend the protest game at Tulane Stadium, but even with

the reduced workload, the SSI guard on the scene refused to help. "This happens all the time," he told the boy's father. He made no report. He did not notify police. On top of that, new allegations surfaced that both Cope-
lin and Hubbard received massive illegal payoffs from the now-defunct Family Health Foundation.¹³

As the Tigers and Jaguars were going through their paces, preparing for their late November clash, officials convened a special Advisory Committee to evaluate Dome management. Included on the committee was Emmitt Douglas, state president of the NAACP. "One thing the public can be sure of is that there will by no means be a whitewash," he told reporters. "I will be one member of the committee that will call a spade a spade." Douglas was a competent state leader, but that wasn't why he was chosen. His appointment, and the appointment of Dillard University's Charles Teamer, was designed to counteract potential charges of racism in committee affairs.¹⁴

It was into this racially charged climate, into this racially charged building, that the Tigers and Jaguars came on November 28 to play the second Bayou Classic football game. The Tigers and Jaguars had problems of their own. In early August, as football practice was getting underway, Guste filed suit on behalf of Grambling against Black Associated Sports Enterprises (BASE), the production company that promoted several Tiger games and controlled television rights for the team. BASE had reneged on payments for several Grambling games in 1972 and issued worthless checks to its opponents for their shares of television broadcast revenues, leaving the athletic department to foot the bill.

BASE wasn't responsible for the Bayou Classic. Houston's Pace Management was, the same firm that handled the Superdome's grand opening events. But at the same time Grambling was filing suit against BASE, Southern's board of supervisors approved a recommendation to try to opt out of its Pace Management deal. Both schools felt that they could negotiate a more favorable contract with a new company. With the Bayou Classic's move to a new stadium, and with the success of the previous two years' neutral-site games, both Grambling and Southern were hoping for a larger share of the revenue. But Pace had a strong relationship with the Superdome, and with the controversy surrounding stadium management, the Superdome Commission was unwilling to part with one of its more reliable partners. Pace would stay.¹⁵

Southern's 1972 problems were also creeping back to haunt the school. In late February, a federal investigation into the deaths of Denver Smith and Leonard Brown ended without indictments. There simply wasn't enough

evidence, announced U.S. attorney Douglas Gonzales. Southern was understandably outraged. “These killings on the Southern University campus were committed in broad daylight,” argued Jesse Stone, president of the Southern University system. “I am very disappointed that the United States government, with all of its vast resources, could not find or identify or gain prosecution of the individuals who were responsible for the tragic deaths that occurred.”¹⁶

Calamity seemed to be everywhere. Except on the football field. The Jaguars had dropped an early game to Mississippi Valley State but recovered well. Entering the team’s final game before the Bayou Classic, a road contest against Florida A&M, Southern was 8–1. So, too, was Grambling. The Tigers’ midseason loss to Jackson State seemed to pale in comparison to its dominating wins over SWAC opponents. The team also defeated Hawaii and Pac-10 power Oregon State. While Southern played in Tampa, Grambling would take on Norfolk State in New York’s Shea Stadium.¹⁷

Those final tune-ups, observed pundits, would provide clues as to who would have the advantage when the teams entered the Superdome for the first time. If so, Grambling seemed to have a decided edge. The Tigers trounced the Spartans in front of almost 34,000 New York fans. The Jaguars were unable to muster any offense against the Rattlers and fell 10–0. Charlie Bates lamented the end of the team’s five-game win streak. “I don’t want to make up an alibi for the loss because they just outplayed us. They did a helluva job on us. We were supposed to be a running team and couldn’t run.”¹⁸

Or could they? Eddie Robinson was predictably worried. In response to claims that his was the largest team in college football, Grambling’s coach responded, “Southern is much larger than we are.” And they could run. “They run the wishbone real well,” he told reporters. “Bates has done a real fine job at Southern and their offense is one of the best in the league.”¹⁹

And if stopping Grambling’s winning streak against them wasn’t motivation enough, Southern was also playing for a share of the SWAC title. The Tigers were ineligible because they had played one fewer conference game than the rest of the Southwestern Athletic Conference teams.²⁰ The Tigers opted to play Oregon State on October 4 instead of playing a league game with Prairie View. “The integrity of the conference rules is at stake,” said SWAC commissioner Andrew Brown. “Conference members must observe conference rules first and the scheduling of games with opponents outside the conference must be done in a way that does not violate conference rules.” Grambling responded that Prairie View knew

of the scheduling discrepancy in April and chose to do nothing about it. “We even offered to play them in December, if that’s what they wanted,” said Robinson. “We aren’t trying to hurt Prairie View or any conference school.” Still, Brown was calling the game a forfeit, leading many to believe that Grambling would bolt the conference for greener pastures. The Tigers certainly didn’t need the SWAC for financial viability, but Robinson quashed the rumors. “You have to be concerned about your own institution and about the other black schools. And the geography is in favor of our staying in the conference.” Grambling would remain loyal.²¹

Any talk of secession was beside the point in the week leading up to the Southern game. “It’s getting to the point where I am almost ashamed to meet [the coaches’] wives on campus. We have to put in a lot of work getting ready for this game,” noted Robinson. “I’m sure that neither the coaches or their families mind because everybody around Grambling knows what this game means to us and our season.” Oregon State, Hawaii, Norfolk State. Those games were important in their own way. Maybe even important enough to skip scheduled conference games. But they weren’t Southern.²²

The parade, the battle of the bands, the beauty pageant.²³ And then there was the game. The largest crowd to enter the maligned Superdome to that point—73,214—attended. The two bands joined each other on the field before the game for the national anthem. The crowd was at a fever pitch. But the frenzy in the stands was countered by the methodical work of the Tigers’ opening drive. Grambling took the kickoff and moved down the field with running backs Cliff Martin and Mike Carter before Doug Williams tossed a 6-yard touchdown pass to Sammy White, in the process breaking the state record for touchdown passes in a season. It appeared that Grambling would continue its dominance.

But on the ensuing kickoff, Jaguar returner Larry Douglas took the ball at his own 4 and proceeded down the field 96 yards for a touchdown. A Southern field goal two possessions later gave Southern the lead. Then the disaster compounded for Grambling. With nine minutes to play in the second quarter, star quarterback Doug Williams fell to the turf, writhing in pain. He had torn ligaments in his left knee and had to be carried off on a stretcher. “How many fans,” asked *The Gramblinite*, “thought ‘there goes the ball game’ when Doug Williams was carried off the field Saturday in the Superdome?”²⁴

Dale Zimmerman often figured he would never get a chance to play. Being second-string quarterback behind an All-American didn’t give a young player much hope. But “Sammy [White] always told me some day



Doug Williams runs the Tiger offense in the second Bayou Classic, the first to take place in the New Orleans Superdome.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive



Doug Williams's injury shocked the Grambling fans and gave Southern fans a glimmer of hope.

Courtesy The Gramblinite

I would get my chance to prove myself.” And now he had it. Under Zimmerman’s leadership, the Tigers drove down the field for a touchdown. At halftime, the score was 13–10.

It was a bruising first half, and as the spent players made their way to the new Superdome locker rooms, the bands began spending themselves on the field, stoking an already ignited crowd. The presentation was so intense that one performer collapsed from exhaustion. This was the Bayou Classic. No one was just going through the paces.²⁵

As the teams returned, the crowd was nervous. Dominated by Southern fans because of the New Orleans satellite and the Baton Rouge campus’s proximity to the Dome, the stands echoed with questions about whether the Jaguars could come back. On Southern’s first drive of the third quarter, they answered. Freshman quarterback Eardis Grisby found receiver Isaac Hagins on a 44-yard post pattern. 13–17, Jaguars.

Southern, however, had run out of gas. And Zimmerman was nothing if not fresh. Still in the third quarter, he tossed a 72-yard touchdown pass to Dwight Scales, then followed in the fourth quarter with another. Sammy White, who would be named the game’s most valuable player, closed the scoring with a final 3-yard touchdown run. “Right now I’m emotionally spent,” said Robinson after his team’s 33–17 victory. “It’s been a real tough week.” His counterpart was conciliatory but proud. “I’m not crying to anyone,” said Charlie Bates. “Grambling was the better team today. I’m still proud of our players because we are a tri-champion.”²⁶

That they were. But Grambling’s place in that triad (along with Southern and Jackson State) came because of a disputed forfeit. It didn’t help that once again Grambling would be named the *Pittsburgh Courier’s* Black National Champion. Jaguar fans left the Superdome that night frustrated by another loss to the Tigers, hoping as they had for years now that next season things would be different.

The next season’s Bayou Classic was up in the air, as continued Superdome disputes threatened the survival of every event in the stadium. “Some appropriate means must be found to get the Louisiana Superdome out of the politics that is threatening to destroy it,” argued an editorial in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. “The public will not bear the confessed ineptitude and deficiencies indefinitely—if deficits continue to mount year after year.” The Dome lost \$4 million in its first year of operation, and if new funds couldn’t be found, it would have to close its doors on April 1.²⁷

SSI was a large part of the expense and frustration. But it had also been a boon to the black community in New Orleans, providing thousands of otherwise nonexistent jobs. “It is the embryo of the future for New Or-



There were times during his career when Dale Zimmerman assumed he would never see the field at Grambling, playing as he did behind an All-American quarterback. But Doug Williams's injury gave him his opportunity, and Zimmerman led his team to 4 touchdown drives and a 33–17 victory in the second Bayou Classic.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

leans,” argued Dillard professor Daniel Thompson. “The structure of the corporation itself guarantees black jobs, or at least an integrated enterprise. We must talk about this in the context that in the next four or five years the majority of the population in New Orleans will be black.”²⁸

Still, the stadium was broke. Still, SSI was mired in controversy. “No one is going to make this thing make money unless you convert it into a gambling casino,” joked Edwards, “which I do not propose to do.” But the governor did have other proposals. The Dome could use funds appropriated to pay state bonds due in June. Ultimately, those bonds would keep the stadium from closing. The Classic would return in November.²⁹

And if any year seemed to belong to Southern, 1976 was it. Grambling stumbled out of the gate, losing its first two games. It would lose again to Tennessee State later in the season. Southern, meanwhile, lost only two games all season. Grambling was ineligible for the SWAC crown, a punishment for the Oregon State scheduling controversy the year prior, but a Jaguar victory could give the team a share of the conference champion-

ship. As always, Southern would have a *de facto* home field advantage in the Superdome. They seemed to have the better team. And they had far more to play for. Maybe this was the year . . . ³⁰

But when the teams took the field on November 27, neither of them seemed prepared. Williams led the Tigers down the field on the opening drive, hitting receiver Carlos Pennywell for a 35-yard touchdown pass, but the drive proved to be the exception rather than the rule. There were 32 penalties for 297 yards. Southern had six turnovers, Grambling two. It was still 7–0 in the third quarter, when both of the frustrated teams finally erupted. After another in a long line of Southern fumbles gave possession back to the Grambling offense, a fight broke out between the teams. Both benches cleared. Play stopped for more than ten minutes. It was ugly—a fitting respite from an ugly game. When play resumed, the Tigers managed another field goal before the close of the third quarter, but the offenses seemed to have nothing left. Late in the game, with a Grambling fourth down looming from its own 5-yard line—and with the memory of a Jaguar blocked punt fresh in his mind—Robinson decided to have his punter kneel in the end zone rather than risk another block. Southern got its only 2 points of the afternoon. When the final gun sounded, it was Grambling 10, Southern 2. ³¹

Again the Jaguars entered the Bayou Classic with a championship at stake; again the Tigers had denied it to them. Southern's last victory, in 1969, seemed a million miles away as dejected fans filed out of the Superdome, discussing the only two points of excitement on the day: the fight and the bands. ³²

In January 1977, Prez Jones announced that he would retire in June as Grambling's president. He was the architect of everything that had happened at the university since 1936, a figure unrivaled even by Eddie Robinson. Unlike Southern, Louisiana's northern black college had avoided the vagaries of president searches and administrative turnover. Now the folks at Grambling were tasked with replacing a legend.

In March, they settled on Grambling alum Joseph Benjamin Johnson, an administrator with a doctorate from the University of Colorado. It seemed like a good hire, but the following month, the administration would be hit with a major scandal that would give Johnson far more than he bargained for. Grambling, it turned out, was operating at a \$4.1 million deficit. And as Robert Bodet, chairman of the board of regents' finance committee, noted, "It is illegal for any state facility to operate under a deficit situation." The school's accounts had been suspect for years, said auditors,

and now was the time to fix the problem. The bookkeeping was bad. The dorms and cafeteria were losing money. It was a “fiscal disaster.”³³

The legislature responded by passing a bill to cover the Grambling debt, but the school’s reputation took a decided hit. Jones was called to testify in front of the Senate Finance Committee just days before his scheduled retirement. “Jones is lucky if he doesn’t go to jail,” said state senator Ted Hickey. That was unlikely, but the threat of such action marred the otherwise celebratory nature of Jones’s retirement. Johnson, for his part, did his best to assure everyone that he could solve the problems. “I understand that we’re in 1977 and you can’t do things the way you did them in 1950,” he said.³⁴

Predictably, Johnson’s words didn’t soothe taxpayer anger. The Lincoln Parish grand jury announced that it would investigate the deficit in the fall. The probe was unlikely to draw any criminal convictions, but it only exacerbated the stigma facing the school.³⁵

And academic finance wasn’t the only element of the university under investigation. In July, the NCAA announced an investigation into possible recruiting violations in the football program. First one Grambling icon, then another. Among the allegations were charges that Grambling gave financial aid to athletes above and beyond NCAA limits and that the school provided illegal transportation to Tiger football games for potential recruits. And transportation was no small expense when it came to Grambling games. The team played all across the country. In 1976, the Tigers played their game against Morgan State in Tokyo, Japan. Robinson, however, seemed cautiously optimistic. He portrayed the investigation as inevitable. “I’m concerned, because it’s a tough thing to go about your job with an investigation going on.” But, ultimately, “I’m not worried about the NCAA. They came in, and what they asked for, we made available to them.” Making things worse, there was a history of violations. In 1975, the NCAA took two scholarships from Grambling for minor recruiting infractions.³⁶

Prez had left the university larger and more prosperous than he found it. So, too, with Robinson and the football program. Now everything seemed to be falling around them.

But things were falling around Southern as well. In accordance with the new state constitution, the Louisiana board of regents put forward a Master Plan for state higher education. It called for LSU to be listed as the only comprehensive state university and recommended that Southern add more two-year associate degree programs, in effect limiting the uni-

versity's mission. In response, thousands of Southern students marched on the capitol in late September, chanting "Ban the Master Plan!" and singing "We Shall Overcome." They crammed a public hearing, arguing to whomever would listen that the ultimate effect of the board of regents' plan would be to make Southern into a junior college.³⁷

For his part, Governor Edwards countered that there was "nothing in the plan that [sought] to erode the status" of Southern. Even Southern system president Jesse Stone admitted that the plan would save money, prevent overlap, and coordinate higher education. But as football season began, the plan remained up in the air.

So, too, did the status of the Superdome. SSI remained under fire, and as 1976 became 1977, that fire was also coming from a new direction. Beginning December 31, 1976, a group of SSI employees represented by the Service Employees International Union struck the Dome for better benefits and overtime provisions. SSI's handling of the strike only led to more racial controversy. "A black wrong is just as bad as a white wrong," said Carl Galmon, a spokesman for the A. Philip Randolph Institute, responding to SSI's attempts to undermine union leadership during the pickets, "and the actions of SSI administrators are inconsistent with the goals of black people in this city and country." Though the strike didn't last long, such publicity hurt the business's claims it was necessary for race equity in New Orleans. Galmon told reporters that SSI was "pimping the black community." Superdome employees were "making salaries below the national poverty level, while administrators of the organization [were] making \$25,000 a year."³⁸

SSI was susceptible to the possibility of replacement. Hyatt owned the hotel next door to the Superdome. It was a national, reliable corporation. And its spokesmen argued as early as August 1976 that Hyatt would be the best choice for managing the Dome. In May 1977, Governor Edwards announced that Hyatt would take over all stadium operations. The legislature voiced its approval at the podium and at the ballot box. But, predictably, SSI cried foul. In October, as football season was in full swing, SSI sued in federal court and won a stay of execution from a federal district court judge. The stay was temporary, however, and in November, with the Bayou Classic weeks away, Edwards and Guste ordered SSI and its leaders out of the building.³⁹

With the state and nation's largest black football game rapidly approaching, Louisiana's black leaders threatened to boycott the Dome in response to the SSI ouster. "I see it as a \$200 million gift to the rich white people with nothing whatsoever coming to the black community but a couple of

funky, funky jobs,” said attorney Lolis Elie. But less than two weeks before the Bayou Classic, Hyatt responded by hiring two African Americans to management positions in the organization.⁴⁰ The racial tension abated. For the moment.

But the Superdome’s racial woes weren’t the only hurdle for the Bayou Classic to overcome. In June, attorney general Guste ruled that Pace Management’s contract with the game was invalid because “it violated public bid laws.” Pace responded in August by suing Grambling and Southern, leading to compromise negotiations throughout the month between the two schools, the attorney general’s office, and Pace. Under the revised deal, Pace would technically invite the two teams to play in the Superdome every year, giving the contest the structure of a bowl game. In return, Grambling and Southern would receive a higher payout.⁴¹

And so, with another crisis averted—in a year beset by crises—the Jaguars and the Tigers came to New Orleans for yet another game. Southern had started its season with great promise, but the losses came quickly. Mississippi Valley State, Jackson State, Alcorn State.⁴² Southern wasn’t just losing, it was losing badly. The whispers around Scotlandville began morphing into shouts. On the Tuesday following the Alcorn loss, the players boycotted practice and issued a list of grievances to the administration. They had problems with Bates’s coaching, with the dorms, with the food. Cornell Morris was dismissed from the team for disciplinary issues. Bates had lost the students, he had lost the alumni, and now he had lost his players. The next day, Wednesday, a Southern press conference announced that Bates had been fired. Assistant coach Ken Tillage would replace him on an interim basis. Bates had given Southern three consecutive eight-win seasons, had revived a struggling program. But he couldn’t beat Grambling, and the team’s early-season woes left him without a job. “We’ve got to rally behind something,” said Tillage. “I told the players they would get 100 percent cooperation, so if they had any complaints to say so and we would straighten them out now. Then we can go full speed ahead.”⁴³

But full speed didn’t seem fast enough. The Jags lost to Tennessee State, then to Howard, then to FAMU. Southern limped into the Bayou Classic with an interim coach and a five-game losing streak.⁴⁴

Grambling, meanwhile, was rolling yet again. The Tigers were 8–1 coming into the game against Southern. Quarterback Doug Williams was a senior and had already broken almost every NCAA passing record, taking both the touchdown and yardage crowns in an early November contest against Langston. The Tigers won that one 65–0. Before the month



One benefit of participating in “America’s No. 1 Black Sports Spectacle” was the revenue it generated for both universities.

Courtesy The Gramblinite

was over, Williams would be named an All-American. Not a small college All-American. Not a black college All-American. An All-American, the first player from an HBCU to do so. He led the nation in passing and touchdowns, and now he would face broken and battered Southern.⁴⁵

But the Tigers wouldn’t take the Jags lightly. “They have everything to gain and nothing to lose,” said Robinson. “They are a good football team. Sooner or later they’re gonna break loose on somebody.” For his part, Tillage remained confident, even though he had yet to win a game as head coach. “We’re not overwhelmed by Grambling nor by Doug Williams. We mean to be there Saturday and not play dead for anybody.”⁴⁶

They played dead. The Jaguar defense watched as Doug Williams threw for 304 yards and 3 touchdowns in his final Bayou Classic. Tiger kick returner Robert Woods ran two punts for touchdowns. Grambling won 55–20, its eighth victory in a row against the Jaguars. Southern president Jesse Stone announced after the game that Tillage would not return as coach.

“We espouse excellence, and we did not see that kind of excellence on the gridiron today. I want the talent. I want the excellence. I want the victory.”⁴⁷ But victory would once again have to wait another year.

Tumult at Southern continued. In April 1978, students protested the actions of Stone, who fired in the first months of the year the education dean, the police chief, and a faculty member. They demanded the president’s resignation, but Stone remained defiant. “I don’t believe I have acted irrationally at any time,” he told reporters. “I certainly don’t think I have been a dictator or a czar.” But the students weren’t alone. The following month, the legislature criticized Stone, citing consistent budget deficits at the university similar to those of Grambling in years prior. Faculty and alumni joined the chorus over the summer, calling for the president’s ouster. But the university board of supervisors voted to keep him, leaving the students, faculty, and alumni to stew.⁴⁸

“The Board, in an arrogant and cynical display of ‘backroom politics,’ ignored the evidence and has displayed callous disregard for the welfare of the university, its faculty and students,” argued Murphy Bell, faculty senate representative. “We who are concerned for the future of Southern University have no other alternative except to seek elimination of the Board by whatever means necessary.” The means they had at their disposal was a dormant NAACP suit that would ultimately merge Southern with LSU, thereby eliminating Southern’s board and Stone’s position. Southern faculty and students had originally resisted the suit, hoping to maintain its autonomy. But now they felt they had no choice.⁴⁹

The students, however, demurred. They didn’t like Stone, but they didn’t want to be part of LSU, either. The faculty was opposed to the board. The board was denying the requests of the faculty. And the student body was frustrated with both of them.⁵⁰ It was a toxic situation, and it was into this milieu that the embattled Jaguar football team took the field in 1978.

Fans didn’t know what to expect from new coach Cass Jackson, but they were resigned to the fact that any rebuilding effort would probably take a while. It would. At the time of the Bayou Classic, the Jaguars were 4–6, hoping against hope that they could somehow salvage their season against their archrival from the north.⁵¹

It wouldn’t be an easy task. Yet again, Grambling had proven dominant throughout the season. The Tigers hadn’t lost all season, their only blemish coming in a scoreless tie against Mississippi Valley.⁵² The Bayou Classic seemed like yet another mismatch, yet another dominant win for the Tigers.

But just as they always did, the Jaguars projected confidence to the

press. "Right now what Southern wants is a victory over Grambling Saturday in the Bayou Classic. We can get it, too, with a break here and there," said the new coach. They had a star wide receiver in George Farmer, and the defense was anchored by pro prospect Kenneth Times.⁵³ Why couldn't they win?

Grambling. That's why. "All I want is a victory over Southern," said Robinson. And Southern would have to face another Williams, Doug's younger brother Mike, who was now quarterbacking the Tigers. So with both teams properly motivated, when the parade and the battle of the bands and the beauty pageant had run their course, the teams took the field in a Superdome that was beginning to find its financial footing.

The Jaguars had yet to find theirs. Though Southern responded well to an early Robert Parham rushing touchdown by driving down the field and scoring a touchdown of their own on a pass from Norman Gibbs to George Farmer, penalties robbed them of several other chances to score in the first half. A third-quarter touchdown pass from Gibbs to Otis Drew gave the Jags a 1-point lead, 13–12, but that would be the team's final highlight. Mike Williams, younger brother of Doug, responded to Southern's score with a 36-yard touchdown pass to Gilbert Culpepper. Then he threw another to Edward Campbell. It was a sloppy game—Southern threw 3 interceptions, Grambling lost 3 fumbles, the 2 teams combined for more than 160 yards in penalties—but the Tigers won again, 28–15. Southern, however—a team with a losing record—put up a strong fight against the conference's best team. "We played well today," said Jackson, "but well is not enough when you lose. We'll be back."⁵⁴ The loss was crushing, the ninth in a row against Grambling, but Jackson was right: there seemed to be reason for optimism. The Jaguars frustrated the Tigers for three quarters, and with some offensive additions, they might be able to bridge the divide. During the offseason, calls for better luck "next year" seemed far more hopeful than pessimistic.

Besides, the Southern band had clearly won the halftime show, as far as Jaguar fans were concerned, and wasn't that just as important? "I don't understand all this football stuff," said Southern fan Marjorie Whitting, "but I promised myself I wouldn't miss the halftime show. To tell you the truth, that's really the only reason I came."⁵⁵

Still, football mattered to many, and the first five games of the 1979 season seemed to validate that new hope, as the Jags went 5–0. Sure, they would lose four of their next five, but those were to powers like Jackson, Alcorn, Tennessee, and FAMU. Southern was 6–4 entering the Bayou

Classic, but their winning record, strong performance, and desire for revenge gave Jaguar fans confidence that this was finally the year.

Grambling, too, had lost to FAMU and Tennessee State, their only blemishes of the season. The Tigers needed a win over Southern to make the 1-AA playoff. It was a strong motivation, but compared to years and years of frustration, it couldn't match the driving force behind the Jaguar players. "This is our last chance in this decade to get out of here with a win over Grambling," said Cass Jackson, "so we're going to give it our best shot."⁵⁶

But before the rivalry could have a new birth, both universities watched as one of its incubators suffered a final death. "New Orleans knows how to do things in style," wrote *Times-Picayune* reporter Ronnie Virgets. "We're especially good at the Main Sendoff. We know how to bury things properly." More than 15,000 fans streamed into Tulane Stadium on a cold November Sunday night to see off the stadium that had redefined collegiate athletic architecture and begun the Bayou Classic's run in New Orleans. The Superdome, for all of its problems, had arrived, and now Tulane Stadium had become obsolete. A large video screen played images of the stadium's best moments. The New Orleans Symphony played. The Tulane cheerleaders cheered. There was a ballet troupe. Famous Tulane players. Southern's band played "When the Saints Go Marching In," before the fans filed out. The stadium was demolished that week.⁵⁷

At the annual pregame luncheon before the Bayou Classic, it was Jackson who was uncharacteristically guarded. "The two bands that will play are pretty equal in talent. The beauties that are vying for the Miss Bayou Classic title are too close to call. But on the football field we're in trouble."⁵⁸ It was a new approach for a Southern head coach, but the other tacks hadn't been working anyway. Why not?

As fans streamed into the Superdome, ushers closely evaluated tickets after a counterfeiting operation was discovered and exposed the night before. But everyone with a ticket got in, and what Jaguar fans saw early in the game was reassuring. Grambling drove down the field on its opening possession, but missed a field goal after Southern's defense held. The game remained scoreless until the middle of the second quarter, when the Jags mounted a 70-yard scoring drive closed by a Wilfred Charles 3-yard touchdown run. Southern 6, Grambling 0!⁵⁹

Grambling would respond in the third quarter, scoring a touchdown and converting the extra point. Southern was behind yet again. In the fourth quarter, Charles ran for his second touchdown. Then he ran for a

2-point conversion. 14–7, Jaguars. Grambling had two more possessions before the clock wound to zero, but the Southern defense held.

The Southern defense held.

The years of frustration were over. Southern won. Grambling had SWAC defensive player of the year Joe Gordon and a SWAC-leading six all-conference performers. But Southern won! “I can’t say enough about this team,” said Jackson. “These players never quit trying the whole season.”⁶⁰

That they hadn’t. As the new decade turned, the Superdome had cemented itself as the home of the rivalry, and Southern had a new hope that it could compete against the vaunted Tigers. Tulane Stadium was gone, as was the Grambling win streak. The problems at the Superdome were far from over, and Grambling, despite its slip in 1979, was still Grambling. The new decade would provide the opportunity for payoff on the hopes and foibles of the now passed 1970s. Anything seemed possible.

9

Last Night of the Tiger Dynasty 1980-1986

Eddie Robinson stood stoically at the podium, tempering as always the enthusiasm about his team and its success. Sure, the Tigers were 9–1. Sure, he had been voted co-coach of the year in the SWAC. And sure, Southern was 4–5–1 on the season. But this was 1980, a new decade, and besides, “Last year they upset us and that upset me. I can’t call myself coach of anything if we lose to them again.”

Gone were the days when Jaguar fans confidently reveled in their dominance of Louisiana black football. Gone were the days of the persistent chants of “Go back, go back, go back to the woods.” Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the small school in the north Louisiana woods created a football dynasty in the state and nation. It played and won games in every major sports venue in the country. It played and won overseas. But the tumultuous days of the 1960s and 1970s were gone now, left in the dust of Ronald Reagan’s election just a few short weeks earlier. It was a new era, and Robinson knew that. Southern had yet another down year, “and they have stumbled and bumbled all season long. You can bet, though, Jackson will have them sky high for us in the Dome.”¹ Besides, dynasties couldn’t last forever. Nothing does.

That would be a hard sell in the halls and dormitories of Grambling and Southern. Freshmen arriving on campus in 1980 had never seen the Jaguars win two games in a row against the Tigers. The legacy of Southern’s dominance, of its place in the stratosphere of Louisiana college football, had diminished through years of up and down seasons, as if black football in the state was somehow a zero-sum game, the Jags fading with each new Tiger milestone.

Of course, the fortunes of the football team weren't the only expectations those incoming freshmen saw thwarted. It was in early June—two months before fall practice began and five before Robinson would once again doubt his team's chances for success in the Bayou Classic—when representatives from the state's universities promoted a plan to better balance the races in Louisiana schools. This was a tactical maneuver, as the U.S. Justice Department was seeking to remedy the problem by merging LSU and Southern, Louisiana Tech and Grambling, and no one in Louisiana wanted that. Black universities were the cornerstones of African American life in the state. Attorney general William Guste argued that Louisiana had a "constitutionally acceptable" education system, and there were plenty of remedies for the problem of racial integration besides merging predominantly white and predominantly black schools. The board of regents sued the government.²

"I know it can be negotiated," argued embattled Southern president Jesse Stone, "if people are willing to work hard and if all consider the possible consequences of failure." If Louisiana was willing to provide funds to upgrade Grambling's and Southern's facilities, and all state schools were willing to enhance minority recruitment, the problem could be solved. While certainly there was a measure of racism in white Louisiana's resistance to the combination plan, supporters of the state's black schools were just as adamant. Any combination of, say, Southern and LSU would have the pragmatic effect of subsuming Southern into LSU. It would never—could never—be the other way around.³

Such charges weren't new. Four years prior, in 1976, the NAACP criticized Louisiana's dual education system in specific relation to athletics, arguing that it "reflects a legacy of racial discrimination and inequality against black athletes and coaches." LSU, for example, had no black baseball players or cheerleaders. It only had two part-time black coaches.⁴ Again Grambling and Southern demurred. Equity could come with similar funding for black athletics, not with sending potential Tiger or Jaguar recruits to LSU. Both remembered the integration of southern college football and the effect it had on their programs. This, for the state's two principal black universities, really was a zero-sum game. When black students chose LSU, they actively abandoned the state's black schools. Money, they argued, was the key to equity.

But while the regents' 1980 desegregation plan did provide new funds for Grambling and Southern, Stone was still unhappy. The plan "does not go far enough in enhancing Southern University." It seemed to many on black campuses as though the regents were doing just enough to meet

federal requirements, a new version of separate but unequal updated for the new decade. In their late September mailout to the Justice Department, the regents included Southern's dissent. In it, the country's largest black university argued that it needed \$222 million in improvements to achieve parity with LSU.⁵

That was unlikely. But as Louisianans waited for the Justice Department's response, they flocked to the state's stadiums. It was football season.

Grambling fell the second week of the season to Marino Casem's Alcorn State, but mauled every other opponent on its schedule. A win against Southern would not only give the Tigers a share of the SWAC championship; it would more than likely give them a berth in the NCAA 1-AA playoffs. "We need this win," said Robinson, but reminded reporters that "won and loss records are meaningless when these two teams meet because the Bayou Classic is a bowl game of sorts for both teams." Of course, that's the sort of thing you have to say when your opponent is 4–5–1. Southern hadn't played to its potential. Still, they had won last season, so why not again? "Forget the past," said Cass Jackson, "my team will be ready."⁶

Added to the pregame festivities this year was a Friday night Bayou Classic basketball game, in which Grambling defeated Southern 74–67, giving coach Fred Hobby his five hundredth victory. Then there was the parade, the battle of the bands. Grambling could make the playoffs; Southern could salvage its season. Excitement permeated New Orleans as fans flocked to the Superdome.⁷

When all the talk and all the pregame festivities had run their course, the Tigers and Jags took the field. Just like the previous year's Bayou Classic, Grambling was beset by penalties. But unlike the previous Bayou Classic, they didn't really matter. By halftime, the score was 21–0, Kenneth Sampson running and catching for touchdowns, and Ed Campbell catching another from quarterback Mike Williams. Late in the game, Grambling fans flooded the Superdome with chants of "We want 50! We want 50!" They didn't get it, but the Tigers' 43–6 victory was adequate revenge for last season's upset. The Jaguars only mustered 178 yards of offense while opposing running back Robert Parham ran for 114 yards, giving him more than 1,000 for the season. Williams threw four touchdown passes and more yardage than the entire Southern team. "I wish we could have scored a hundred," said the game's Most Valuable Offensive Player. "We wanted to beat them big."⁸

That they did. Grambling, it seemed, was back in its proper place. So, too, was Southern. The Tigers lost in the playoffs to Boise State, but that was only a small aggravation. The *Pittsburgh Courier* awarded them the

Black National Championship.⁹ The balance of power was restored on the bayou.

Integration on the bayou, however, was far from solved. After the Justice Department rejected the board of regents' plan, the parties sat down in early February 1981 for face-to-face negotiations. The federal government was now demanding that the state provide the necessary funding for improvements at Grambling and Southern prior to approving any new construction projects for traditionally white schools. Grambling needed a law school. Southern would have authority over education training. "The state should consider carefully the social effects of these actions before agreeing to them," argued *Times-Picayune* columnist Jack Wardlaw. "For example, would placing all teacher training under Southern tend to make education a 'black' profession?" Perhaps things hadn't changed so much since the 1960s, after all.¹⁰

Finally, in August, the state and the nation reached a settlement. No programs would be excised from the traditionally white schools. Millions would be spent to improve facilities at the traditionally black schools, and there would be greater minority participation in education decisions. "This does, in my judgment, create an opportunity for a new beginning for Southern University," said Stone in October, after the plan's final approval. "There is nothing in the plan that changes the nature of anybody. It just gives us more leverage."¹¹

And in October, leverage was everywhere, particularly on the football field. Grambling had once again dominated SWAC play, but dropped three nonconference games. Though the Tigers had a winning record and a chance at a conference crown, they seemed vulnerable.¹²

But maybe not. Southern defeated Bethune-Cookman to open the season, then blanked Prairie View two weeks later. Every other game was a loss. The Jaguars were 2–8. In the offseason, the Jaguars had made yet another coaching change, hiring LSU assistant Otis Washington. The season was disappointing for the new coach, but it was, for the most part, expected to be another down year for the Jags. Washington managed to keep his sense of humor. "I really didn't realize the magnitude of the Bayou Classic until just a few days ago," he told reporters. When he arrived in Scotlandville, the most common question he received was "Will we beat Grambling?" It puzzled him. "The thing that came to my mind is that most people felt or thought Southern played only one football game each year—Grambling. The answer I'd usually give is that I'd rather be 10–1 and win. But the way our season is going right now, I'd rather be 3–8."¹³

Of course, Washington had faced Bear Bryant as an assistant at LSU,

and much was made before the Bayou Classic of his opinion of Bryant and Robinson. Two weeks prior, Bear tied Amos Alonzo Stagg with 314 victories, college football's all-time record. Robinson had won 297 games and was waiting patiently to make the Bayou Classic number 298.¹⁴ Otis Washington wanted to make him wait even longer. He knew that a victory over the Tigers could compensate for all the disappointment throughout the fall. No one, after all, ever asked, "Will we beat FAMU?"

Will we beat Grambling? the fans asked again as they packed the Superdome, fully expecting the answer to be no. But the Jaguars opened the game as if they might actually deliver, entering halftime down 20–16. Will we beat Grambling?

Southern had the first possession of the second half, and just 4 plays into the drive running back Jonathon Rochon took a screen pass 46 yards for a touchdown. The Jaguars scored again when Kedrick Hogan passed to Dexter Henderson for another score. The replay showed that Henderson was out of bounds, and Tiger fans cried foul, but there was no replay rule in college football. Will we beat Grambling? Southern scored, and they scored, and they scored. In the fourth quarter, freshman Brian Forsythe intercepted a Grambling pass near the Jaguar goal line and returned it 96 yards for another touchdown. "We knew what we had to do before we went out there today," said Rochon. "The smell of victory was in the air at practice all week." And there it was again, stinking up the Superdome. When the gun sounded, the score was 20–50. Not only had Southern's defense held the vaunted Grambling running game to 101 meager yards, not only had it kept the Tigers scoreless in the second half, but the offense had managed to do what Grambling couldn't the previous season: score 50.

"This makes the whole season. It's like this is the way it was supposed to happen. There was something divine about this victory," said Jag offensive guard Ben Taylor, tears streaming down his face, enraptured by what he saw as a legitimate miracle. "It was planned this way."¹⁵ It was a holy day in the Louisiana Superdome, and the Jaguars' monumental upset was something like a religious experience for Southern fans staying behind to cheer the team after the victory, for Southern players carrying Otis Washington off the field on their shoulders. No one questioned whether or not this was a turning point in the rivalry, whether the win would mark the end of Grambling's dominance. Southern won this year, and for 365 days, that was all that mattered.

It had been a good year for Southern. Jesse Stone got the desegregation plan he wanted. The Jaguar band played at the presidential inaugu-

ration.¹⁶ The football team put up 50 on Grambling. But the question remained: Was this an aberration or a turning point?

It seemed, for the time being, an aberration. Grambling's 1982 season was yet another success, as the team rolled into the Bayou Classic with an 8–2 record, seemingly playing with additional inspiration. In early April, Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones had died at the age of eighty after complications following gallbladder surgery. Though Jones had retired, he still lived in the area and his shadow loomed over every success at the university. "We just can't see Grambling without him," said new president Joseph Johnson.¹⁷

But Southern was playing with its own inspiration. Eleven days before its traditional rivalry game with Grambling, Southern students and faculty gathered for a memorial ceremony for Leonard Brown and Denver Smith. It was the tenth anniversary of their deaths in 1972 amid the tumult that would cancel the rest of that year's football season. There was an assembly of hundreds of students, faculty, and alumni. There was a candlelight vigil in front of the administration building. "They died for the right of a peaceful assembly," said local minister Reginald Pitcher, "and I hope we don't forget what they died for."¹⁸

Perhaps it was the anniversary. Or perhaps it was momentum from the Bayou Classic win the previous season. But Otis Washington's team was playing much better in 1982. The Jaguars were 7–3, and just like Grambling had only one conference loss.¹⁹ The Bayou Classic, for the first time in years, promised to be a contest between two SWAC heavyweights.

But distractions were everywhere. A nine-week NFL Players Association strike canceled almost one hundred games. When play resumed the week before the Bayou Classic, the Superdome was in dire straits. Its most immediate impact on Grambling and Southern was that the absence of NFL games in the Dome made the annual black college football game all the more necessary for the stadium's bottom line. It would be, quite literally, the most important contest in the stadium all year.²⁰

Its significance was codified in the hype continuing to surround the annual event. "The Classic cuts across all kinds of traditional lines," said Southern alumni director Donald Wade. "You'll have husbands and wives having gone to different schools, and children, half in Southern and half in Grambling." And it mattered to all of them. "This is the biggest annual thing for blacks in the world." It was the biggest annual thing for Grambling and Southern, too. Pace Management had been excised from the process, allowing the schools to share far more revenue from the game. Revenue was the thing, as was exposure, and this year exposure and reve-

nue would be at an all-time high. Cable network TBS purchased the broadcasting rights to the game, and would televise it nationally for the first time. There would be more than 70,000 people watching in the stands and an estimated 22 million watching at home.²¹

New Orleans was also a beneficiary. Hyatt's Bill Curl estimated that the game generated around \$1 million for the city. "It's one of the biggest weekends of the year," he said. "It's not a local or regional event, either. People all over the country come in for the event. We get calls all during the year about it. Year-round calls on the date, ticket prices." The impact of the NFL strike made such revenue all the more important.²²

But the 1982 Classic, for all of its hype, would be missing one of the core elements that defined it. The Grambling band was in Japan that week, and so there would be no battle of the bands. There would be no band on the Tigers' sideline. It seemed an auspicious moment for Southern as the Jaguars took the field.

The first half belonged to the defense, as Southern responded to a Grambling field goal with a 15-yard Mike Adams touchdown run. But that was all. The Jaguar band played alone at halftime, feeding a Southern crowd delirious that its team had yet another halftime lead. Will we beat Grambling?

As the second half began, it didn't look good. Grambling drove the ball down the field in its first possession of the third quarter, retaking the lead on a James Robinson run. But the Jags had possessions of their own. Two third-quarter touchdowns and an early fourth-quarter field goal gave Southern a 22–10 lead. Another Grambling score cut the lead to 22–17, but it wouldn't be enough. The Jags had their first two-game win streak since 1961.

Grambling, however, wasn't ready to give up its dynasty just yet. As the 1982 season closed, Robinson received the Walter Camp Football Foundation's Distinguished American Award. The Tigers were still an international phenomenon. Their coach was still a legend. And though millions watched them lose on live television, they were determined to prove that their state dominance hadn't abated.²³

And in 1983, they played like it. The Tigers' one loss on the season came to sixth-ranked SMU. They lost that game by only 7. A victory over Southern would put Eddie Robinson in a tie with Glenn "Pop" Warner for third on the all-time college football wins list. But for the first time in recent memory, the Jaguars had more than pride to play for, as well. Though Southern was 6–3 on the season, the team had only one conference loss, meaning that a victory over Grambling would give them an



The Jaguar mascot, changed in the 1930s from the original “Bushmen,” had become iconic at Southern. After the team’s first two-game winning streak against Grambling in decades, the Jaguar had far more to celebrate.

Courtesy Ryan Paul Knight

outright conference title. Otis Washington had turned around the Jaguar program in only three years, leaving the Southern faithful to expect yet another win.²⁴

Still, the broader media perception was that the Jaguars were doing it with smoke and mirrors. Southern trailed their opponents in virtually every offensive category. They had forty-one fumbles and seventeen interceptions. Grambling, meanwhile, was blowing out its opponents, holding them to less than 9 points per game.²⁵

So the teams took the field for the tenth Bayou Classic with a conference title and state pride swirling around them. Politics swirled, too. In late November 1983, the campaign season for the 1984 presidential election had already begun, and Jesse Jackson was in town to shore up support and attend the game.²⁶ His presence excited an appreciative crowd, but he wasn’t the reason they were there. After all of the pregame weekend festivities had run their course, after Jackson had taken his seat, there was still a conference championship to decide, a rivalry to reengage, a blood feud to settle.

That crowd, however, was unexpectedly small. Fifty years prior, 58,199



Jesse Jackson in 1983. The presidential candidate would attend the 1983 Bayou Classic game during his campaign for the 1984 election.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, U.S. News & World Report Magazine Collection, photo by Warren K. Leffler

spectators would have seemed unthinkable, but the growth of the Bayou Classic created new expectations. Organizers were left wondering what had gone wrong.²⁷ Still, those who were in the Superdome were rapturous as the teams took the field, waiting expectantly for a conference championship, or to avenge two losses in a row, or to make it three, or to see a coach tie Pop Warner for wins. It was all possibility and hype . . . until kickoff.

After a slow start, the Tigers proved the pundits right. A close first half gave way to a second half rushing onslaught by the Tigers. Fullback Reggie Pugh ran for 100 yards in the second half alone. The game turned, how-



Robinson's teams of the 1980s weren't as dominant against their archrival as they had been in the past, but his 1983 victory against Southern both provided a measure of redemption and tied Robinson with legendary coach Pop Warner in wins.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

ever, not on offense or defense. "The key?" asked Grambling return man Dwayne Jupiter. "Special teams." It was early in the third quarter, with Southern clinging to a 10-7 lead, when Jupiter returned a Jaguar punt 85 yards for a touchdown. Southern wouldn't score again. The Tigers got the vengeance they were looking for. They got the conference championship. Robinson got his record-tying victory, 10-24. "We owed it to the student body," said offensive tackle Darryl Augurson. "It's hard to walk around campus with your head up when you've lost two Bayou Classics in a row."²⁸

What the win didn't do was put Grambling back in the 1-AA playoffs. The playoffs, in fact, had already begun. The late date of the Bayou Classic ultimately made Grambling or Southern ineligible. Both schools made nods to scheduling the game earlier to increase the likelihood of playoff eligibility, but both also noted that the Bayou Classic was a playoff game in itself. It generated more revenue than a 1-AA playoff game. More people saw it. And the outcome was far more important to its fans. Playoffs or no, the Bayou Classic would always be the most significant game on the schedule. With or without the playoffs, the Tigers once again found themselves named Black National Champion for 1983.²⁹

In the offseason, revenue continued to be an issue. In June 1984, the

Supreme Court ruled that the NCAA was in violation of antitrust laws by exercising exclusive control over television contracts for college football. The ruling would now allow individual colleges and conferences to negotiate their own television deals with networks. Now, major programs didn't have to limit their exposure on national television. Networks didn't have to deal with the NCAA for one massive lump sum. Everyone seemed to win.

Except small colleges. The ruling seemed to threaten the ability of HBCUs to receive television exposure, because there were now no limits to the number of times networks could broadcast the games of Notre Dame or USC. If a network could show the University of Miami every week, what incentive was there to show FAMU? "It's a fight for survival," said SWAC commissioner James Frank. "Obviously this means more competition, more people out there trying to strike deals—not only the big boys, but us small ones as well." He argued that many smaller schools would have to schedule games on untraditional nights to make their games more attractive to television executives.

But HBCUs struggled for television time anyway, and without the watchful eye of the NCAA, Grambling and Southern could more easily negotiate their own lucrative deal for Bayou Classic broadcast rights. They had something that most small college programs didn't have: a legitimate showcase game with broad national appeal. Still, Eddie Robinson was typically pessimistic. "I go with the Constitution and what the Supreme Court thinks, but I think it's going to have a negative effect on the future of Division 1-AA, Divisions II and III. We aren't going to be able to get a piece of the television pie." Significantly, however, NBC, the only major network not to televise college football games, announced that the ruling had sparked their interest, and that after studying the situation, they would begin seeking college contracts of their own.³⁰

While NBC deliberated, however, the teams took to the field, and it would be a disappointing go for both the Tigers and Jaguars. Grambling, defending SWAC champion, faltered early and often in 1984, losing four of its first six games. "It's been a frustrating season," said Robinson, "but I've always said the first to cry is a sissy. Whatever is wrong, I have to find it." Grambling closed its campaign with four straight victories, ensuring yet another winning season for the Tigers entering the Bayou Classic. But when you set a standard the way Grambling had, a winning season wasn't good enough. It was just the third four-loss Tiger season since 1960, and another slip in the Bayou Classic could make it five.

Otis Washington, meanwhile, entered the season with the hope of win-

ning his first conference championship. But Southern, too, suffered four losses, leaving them with a mark equal to that of Grambling. And in a down season for both teams, the Bayou Classic became even more important. Without a conference championship or a playoff berth to fall back on, a victory over a rival was the only way to salvage a disappointing year. Though the records of the opponents were less than stellar, the game itself promised to be hard-fought and close.³¹

When the Classic began, each team stalled on its first drive. But Grambling struck quickly in its second possession on three swift plays, ending in a 17-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Terrell Landry to tailback Wayne Hill. Then Southern responded with a touchdown pass of its own, Ervin Bennett throwing to Connell Swain. Then another Grambling touchdown. Then two Southern field goals and another touchdown. At halftime it was 19–14, the close game that everyone expected.

Southern started the second half with another field goal, but watched helplessly as Grambling's Landry passed for another touchdown, this time to wideout Calvin Nicholas. 22–21. But the Tigers' passing was ancillary to their rushing. Running back Wayne Hill, filling in for an injured Reggie Pugh, exploded in the second half. Hill wanted to attend Southern but wasn't offered a scholarship, so his performance had a missionary zeal to it. His 18-yard third-quarter touchdown run gave Grambling a 22–28 lead. His 127 rushing yards led the game. Southern, however, wasn't done. A 71-yard drive ended in an early fourth-quarter touchdown pass from Ervin Bennett to Connell Swain. 29–28.



The Superdome was ignited by both the game itself and the pageantry that surrounded it.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

Grambling's next drive began at its own 26-yard line. It was slow and methodical. Running, running, running. But after a completed pass at Southern's 40, receiver Calvin Nicholas fumbled. Fumble! Southern recovers! The crowd was in a frenzy.

Until it saw the penalty flag near the line of scrimmage. A roughing-the-passer penalty gave the ball back to the Tigers with a first down. The drive continued, even more careful than before. Grambling moved into range, then kicked a field goal. 29–31. Its defense then held, and the game ended. The Tigers had a new winning streak. Robinson, now four wins shy of the college football record, joked to the media that the win "allows me to live in the state for the next year." The season hadn't gone as planned. Robinson's disappointment hadn't fully abated, but defeating Southern was just the remedy he needed.³²

As 1984 became 1985, a new push from the Southern University System board sought President Stone's ouster, citing inferior academic standards and the lack of a long-term development plan. But Stone had been around for a long time; he had political connections in every part of the state, "friendships that were built up over the civil rights years," according to a legislative aide. His political capital kept him confident and defiant. "Jesse has nine lives," said state senator Richard Turnley. "It's hard to say which one he's on, but I think he may be on his eighth."³³

He was. In February, Stone announced his resignation. He blamed "unfriendly forces" for his desire to leave. "I think that there comes a time when it's probably easier to achieve a goal if you're not the target than it is if you are, and I have been a kind of target for a lot of people outside the university who have been meddling in the university's affairs for the past ten years." In his place came Joffre T. Whisenton, who immediately had to answer questions about underperformance in many Southern educational programs—programs that court-ordered state funding was supposed to fix. Whisenton promised results, but also countered such concerns by arguing that black colleges' historical disadvantages made it unrealistic to assume quick competition with established white schools like LSU. "It's almost like a tricycle trying to keep up with a jet," he said.

Meanwhile, Grambling was cited as the picture of success. From 1977 to 1980, Grambling had one of the highest failure rates in the state for teacher certification and lost more than seven hundred students. But as of November 1985, student enrollment had returned, test scores were up. President Joseph Johnson nodded to the funding initiative, but also cited greater alumni involvement and the publicity brought by its football program.³⁴

And why not? By early November, Grambling's football coach had more wins than any in history. The Tigers won their first six games of 1985, easily giving Robinson the record. But after the team made its coach a legend, it stumbled, losing two of its final four. It was another monumentally successful season for Robinson, but the coach was still characteristically glum. "After playing ten games we should be improving, but our team is not performing the way it should."³⁵

Otis Washington was frustrated, too, but for better reason. The Jags were 6-4. Again. They had entered the season expecting 1985 to be the year they won the SWAC. "Even if we win our last game," said Washington, "the season, at best, will have been a poor one." The program had come a long way from the lean years of the 1970s, but Grambling and the SWAC were the two hurdles that seemed insurmountable.³⁶

The Southern student body, at least, remained confident. The day before the game, the *Southern Digest* printed a mock sermon predicting Grambling's defeat: "Hey yall, haa! We want to pay our last respects, haa, to Brother Eddie Robinson and his Grambling Tigers, haa! . . . A special mission, haa, was on the minds of Otis Washington and his Southern University Jaguars haa! A special history making mission, haa! On November 23, 1985, haa! The Jaguars did what no other team dreamed of doing, haa! The Jaguars destroyed, haa! The Jaguars devastated, haa! The Jaguars mutilated, haa! The Tigers of Grambling University . . . Ashes to ashes, haa! Dust to dust, haaa, may Eddie and his defeated Tigers lay to rest. And all the mighty Jaguars said, amen!"³⁷

There was more to the twelfth Bayou Classic than team redemption. Southern had a new assistant coach prowling the sidelines, staring across the field at Robinson and the Grambling players: Doug Williams. The former Tiger star joined Washington's staff after his NFL career, and now would be helping the enemy. It was the ultimate betrayal. "I look at it as a strictly professional situation," Williams explained. "I played in the Bayou Classic four straight years for Grambling. That's history now." Everyone in the stands, whether wearing blue or black, knew that Williams had never lost a Bayou Classic. And he didn't intend to this year, either.³⁸

Even with the draw of Doug Williams's return, however, both universities had cause for concern. The 1984 Classic had witnessed an even greater drop in attendance, down to 51,752, and advance ticket sales appeared down again in 1985. Pace Management had publicized the game and brought packed houses, but its involvement limited the take of each school. Now, the schools were making more money, but the continuation of the game depended on attendance. "You have to realize," said Donald

Wade, Southern's alumni director, "that the novelty is wearing off." The Classic needed full-time promotion and better advertising, but it would still be best if the schools handled those duties themselves. Decreased attendance figures were frustrating, but so, too, was Pace.³⁹

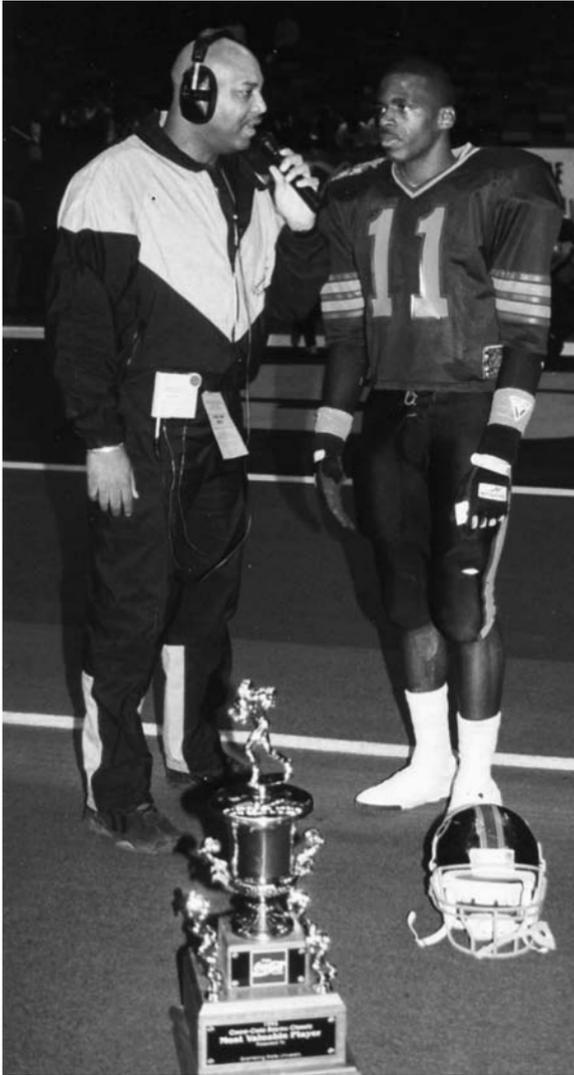
Though the crowd wasn't a sellout on November 23, the 56,742 was 5,000 more than the previous Classic. And 56,742 fans can still be overwhelmingly loud. But as the roar dissipated and the players took the field, everyone was shocked to see Chauncey Allen enter as Grambling's quarterback. Tiger starter Terrell Landry missed practice during the week because of a sick child, so Allen—who had only thrown five passes all season—got the start in the most important game of the year.

Southern's crowd was buzzing. Maybe this was the break they needed. Salvage the season. Beat Grambling. First Doug Williams, and now this. Everything seemed to be going their way. Early in the first quarter, the Jags scored on a 44-yard Alij Tapp touchdown pass to Ronald Scott. Grambling's backup managed a touchdown to John McFarland on the next possession, but Southern came back to score one more Connell Swain touchdown before quarter's end. 12–6. Maybe this was it. Maybe.

It wasn't. Another Allen touchdown pass to McFarland would leave Grambling ahead 12–13 at halftime. Three third-quarter field goals and a fourth-quarter Wayne Hill touchdown would make the final 12–29. Southern never scored after the first quarter. The backup quarterback was good. Doug Williams didn't help.⁴⁰ Another string of losses. Another disappointment. What could next season possibly bring?

It didn't look good. Perhaps the only thing that could save the Jaguars now was a cancellation of the entire event.

And in June 1986, two months before the teams reported to camp, cancellation seemed entirely possible. The year prior, Tom Benson purchased a majority share of the New Orleans Saints from John Mecom, Jr., assuming that the state's financial arrangement with the team would stay in place. That arrangement amounted to a \$3 million subsidy, on top of its appropriation to fund the Superdome. But desperate to reduce the state budget, the Louisiana legislature planned to cut the Saints' subsidy and reduce the Superdome's operating expenditure by \$4 million. "There is no way," Benson told the press, "my partners and I will continue to operate the team here if the state rescinds the twenty-year contract we have with them." That contract gave the Saints Dome revenue from gameday parking and concessions, as well as free use of locker rooms and stadium personnel. All of it would disappear under the new budget. Under the new plan, the Superdome would effectively close. The Sugar Bowl, Tulane



The profusion of media surrounding the Bayou Classic was vastly accelerated compared to the rest of the season. Here quarterback Hollis Brent is being interviewed by the Grambling media in the early 1980s.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

home football games, and the Bayou Classic would all have to find new homes.⁴¹

The New Orleans City Council desperately urged Governor Edwards and the legislature to keep the contract with the Saints. The revenue from professional football was vital to the city's economy, as were events like the Bayou Classic. In addition, attorney general Guste reminded lawmakers that cutting those funds would put the state in breach of contract and could ultimately cause more long-term financial damage. The legislature listened. The Saints' subsidy was maintained, and the Dome remained opened.⁴² Southern was going to have to play Grambling after all.

The season hadn't gone according to form. After a 4–1 start, things went awry for the Jaguars. Three losses in a row. If that weren't bad enough, star freshman quarterback Jonathan Story suffered a season-ending knee injury. They had no quarterback, no hope of a conference title. It was another disappointing year for the Jags. But Grambling had suffered disappointments of its own, losing four straight games in the middle of the season, sandwiched on either side by three wins.⁴³

The rivalry, however, wasn't simply program-defining. It was personal. Jaguar receiver Farrington Johnson came to Southern from north Louisiana, turning down a scholarship to Grambling. "It's been difficult," he said. "I just want to win. If I don't, it's almost like I can't go back home." Baton Rouge native and Grambling flanker Calvin Nicholas had the same problem. "It can be a very bad situation. My freshman year we lost, and every time I went out, it was the same old thing: 'You went all the way to the woods just to get a whipping.'" Nicholas, at least, had the benefit of three straight wins since the last Tiger loss. Johnson had never beaten Grambling, and his chances this year seemed dim.⁴⁴

They were. Grambling dominated the game, winning its fourth straight Bayou Classic in relatively easy fashion, 30–3. Johnson missed a fourth-down touchdown attempt in the back of the endzone late in the game. Nicholas caught 6 passes for 71 yards and a touchdown. Even more important, Grambling's Chauncey Allen, now the unquestioned starter, threw three touchdown passes. Tiger running backs Terry Rose and Wayne Hill combined for more than 170 rushing yards. "We were flat as a pancake," said a flustered Otis Washington after the game. "I don't understand it. This is our biggest game of the year. I don't know why we came out flat. I can't put my finger on it. We have no excuses and nobody to blame but ourselves. It was a poor excuse for a game."⁴⁵

Johnson would have to return hat-in-hand to north Louisiana, once again to suffer the abuse heaped upon him for having the gall to choose

Southern over Grambling. Nicholas would saunter into Baton Rouge and gloat. Grambling had won four in a row. It had won nineteen of the last twenty-five meetings with its archrival. Fans of Grambling had lived a charmed life for the past quarter century.

What they didn't know, couldn't know—what Johnson and Nicholas and Washington and Robinson couldn't know—was that the Tiger dynasty had seen its twilight. Never again would Grambling string together such a series of wins. Never again would there be a similar generation of dominance. Even as the “boys from the woods” celebrated another victory over the Jaguars, their ownership of the Bayou Classic had come to a close.

10

Winters of Discontent 1987-1992

Marino Casem never intended to be a football coach. The Memphis native graduated with a degree in physical therapy from Xavier in New Orleans before receiving his certification at Tuskegee, then moved back to his hometown. But Betty Jean was in Utica, Mississippi, and Utica was 250 miles away. She got Marino a coaching job at the local junior college, and eager to be with the girl he loved, Casem took it. “The day I took the coaching job, all the hospitals started calling,” he said. “So later on, every time Betty Jean would complain about the coaching business and all the hours, I’d tell her, ‘Well, if it hadn’t been for you I’d be running a hospital by now.’” After brief stints in the military and Alabama State, Casem landed in the early 1960s in tiny Lorman, Mississippi, the head football coach of Alcorn State University.

It was there that people began calling him The Godfather. His twenty-two-year run at Alcorn produced seven SWAC championships, four black college national championships, a host of coach-of-the-year awards, and, in 1984, a 1-AA number one ranking. By the end of the 1985 season, there was really little else for him to accomplish with the Braves. So he and Betty Jean headed south on Highway 61, bound for the largest black university in the country.¹

Southern’s 1986 season was another in a long line of disappointments. Otis Washington’s team was again 6–5. Had again lost to Grambling to close the year. Casem wasn’t used to losing, and he wasn’t used to watching as someone else ran the football team. After the Jaguars’ fourth straight loss to the Tigers, the new athletic director took over as head football coach. Things, he vowed, would be different.

The year 1987, however, would prove to be one of turmoil. First there was Washington's dismissal. Then, that summer, star defensive back Marion Blount drowned in a swimming accident. A week prior to the first game, the Jaguars' offensive coordinator took another job and left the program.²

As the season began—despite Casem's vow—things appeared remarkably the same. After four wins to start the season, the Jaguars dropped their next three, including a close loss to Alcorn. For the third year in a row, Southern would enter the Bayou Classic with a 6–4 record. The disappointment of the losses, however, was trumped by the specter of controversy. The NCAA was investigating the team for possibly using ineligible players. In response, the new coach suspended two of his players for the final two games of the season. But Casem had defeated Robinson eight times at Alcorn, and was excited to be in New Orleans. "It's the biggest happening in the black world. It's a monster game. It's an awesome feeling to be involved in it. When I was at Alcorn, we always wanted to be a part of it. We were envious."³

And so the excitement of possibility trumped the frustration of a long season. Why not? Grambling, for all its history of success, seemed imminently vulnerable in 1987. The Tigers were only 5–5, losing their last 2 games to Alabama State and South Carolina State. Against the Bulldogs, Grambling led 13–12 when South Carolina State tried a late field goal to win. They missed, but a Tiger penalty gave them another chance. They missed again, but there was another penalty. Then again. Another penalty. Finally, on the fourth try, the Bulldog kicker made his attempt and won the game. Grambling had always been a heavily penalized team, but they weren't supposed to choke. Weren't supposed to give kickers four chances to win. "We're trying to put that one behind us," said Robinson.

With both teams attempting to rectify a season of mistakes, their fans descended upon New Orleans yet again. They saw the beauty pageant at the Fairmont Hotel. They attended the Whitney Houston concert sponsored jointly by the two schools. But there remained, as ever, controversy. Officials estimated that the game brought in more than \$10 million in tourism dollars to New Orleans, but some sought to artificially inflate the city's take. Southern officials charged that the previous year, Canal Street hotels charged \$10 to \$15 more for rooms during Bayou Classic weekend than they did during comparable weekends, such as that of the Sugar Bowl. The Greater New Orleans Hotel-Motel Association denied the charge, arguing that an investigation of the claims turned up no evidence of price gouging. Still, the appearance of unfair treatment was there, and it would linger.⁴

But after the bills had been paid, there was still the game, and another still-small crowd of 55,783 filed into the Dome, hoping to see their teams avenge themselves once more. As the game began, Grambling appeared to be suffering a hangover from its debacle against South Carolina State. An early Tiger turnover led to a short field for Southern and a quick 3-point lead. Then it was a 79-yard Jaguar drive, ending in a touchdown pass from freshman quarterback Nate Harrison to receiver Elliott Searcy. Grambling recovered in the second quarter with a Chauncey Allen touchdown pass and a blocked punt that resulted in another touchdown, making the score 14–13 at half, and it seemed as though the Tigers were finding their legs.

Or not. After a slow start to the second half, the Jaguars managed a late third-quarter touchdown on a 38-yard run by tailback Daryl Garner. They scored again early in the fourth when Garner caught a 25-yard touchdown pass from Harrison. But a Tiger touchdown run from fullback Sherman Cowley made the score 21–27.

It wasn't over. Grambling had one more chance when they got the ball on their own 20-yard line with 2 1/2 minutes left. The Tigers moved to



The action on the field was intense. This photo is from a later Bayou Classic, but serves to represent the passion with which both teams played.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

their 49, but a fourth and 10 left them with only one more chance. It was impossible. Right? Chauncey Allen dropped back, looking, looking. His pass hit Terry Rose in stride, who immediately turned upfield, a clear path to another touchdown, another victory over Southern. But cornerback Maurice Hurst caught Rose from behind and forced the ball out of his hands just before he crossed the goal line. It bounced quickly and rolled out the back of the endzone. Touchback. Jaguar ball. Southern wins.

Rose was devastated as Southern players ran onto the field. The streak was over. The Godfather had done it, had beaten the winningest coach in college football history. For Southern, it was redemption. For Grambling, it was the second straight loss on a fluke play at the end of the game, giving the team its first losing season in twenty-eight years. At the postgame press conference, a devastated Robinson hinted at retirement. "I'm not putting people in my pocket the way I used to. I've got to question myself," he said. "I'm going to sit down and look at myself. Maybe I'm not as sharp as I once was."⁵

Meanwhile, Casem was ecstatic. "To beat Grambling is an awesome thing," he said. "It rectifies everything that has happened to us this year. This is going to ease all the pains and ills that have bothered Southern University." The Washington dismissal. The Blount tragedy. The coordinator debacle. The player suspensions. The Jaguars had won for Blount and erased everything else. "This victory," announced a defiant Casem, "means Southern is going to be a force to be reckoned with."⁶

Maybe so, but a new set of troubles began for Southern in late January 1988, when art professor Frank Hayden was shot and killed by his son. A well-respected sculptor, Hayden was one of the stars of the Southern faculty, and now he was gone.⁷

As the campus coped with the death, it also suffered continued financial woes. In August, Southern's governing board tried to oust Joffre Whisenton. Though he survived the public meeting, many attended to catcall and boo the university president. His tenure seemed doomed. The NAACP investigated Southern as well, arguing that Whisenton had mismanaged the school's finances and ridden it into the ground. In October, with the school millions of dollars over budget, Whisenton was forced to resign, replaced by the New Orleans campus's chancellor, Dolores Spikes. Meanwhile, the Southern board itself was under fire, Governor Buddy Roemer seeking to eliminate it in favor of a larger "super-board" to govern the state's universities not under the auspices of LSU.⁸

The controversies peaked two weeks before the Bayou Classic when Whisenton sued Southern, claiming that the university's malice and bad

faith caused him mental anguish, emotional distress, and loss of reputation. “It’s no surprise,” said Southern board member Bobby Gaston. The school argued that it wasn’t Whisenton’s ouster that caused his loss of reputation. It was the disaster of his governance itself.⁹ Regardless, all involved would view the Bayou Classic as a welcome respite from a year of continued troubles.

But the Classic had troubles of its own. In late August, Willie Sensley, vice chairman of Southern’s board of supervisors, argued that the game should be moved from New Orleans. The year 1988 saw more price gouging by New Orleans hotels, each charging more during Bayou Classic weekend than for the weekend of LSU-Tulane. The city insisted it wanted the game to stay, claiming that if there were any problems, it would find and eliminate them. Sensley, however, wasn’t moved. Each year the teams took turns “hosting” the event—being the official home team. This was Southern’s year and arrangements were already in place, but if something wasn’t done, Sensley would recommend that the Jaguars move the game in 1990 when they next hosted the event.¹⁰

For the next two years, at least, the Classic was safe. But Southern’s football team hadn’t been able to avoid stumbling, either. Even as the players reported to camp in August, Casem was worried about his offensive line. He had lost his two best performers to graduation, and the others had been inconsistent throughout 1987. “I hope we can surprise some people with some different looks,” he said. “But you’re only capable of doing what your personnel allows you to do.” His team managed to surprise some people early in 1988, winning three of its first four games, but then the Jaguars went into a tailspin, losing four games in a row before recovering for two late victories before the Bayou Classic.¹¹

Meanwhile, Grambling strove to overcome its losing record of the previous year when penalties, turnovers, and defensive holes had conspired to fell the Tigers. 1988 would be a corrective measure for all of them. The Tigers entered the Bayou Classic with an 8–2 mark.¹²

If the win-loss disparity wasn’t enough, Grambling was also out to avenge the previous season’s loss, forged as it was from a forced fumble near the goal line. Grambling had recovered from its first losing season in almost three decades but hadn’t forgotten who’d given it to them. Still, listening to Robinson would have led any outside observer to believe that the Tigers were the ones entering the game with a 5–5 record. “Right now, I think Southern is peaking and that doesn’t speak well for us. I just hope we don’t have the same ending as last year.” Casem, in contrast, was confident. “Our morale is very, very high right now,” he said. “Our kids are awful

young, but we're playing better than in recent weeks. I think our kids have finally found themselves and actually know what we're trying to do."¹³

Who exactly was the underdog here? The Jaguars certainly didn't think of themselves as such. They had defeated Grambling last season. They had their own hall-of-fame coach prowling the sidelines. They had suffered numerous setbacks on and off the field, but, as Casem announced to a hungry press corps, "There's nothing like beating Grambling."¹⁴

For the fans, though, confidence was never a question. Southern fan John Cade was milling around the entrance gate before the game when a Grambling fan ambled up to him. "There's a chump right there," Cade said. The chump just smiled. The two men embraced. Wilson Gant had heard this from his friend before, and he gave as good as he got. They wouldn't sit together during the game, because during the game they were enemies. But before and after, the Bayou Classic was the stage for a grand family reunion for black Louisiana. North or south. Black or blue. Cade and Gant separated as they entered the stadium with the other 55,450 fans. They would see each other again.¹⁵

But first there was the game. Despite its poor record, Southern had the number one defense in 1-AA. After a first-quarter Grambling field goal, the Jaguars shut down the Tiger offense. It was a defensive battle throughout, until the fourth quarter, when Southern scored 10 points in the final 4:21 to win the game, a field goal followed by a 17-yard Curtis Patterson run with less than 2 minutes to play. Southern linebacker Chris Scott's 14 tackles and 1 1/2 sacks made him the game's Most Valuable Player and spearheaded a fierce defense that held the Tigers to a lone 3 points. The final score was 10-3. Again Grambling hurt itself, with 4 fumbles and 100 penalty yards. Robinson was despondent. Casem was joyous. The long era of Tiger dominance was effectively over.¹⁶

As Gant left the Superdome, stung by Grambling's second Bayou Classic loss in a row, his Southern friends found him, celebrating with the verve of victors. Gant took it in stride, understanding fundamentally the rules of winners and losers. But after the ribbing, after the taunts, the men hugged as they left the platform. "Man," said Jag fan Booker Johnson, "this is what it's all about."¹⁷

For Cade, Johnson, and the other Southern faithful, the victory would be short-lived. In early December, Casem announced that he would step down as football coach to focus his full attention on his duties as athletic director. He had set the program on the right track, and now it was time for new leadership.¹⁸

As the search for his replacement began, the Jaguars again suffered a

blow. Two years prior, the school suspended two players after they were deemed ineligible. Eight more were academically ineligible before the start of this season. Now, the NCAA was investigating new accusations of academic irregularities and five-year-player use. Casem presented an air of confidence, but that was nothing new. Jaguar fans would have to wait.¹⁹

As they waited, Louisiana inspector general Bill Lynch issued a scathing report on Southern's financial mismanagement, building from the original allegations leveled by the NAACP. The school was discriminatory. It promoted based on favoritism. It kept inadequate records. New president Dolores Spikes escaped reproach, but she was the only one.²⁰

The folks from Scotlandville were desperate for good news, a distraction from the tumult swirling around the university. In February, they got it. Casem hired former Jaguar quarterback Gerald Kimble to coach the football team. Kimble had also been an assistant coach with the team in the 1970s, and for the last ten years had coached at Shreveport's Green Oaks High. He promised a conference championship and a high-flying, pass-happy offense. On the football field, at least, there seemed to be reason for optimism.²¹



Dolores Spikes took over as president of Southern in 1988 after serving as chancellor of the New Orleans branch of the campus. During the legislative furor that year over Southern's financial and academic mismanagement, Spikes survived a purge and set the university back on the right path.

Photo courtesy State Library of Louisiana

But that was about the only place. The Roemer administration continued to fight Southern's desegregation plan, pushing instead for a super-board that would subsume the university into a broader system. "Southern's position," said a Roemer aide, "seems to be that the role, scope, and mission of Southern-Baton Rouge is the education of disadvantaged blacks. It's a worthy mission, but the state is saying, let's step back and see what's the best way to do that." The chasm seemed insurmountable. The state responded to Southern's protests by arguing that the school shouldn't be allowed to add new courses until the current programs were improved. It was another in a long series of slaps in the face for the university, but Roemer had plenty of evidence to back his claims. Southern officials had been making legitimate autonomy arguments since the 1970s, but NAACP and state investigations weren't fabricated. Autonomy was meaningless, they argued, if the autonomous product being produced didn't meet a baseline standard required of every university.²²

The imbroglio put Grambling in an awkward position. It unquestionably defended Southern's argument about the particular mission and necessity of black colleges. At the same time, however, Grambling was one of nine regional universities governed by the Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities. For all of the division between Grambling and Louisiana Tech over the years—particularly as Jim Crow was giving way to integrated civil rights—the two schools were now governed by the same board. One was still predominantly white, one predominantly black, but at the highest levels, the decisions were coming from the same place. Not only that, but while Southern struggled with embarrassing graduation rates, Grambling was leading the state, at or near the top in every statistical category. Though the on-campus administration at Grambling (to say nothing of the various athletic and academic departments) saw itself as unquestionably in Southern's camp, the reality of its situation made it look far more like Tech.

The crisis in Scotlandville hit the athletic department in July, as the revised Southern board forced budget cuts that led to the dismissal of several assistant coaches. In addition, the prices of football and basketball tickets would go up. The department was operating at a \$600,000 deficit, but, said Casem, "We will not be in a deficit again this year." The problem had the ancillary effect of canceling any Southern plans to move the Bayou Classic in 1990. The revenue from the game was the largest part of the athletic budget and couldn't be risked because of a few perceived slights from hotel operators in New Orleans. Not while the entire university found itself under the state's microscope.²³

By August, a Southern lawsuit against the restructuring plan reached the Supreme Court, winning a temporary stay from Justice Byron White while the Court waited to hear from the Justice Department. The Supreme Court deliberated, and Southern waited to hear its fate.²⁴ In the meantime, there was football.

On the football field, at least, there was a way to gauge your progress. There wasn't confusion and delay. There were no angels dancing on the heads of pins. You scored more points than the other guys, and you won.

Even before the season, however, Southern seemed to be winning, as early August saw former Jaguar defensive back Mel Blount enter the NFL Hall of Fame. At the same time, Eddie Robinson announced that he would step down as athletic director, focusing all of his energies on football and fundraising.²⁵

Both teams had their share of success and failure throughout the season. Southern started strong at 5–1, but then faltered late to enter the Bayou Classic with a 6–3–1 record. Grambling lost two games as well, but won its last five and could still win the SWAC championship with a win over the Jaguars, and a win could provide them an at-large berth in the 1-AA tournament. Gone were the days when the SWAC received an automatic bid. A string of mediocre seasons, the late 1970s division of schools into 1-A and 1-AA, and the big conference television deals made possible by the Supreme Court had conspired to push Louisiana's black universities off the front of national sports pages. Even the Bayou Classic was drawing, on average, twenty thousand fewer fans than it had at its inception.²⁶

But it was no less important to the 59,774 fans who entered the Superdome on November 18 that year. Late in the second quarter, the Jaguar fans among the crowd remained confident that they would win their third straight, would erase all the controversy surrounding them, if for only an afternoon. They had a 16–13 lead with 2:28 left in the half, fueled by 2 Nate Harrison touchdown passes and a safety of Grambling's Clemente Gordon. But the Tigers marched down the field 72 yards and scored with 29 seconds left on Gordon's 63-yard touchdown strike to Wendell Jones. In the second half, they scored again, and again, and again. Two Gordon touchdown passes to Brian Thomas, an 85-yard touchdown run by Jake Reed. Grambling scored 38 points in the final three quarters of the game, never allowing a hustling Jaguar offense to catch up. Nate Harrison's two fourth-quarter touchdown passes to Brian Thomas would be too little, too late. The sixteenth Bayou Classic ended in Grambling's victory, 44–30. The Tigers had their typical bevy of penalties, but their more than 500 yards of offense compensated nicely. And they were again SWAC champions.²⁷

Southern was disappointed, but everything seemed to be disappointment these days. The Saturday following the Bayou Classic, a group of students, faculty, and alumni met on the steps of the state capitol to hold a "Keep Southern Alive" rally to protest the Roemer realignment plan.²⁸

And as the new decade turned, the protests seemed to have their effect. The Southern board of supervisors remained. In March, the law school narrowly avoided loss of accreditation. Payroll controversies dominated the summer months, leading to two indictments in September. But in the face of troubles all around, the Southern faithful once again turned to football. And Gerald Kimble, now in his second season, was confident. They were okay last year, but they had the potential to be great in 1990. "I'm not going to say how good or how many games we'll win, but we'll be a better overall team." His star cornerback was also hopeful. "We can be as good as we want to be," said Aeneas Williams. "It just depends on how we play." Apparently, however, the Jaguars weren't all that interested in being good. The team dropped 2 of its first 3, then 4 of its last 5, and entered the 1990 Bayou Classic with a 4-6 record.²⁹

But Grambling, too, had its share of self-destructions, as a seventy-one-year-old Eddie Robinson began his sixth decade of coaching the Tigers. Though his winning percentage was down, though the number of players Grambling placed in the NFL was down, the university still thought its 1990 team would be one of its best. The athletic department began an early Heisman campaign for fullback Walter Dean, who had averaged more than 100 yards per game in 1989. Five games into the season, everything appeared to be on track. Dean was running well and the Tigers were undefeated. But then two losses in a row. Another late loss to Alabama State left the Tigers at 7-3 entering the Bayou Classic. Still, there were successes. Grambling played in the Cotton Bowl, the Meadowlands, and the Hoosier Dome, attracting large crowds in all three venues. Not only that, but Dean was averaging almost 130 yards per game, and the Tigers were confident that they could close their season with a win over Southern. More than sixty thousand tickets had already been sold, and promoters were expecting the largest crowd in years.³⁰

They got it. Attendance topped seventy thousand, the crowd roaring in response to every play, dancing with the sound of the bands. They saw Jags star Aeneas Williams end his college career with twelve tackles and four pass break-ups. But they also saw Walter Dean end his by rushing for 144 more yards, breaking his own single-season rushing record in the process. Grambling quarterback Shawn Burras threw for 255 yards and 2 touchdowns. By the time Southern managed its first touchdown in the



The meaning of the Bayou Classic to the fans, the state, and the broader black community has been parsed out in the previous chapters, but it is important to remember what it meant to the players. There were very specific reasons that players attended Grambling, that they attended Southern. One of them, without question, was to beat their Louisiana rival.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

late fourth quarter—a touchdown pass to Kirk Davenport by quarterback Robert Ziegler, the Jags third quarterback of the afternoon—the score was already 19–0. A Grambling score on an interception return sealed what seemed to be an inevitable victory, even after Ziegler managed another score. The Jags succumbed to another defeat, 25–13. “It wasn’t pretty,” said Robinson, but it was a win. Another win.³¹

As 1990 bled into 1991, it was Grambling’s turn for campus controversy. A February presentation for Black History Month descended into chaos when a white speaker took the stage. Grambling students Walter Davis and Stephen Ferguson rushed from the audience, knocking the speaker off the podium, denouncing the idea of inviting a white representative to a Black History Month presentation. More students followed, this time pushing Davis and Ferguson off the stage. The resulting confrontation between students and administrators led to fourteen indefinite suspensions. At a March hearing for Davis and Ferguson, student protests morphed into anarchy; as the police sprayed mace, the students fought back, violently assaulting two police officers. Nine were arrested.

“The university would love to say it is simply a racial thing, a black and white thing,” said David Bradley-Gibson, one of the suspended students. “But if the police hadn’t come in there and brutalized the students, and if the administration had treated the students fairly afterward, we would have moved on to something else.” It seemed like a reasonable point. And even those who didn’t agree couldn’t help but see eerie similarities to 1972. In June, the suspended students were allowed once again to register for classes.³²

They were there in the fall, when the student body again flocked to the stadium to see the Tiger football team. What they saw, however, didn’t ease their tension. Grambling’s season was one of ups and downs. Against Prairie View, the Tigers scored 77 points in a massive rout. A few weeks later, they lost to Alabama State 60–14, the largest defeat in Robinson’s tenure as coach. Grambling limped into the Bayou Classic with a 5–5 record.³³

As that date neared, however, Gerald Kimble was coveting a .500 record. Southern’s season had been a disaster from the beginning. In early September, the players boycotted practice in protest over athletic housing. The dormitories weren’t air conditioned, and players who bought window units for their rooms were told they were in violation of school policy. A tense meeting with the chancellor ultimately mollified the players, and promises by the administration were sufficient to return them to the practice field.

Southern needed all the practice it could get. Loss followed loss followed loss. The team was 2–7 entering its final game before the Bayou Classic, a contest against hapless Prairie View. “We need to win a football game,” said Kimble, “and we couldn’t care if it were the School for the Blind.” Prairie View was as close as Kimble was going to get, and the victory provided some measure of momentum for the 3–7 squad as they sought to upset their archrival.³⁴

But in a season of slumps, even the Bayou Classic itself was in trouble. In early October, Marino Casem announced Southern’s intention to move the game to Houston, which was courting the game by offering better hotel prices and other amenities. “New Orleans says we can’t do better than them,” said Casem. “And we want to be in New Orleans. We’re Louisiana people. But they don’t really want us.” He referenced the price gouging more than anything else.

It was a threat, but it wasn’t an idle threat. Houston wanted the game and all the weekend-long festivities that accompanied it. Both Southern and Grambling had demonstrated over the years that even in down sea-

sons, they could draw large neutral-site crowds in a wide variety of venues. Classic representatives agreed to meet with Houston tourism officials after the game. New Orleans, for its part, tried simultaneously to deny Casem's charges and apologize for the lack of hospitality. A giant billboard welcomed Classic fans to New Orleans. Banners appeared along Poydras Street in front of the Superdome. Certainly they would get to the bottom of these price-gouging claims.³⁵

The seeming paradox was necessary, as the Bayou Classic, even when the teams entered the game with mediocre records, generated significant revenue. And it only promised to increase. In April, Grambling and Southern announced a 3-year television contract with NBC worth almost \$500,000. More important than the money, however, was the exposure. This was the payoff from the Supreme Court decision all those years ago—a small-school showcase game on national network television. “For me,” said the network’s Ken Schanzer, “the question is not why we’re doing it, but why we haven’t done it before.” It was a bold statement, and black Louisiana surely agreed, but black college football was a risk, and everyone waited to see what the game would provide.³⁶

On paper, it seemed to provide a massive mismatch. Despite Grambling’s poor record, its statistics still vastly outstripped those of Southern. “Statistics are for losers,” said Robinson, typically dour before the big game. “You have to ask who wins the games. We haven’t won when we had to win.” Neither had Southern. And so the two entered the stadium with far more questions than answers.³⁷

As the television cameras rolled, the teams played at a furious pace. After a Nate Harrison touchdown pass to Cornell Johnson, Grambling responded with a field goal and a 1-yard Eric Gant touchdown run. The Jaguars scored two more touchdowns in succession (an interception return, an Alden Foster run) before the Tigers responded with a field goal. Another Southern field goal made the halftime score 24–17. The game was high scoring, exciting, and loud—everything network television was hoping for.³⁸

And then there was the halftime show. “This is the No. 1 event for the band,” said Southern drum major Darin Celestin. “There’s been so much hype and stuff that’s been going on for years, and some alumni come back just for this. I have friends at Grambling, and we have an understanding that whoever wins the game wins, but when it comes down to who has the best band, then we have a problem.” Both bands played, and moved, and drove the crowd into a frenzy. And it was all on television. This was the additional entertainment that didn’t come from programming Big Ten



The game's contract with NBC added a new national credibility to the Bayou Classic. Here Ahmad Rashad prepares for a Bayou Classic telecast.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

football games. It was as old as the rivalry itself, but it was fundamentally new to network television. With the fans well lubricated and drenched in the sound of the music, the teams took the field for another half, NBC executives hoping against hope that it would match the intensity of the first.³⁹

It would. Grambling's touchdown in the third quarter didn't tie the game, because the Jaguars blocked the extra point. It was 24-23 entering the fourth, and the Tigers took the lead on quarterback Eric Bryant's second touchdown pass of the game, this one to Derrick Ned. 24-30, Grambling. With just over 6:30 left in regulation, Southern got the ball

on its own 30-yard line. Seventy yards to win the game. It was a long way to go, with limited time and a national audience bearing down. The running game had failed all day, only yielding 15 yards, so Kimble decided to go with the pass. What did he have to lose? His team was 3–7 anyway. So when Southern quarterback Nate Harrison dropped back to pass—everyone in the building, everyone across the country, assuming it would be the first of many in a sustained, methodical drive down the field—Kimble knew he had the element of surprise. Harrison’s pass hit wide receiver Brian Thomas in stride, and he ran the full 70 yards for a touch-down. 31–30.

Southern had done it. Had shocked their rival on national television and won the most important game of the season. It was the second losing season in five years for Robinson’s team. “I feel bad about the record,” said Tiger fullback Eric Gant, “but losing the Bayou Classic is worse. You can be 0–10, but if you win the Bayou Classic, it’ll make your season.”⁴⁰

That was undoubtedly true, and even with the Grambling loss, the game was a success for both teams in the simple excitement it provided for NBC. But Southern’s elation over a win against the Tigers was tempered by its demoralizing season. Two weeks after the victory, the university fired Gerald Kimble. He wasn’t surprised. “The old cliché is you’re hired to be fired, and today it just happened to be me.”⁴¹

Removing Kimble seemed an easy decision, but in these years of trouble, nothing at Southern seemed easy. Marino Casem recommended Alabama State coach Houston Markham for the head coaching job, favoring the tenured veteran over startup candidate and former Grambling star Doug Williams. The board rubber-stamped the decision, as expected. But when Markham returned to Montgomery, he hedged. Though Markham had agreed verbally to a \$70,000 contract, he chose instead to renew his contract with the Hornets, once again leaving the Jaguars in the lurch. “Obviously,” said chancellor Marvin Yates, “we have been placed in an awkward situation.” To make it less awkward, the board named Casem interim head coach for 1992, giving the university a year to find the best replacement possible. And so, for one final year, Casem would troll a collegiate sideline. For one final year, he would stare across the field at Robinson in the Bayou Classic, two legends playing chess one last time.⁴²

And as winter gave way to warmer weather, the Classic finally cemented itself in New Orleans. Negotiations with the city set the date of the game on Thanksgiving weekend, ensuring lower lodging rates because the hotels would have set dates for fans’ arrival every season. The ten-year deal also had the benefit of giving NBC a game on a normally

sports-dead weekend, making a continuation of that contract more likely as well.⁴³ Everybody won. Except Houston. Casem used the city as leverage in negotiations with New Orleans, and the bluff paid off. It would be more than a decade before the Classic again turned to Texas.

The more immediate future saw both Southern and Grambling attempting to rectify fallen 1991 seasons. And Southern would get its chance for redemption early, opening the season against Markham's Alabama State Hornets. "There's no question I want to whip his ass," said Casem. "I don't want to be anything less than a gentleman, and I don't want to give the kids a bad image. But I'm not going to be deceitful. What he did bothered me a lot." The problem for Casem was that Alabama State was the defending SWAC champion two times over. They were good. Southern, meanwhile, was rebuilding with an interim coach. Despite Casem's best intentions, his team couldn't overcome eight turnovers. The Hornets won 30-10.⁴⁴

The Jaguars never really recovered, entering the Bayou Classic at 5-5.⁴⁵ Grambling, for its part, stumbled out of the gate as well. Star quarterback Eric Bryant found himself academically ineligible before the season, vaulting Alex Perkins to the starting role. Predictably, the team struggled early, losing two of its first four. But it hadn't lost since, and the Tigers were averaging well over 30 points per game.⁴⁶

And so, with NBC's cameras rolling, Marino Casem led his team onto the field for the last time. He stared across the field at Eddie Robinson for the last time. He soaked in the noise of 71,282 fans driven mad with anticipation, and he watched as his team, inspired by its coach's last game, scored the game's opening touchdown—a run by quarterback Eric Randall. In the second quarter, he saw them score the second when Randall passed to Cornell Johnson.

The bands played at halftime, but the real show was yet to come. Grambling's kick returner Norman Bradford opened the second half with an 85-yard kickoff return, narrowing the Tiger deficit to 7. Southern responded with a touchdown of its own on another Randall run. Then a Grambling field goal. A touchdown by Tiger fullback Eric Grant. When the third quarter barrage was complete, the Jaguars still led 21-16. Another Gant touchdown run early in the fourth put the Tigers up 21-23; then a Randall to Johnson connection made it 27-23.

With 4:05 remaining, Grambling took its final possession on the 23-yard line. Unlike Southern the previous year, Robinson didn't go for an immediate home run. Instead, he methodically worked the ball down the field. With less than a minute to play, the Tigers were poised on the Jag-

uar 3-yard line. Alex Perkins, the backup who performed so admirably all season, dropped back, then rolled to the left. Pass! Pass!

But it wasn't a pass. Perkins ran into the endzone on a quarterback bootleg. 30–27. Casem's farewell was spoiled. The Tigers led only twice in the game, and for a total of only sixty-four seconds. But that was enough.⁴⁷ Robinson soaked it in, standing on the field with his players, listening to the Tiger fans exultant in victory. He had no way of knowing that the Bayou Classic win, sweet as it was, would be his last.

But Southern fans had no way of knowing that, either. The Jaguars were devastated. Another Southern loss. Another losing season. Years of Grambling dominance had given way to measured parity, but losses hurt more when expectations were raised. What we need, they argued, is an Eddie Robinson of our own. We need a coach to build the program, to stay for more than a few seasons, to beat the hell out of Grambling. To give unto them as we have received.

On Friday night, December 18, 1992, the embattled Southern University board of supervisors unanimously agreed to hire Winston-Salem State head coach Pete Richardson to lead its football team.



Southern Renaissance 1993-2000

Pete Richardson sat quietly. This was his usual pose. He was an introvert, anxious in social situations. After growing up in Youngstown, Ohio, playing football, loving nothing but football, Richardson moved through college and even managed to play a couple of seasons with the NFL's Buffalo Bills. After his pro stint, he headed to Winston-Salem State, where he remained an assistant for nine years before taking over as head football coach. But that was five years ago, and now he was in Baton Rouge, watching quietly, always quietly, as the board of supervisors approved his new contract. He wasn't the board's first choice, as bickering over other candidates left members at a stalemate. Richardson was the compromise hire, but he was a hire, nonetheless. Southern had a new coach.¹

On other matters, however, Southern's board was still unwilling to compromise. The federal lawsuit accusing Louisiana of operating a segregated higher education system had entered its nineteenth year, and Scotlandville was still fighting every compromise measure the state proposed. Any new plan would eliminate Southern's board and would, they argued, ultimately diminish minority representation in positions of collegiate leadership. Again the 1970s. Again the exceptionalism. Desegregation, they argued, would hinder black education, not help it.

In the end, the board was fighting a battle that was doomed from the outset. When the final compromise vote failed in early January 1993, the U.S. District Court was able to impose a solution of its own, the dreaded "super-board" that Southern had been fighting for years. The judge's ruling came down in March.²

As the calendar moved closer and closer to football season, Gramb-

ling found itself embroiled in yet another race controversy of its own. In June, the National League of Nurses launched an investigation of the school's program, charging racial insensitivity. The administration said all the right things, welcoming the benefits of such a review and hoping for better racial cooperation in the department. "It works out that white students go to white faculty and black students go to black faculty," said Carroll Falcon, a member of the board of trustees. "And this has probably led to some feelings of better treatment on either side."³ So Grambling, too, was making an argument for exceptionalism. Grambling, too, made the claim that races tend to stick together.

But by July, the school's defenses had been broken. "I'm sick of this craziness," said nursing dean Betty Smith, the school's only white dean. The faculty's six white professors—Smith excepted—all quit, claiming racial discrimination and inequitable pay scales. The incident left the nursing program in jeopardy and served as a microcosm of Southern's broader claims. Grambling's nursing program was a creature of racial mixing imperatives, created to lure white students and faculty to the campus. Now that racial mixing threatened to tear the program apart.⁴

It didn't. New teachers were hired and the program continued, but again the role and place of a black college came into question. By the time football season rolled around, both schools had once again manned the barricades of viable black education.

Such had become the norm. So, too, had Southern's coaching turnover. Pete Richardson was the Jaguars' third coach in three seasons. Their fifth in eight. Meanwhile, Eddie Robinson seemed to have trolled the Grambling sideline since the dawn of time. In Robinson's fifty-first season, Grambling entered the Bayou Classic at 7–3. But Southern was 9–1 and the clear favorite to beat its rival. Even more impressive, particularly in light of the race controversies swirling around Louisiana's black colleges, was the makeup of Richardson's new staff. "What is this," asked senior safety Jabbar Juluke, "the Rainbow Coalition?" The Jaguars' coaching staff included two whites and one Asian. "There were a lot of eyebrows raised because of the people I brought in," Richardson explained, "but it wasn't a big deal to me."⁵ It wasn't a big deal to many, even among those who were making exceptionalism arguments to defeat state desegregation plans. Winning cured everything. The blurred lines of race and collegiate success became clearer in sports. There were wins and there were losses. And all qualifications fed from those statistics.

And success only bred success. With Southern's resurgence, Bayou Classic ticket sales were reaching a new high. The Jaguars hadn't won



Pete Richardson's arrival at Southern ushered in a new era in Jaguar football. He hired a more diverse staff, he provided stability to a program that had been floundering under a succession of head coaches, and, most important, he won games.

Courtesy Ryan Paul Knight

an outright SWAC title since 1959, but could do so with a victory over Grambling. As eager ticket buyers pressed for a seat at history, the potential profits for each school grew. The schools still played themselves out of 1-AA contention by playing the Classic so late in the season, after the playoffs began. But with a sellout crowd and national television coverage, the money from the game outstripped any that could be gained from participation in the national tournament. It would be the rivalry's first million-dollar gate.⁶ But that wasn't all. Thousands of students flocked to the new job fair held in conjunction with the Classic weekend. The battle of the bands added a Greek step show to its bill, and it, too, was sold out.⁷

On the field, however, the benefit was clearly one-sided. At half-time, the Jags were up 17-7, led by quarterback Eric Randall and tailback Lindsey Scott, who each had a touchdown in the first half. They each had one more in the second half, and at game's end Southern had swamped Grambling 31-13 and won the SWAC championship. The Dome was filled with Jaguar fans, always in the ascendant, and the noise of the celebration pierced every corner of the aging structure.⁸



The job fair associated with the Bayou Classic not only gave qualified black applicants, particularly from Grambling and Southern, an outlet for finding employment, but it also provided businesses, corporations, and New Orleans itself the opportunity for developing brands and finding the most qualified talent. It was ultimately a vehicle for economic development in many facets.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

It continued on New Year's Day, when the Jaguars carried their SWAC championship to the Heritage Bowl, defeating South Carolina State 11–0. Their success led to another Black National Championship.⁹ In one short season, Pete Richardson, the compromise candidate, turned Southern's program around. They were champions of the Heritage Bowl, of the SWAC, of the state. A new day had dawned.

Richardson's success convinced even the Grambling student newspaper that something significant was happening in the game. "It's safe to say that the young turks are taking over black college football from the old pioneers. It's a transformation that had to happen," wrote Carl Ramsey. Of course, the old pioneer was Robinson. "Father time caught up to immortal coaching greats Jake Gaither, John Merritt, W. C. Gordon, and Marino Casem. And it looks like father time is finally getting a grip on the legendary Eddie Robinson."¹⁰

It was certainly true that Grambling seemed headed in the opposite direction of its south Louisiana counterpart, beset by the same kinds of controversies that held Southern in limbo for so many years. In June 1994,

the state board fired embattled president Harold Lundy after a legislative audit revealed numerous cases of mismanagement and illegal activity. Of course, the board governed over many of the state's universities, and ten of the eleven members voting against Lundy were white, giving him the opportunity to allege discrimination. The campus remained divided over the ouster through the fall, as Grambling's leadership struggled to fix the problems discovered by the audit.

Still, for all the tumult, the Tigers didn't allow the controversy to hover over their 1994 season, and as fans flocked to the stadium, they were rewarded with a 9–1 record. The team was still undefeated in conference play and was guaranteed a share of the SWAC championship even after a loss to Southern. Again alums sought solace in the football team, again it delivered.¹¹ The Jaguar football team, however, didn't. The defending conference champions stumbled to a 5–5 mark prior to the Bayou Classic, but its record was somewhat misleading. Southern dropped its 5 games by a total of only 16 points.¹²

Another massive crowd descended upon New Orleans to see what kind of fight the Jaguars had in them, spending an estimated \$34 million in the city that weekend. The job fair, book signings, special black history exhibits, the battle of the bands, and then the game. Again, it would be televised by NBC. Though the network's contract with the Classic expired after the 1993 contest, a new multiyear deal ensured that the rivalry would stay on national television for many years to come.¹³

The cameras rolled, the graphics flooded the screen, and the Jaguars' show began again. In the days leading up to the game, Southern players insisted that they were better than their record indicated. They cited the close losses, the subtle mistakes here and there. They could keep Grambling from winning an outright conference title. And they did. The Tigers' first and only score came with three minutes left in the fourth quarter. By that point, Southern had 34. Southern linebacker Jimmy Connor returned two interceptions for touchdowns. Cornerback Matthew Dorsett returned another. Then Jerry Wilson returned a punt for a touchdown. Though the Jaguar offense only managed two field goals, they won overwhelmingly, 34–7. "Everything that happened today should come back to reflect on me and my coaching," said a dejected Eddie Robinson. "I've never seen a Grambling team lose like this, getting behind 21–0 without the defense on the field. We could have stayed home this weekend." As the final seconds ticked slowly off the fourth-quarter clock, Southern defensive lineman Kendall Shello began singing. "Coach Rob can't get 400 wins, can't get 400 wins! Ain't it a shame? Ain't it a shame?"¹⁴



The Bayou Classic serves as a theater for all African American issues in Louisiana. Here a meeting of the Louisiana legislature's black caucus takes place in conjunction with the weekend festivities.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

Any of the Tiger fans streaming disappointed out of the stadium would have agreed, but there was no chance of that anyway. Robinson was stuck at 397 after the loss. It would be his 1995 season, his 53rd, that would see his 400th win.

Robinson, for his part, didn't want to talk about it. But "so many people have asked," said his son, Eddie Robinson, Jr.; "he kind of has to respond." His responses, however, had a typical Robinsonian flair. "You want to win each game. If it helps us or the youth of this country, then 400 means something to me. If we don't reach it, it won't be the end of the world."¹⁵ The typical pessimism ever emanating from Grambling's coaching offices.

But this time, the pessimism was justified. "We're not loaded," Robinson said about his 1995 squad. After a season-opening win at Alcorn, the team lost two in a row. A win over Prairie View put Robinson in sight of the 400-mark, but didn't inspire much confidence. It was the Panthers' fifty-first loss in a row, setting a new NCAA record for futility. The next game was against Mississippi Valley State, another winless team, and the Tigers treated them as such, winning 42–6. "I tried to say this was just another day, just another game," admitted Robinson, "but it really wasn't." President Bill Clinton called Robinson at the stadium to congratulate him.¹⁶

Then the hoopla ended, and the season found some sense of normalcy. And when the smoke cleared, it turned out that Robinson's original pessimism was valid. The Tigers dropped three of their final five games, entering the Bayou Classic with a 5-5 record.¹⁷

Southern was having no such trouble. The team's win over Grambling in 1994 erased the memories of an otherwise disappointing season, and gave the Jaguars momentum going into 1995. The team entered the Bayou Classic with a 9-1 record using its patented "racehorse offense," generating more than 41 points per game.¹⁸

Both teams felt they had a chance in the Classic, and both had much to play for. Conference champion Jackson State entered the 1-AA playoff, so the second-place team would be the SWAC's representative in the Heritage Bowl, which pitted the conference versus a representative of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference. Southern's 5-1 conference record would give them a second-place finish after defeating Grambling, but the Tigers, 4-2 in conference play, could force a tie for second and possibly give themselves the berth.¹⁹

The 67,351 in attendance knew the stakes. They always did. But they also knew that the roles were fundamentally reversed. The previous season, a disappointing five-loss Southern team upset a one-loss Grambling. This year it was Grambling with the disappointment. Would the outcome be reversed as well?

In the first half, that question remained in doubt. Southern scored first on a blocked punt, but Grambling's offense responded with a touchdown pass from Kendrick Nord to Jeff Nichols. When the teams went to the locker room at halftime, Southern's offense had 56 passing yards and no points. Whispers moved through the stadium, wondering where the vaunted Jaguar offense had gone and whether it would return in the second half.

Or perhaps they wouldn't need it. Southern opened the third quarter when Jermaine Sharp returned Grambling's kickoff 67 yards for a touchdown. It followed that score with a field goal by Carlos Leach. Then another. Then another. The Jaguars weren't dominant, but they were getting the job done. Finally, a fourth-quarter touchdown run by fullback Donnie Gales gave Southern a 30-7 lead, and a late Tiger touchdown by tailback Jay Johnson wouldn't change the outcome. Southern won again, 30-14. Grambling lost its third Bayou Classic in a row and suffered another losing season. Robinson was still unable to defeat Richardson. Adding insult to injury, Southern would again be named Black National Champion.²⁰

After the game, reporters pressed Grambling's coach as to the reason

for the team's failure. "I'm the reason," he said without hesitation. Through the course of the press conference, Robinson became contemplative. "They say life changes itself, replaces the old with the new. When the time comes, whatever I have done to that time, I will have to live with it."²¹ That sounded like retirement talk, but no one assumed it would happen. No one wanted it to happen. Still, the disappointment on Grambling's campus was a creature of Robinson's doing. He was, in effect, a victim of his own success, and his age made him vulnerable. Coach Rob would need a strong season in 1996 to secure his job, to secure his legacy.

But the season would be anything but strong. After watching its rival win another Heritage Bowl in late December, Grambling would suffer a barrage of allegations in the first half of the new year. An NCAA investigation led to the university's admission that 72 student-athletes, many from the football team, received grade changes in more than 140 different classes. Robinson also used ineligible players, some of whom never appeared on any of the team's NCAA participation charts. The state government's interest was piqued, leading to its own investigation of academic fraud in the athletic department. As football season began, Governor Mike Foster initiated a task force to review "Grambling's academic, athletic, and financial management practices and mak[e] recommendations to the university's administration." It was a nightmare. No one knew how long Eddie Robinson would stay at the helm of the football team, but everyone admitted that his time was drawing to a close. Not only did the infractions portend a quicker-than-planned exit for the legendary coach, but they threatened to tarnish his legacy.²²

And then the season came. It didn't help. As the team suffered through a disastrous 3–7 campaign leading up to the Bayou Classic, questions continued to come about Robinson's possible retirement. There was the investigation. The scandal. And the losing. "To walk out with seven whippings this year and have a chance to pay those guys back, no way," said a defiant Robinson. The season was a loss, the Tigers mired in frustration and scandal. The only possible path to redemption led through Southern.²³

Southern had trouble of its own. Richardson had revived the once-great program, had engineered its stunning rebirth, and was careful to avoid the pitfalls underway up north. Before the season's first game, Richardson announced that five of his players, including all-conference performers Melvin Williams and Lionel Nicholas, were academically ineligible and wouldn't play. After predictably losing its first two games as a consequence, Richardson again suffered a lapse in discipline, suspending six more players for the season's third game for "a blatant disregard for

team rules.” For all the trouble, however, the Jaguars still managed to finish a respectable 6–4 entering the Bayou Classic.²⁴

While the teams struggled individually, however, together they continued to reach new milestones. Early in the season, the Bayou Classic signed a \$3.6 million sponsorship deal with State Farm, ensuring that the schools would divide \$1.2 million for the coming three seasons. “I’m happy someone out there has recognized the value of the product,” said Marino Casem. “This is going to put us in another category.” Meanwhile, the weekend festivities drew tens of thousands of people from all over the country, and the city upped its economic impact estimates to more than \$51 million. What the game lacked in suspense after Southern’s resurgence was more than compensated by its newfound earning potential.²⁵

Then again, maybe there was still suspense to be had. A crowd of 69,387 poured into the Superdome, soaked in the weekend’s festivities. They watched the defenses dominate the first half, with a lone late first-quarter Grambling touchdown pass from Mike Kornbleau to Silas Payne the only score. But in the second half, it was Southern’s turn. A field goal led to a touchdown pass (quarterback Marcus Jacoby to Leonce Griffin), and that to yet another (tailback Steve Wofford to Peter Sheppard on a trick play). It was 17–6, and a late Grambling fumble recovery for a touchdown wouldn’t matter. 17–12. Time evaporated. The Jaguars outlasted the Tigers yet again.

The 1996 Classic drew attention for another reason as well. Southern quarterback Marcus Jacoby had transferred to the university from Louisiana Tech. Grambling quarterback Mike Kornblau had transferred from Rochester. The publicity they received before and after the game wasn’t because of their former schools. Jacoby and Kornblau were both white. “I never envisioned it happening,” said Robinson, referring to the anomaly of two white quarterbacks starting in the Bayou Classic, “but I never doubted it would happen.” Though Grambling had the far more frustrating season, Jacoby had experienced far more grief. The student newspaper ran an editorial criticizing the move to start a white quarterback. His teammates grumbled when the Jaguars opened with two losses. Kornblau, meanwhile, was baffled by Jacoby’s treatment. “I find it strange because they’re having a better year than us,” he said. “I guess I’m fortunate.” The milestone demonstrated marked progress for two schools that had suffered under the weight of racial issues since their inception.²⁶

But Eddie Robinson suffered, too. It had been a long year for the coach, all racial milestones aside. “It’s pretty hard to describe how it feels to lose four straight when we used to control this series,” he said. Then the inevi-

table questions about his possible ouster. If he couldn't get the recruits, couldn't manage a winning season, couldn't beat Southern, wasn't it time to walk away? "Unless Grambling sends me away, I'm going to try to beat somebody," he told a ravenous press corps. "It's not my decision, but sometimes decisions can be made over which you don't have any control. But as far as I'm concerned, I'll be here."²⁷

His, however, was not the only concern. In December, university president Raymond Hicks asked Robinson to resign. The coach, his family, Grambling students, and alumni all waited. Most defended him. Most wanted him to stay. Governor Foster issued a formal statement arguing that the coach deserved a final season. The Louisiana board of regents backed him. Hicks responded by claiming "to protect the integrity of the university," but he had clearly stepped beyond his reach. Less than a week after his initial request, he announced that Robinson would return for a final season. "Coach Robinson has requested that he be allowed one more year," said Hicks. "Grambling University and the state of Louisiana owe him no less." His display of false magnanimity, however, went largely unnoticed. Or trusted. As 1996 became 1997, the criticism at Grambling fell solely on the shoulders of the university's president.²⁸

His stand, however, wasn't the result of malice. The football team's troubles ran far deeper than its 3–8 record. In December four football players and another student were expelled for raping a fifteen-year-old girl in a campus dormitory. In January, the NCAA's investigation led to eight counts of major violations, including illegal recruiting, improper tryouts, and illegal scholarships.²⁹

None of this, however, diminished Robinson in the minds of his fans. In early January, someone lobbed a firebomb at the president's home. Though no one was hurt, the message was clear: no one messes with Eddie Robinson. Of course, the coach was horrified by such displays, but fanaticism is inherent in the project of sport. The same impulses that led to pilgrimages to New Orleans were the same that resulted in firebombs. In October, Hicks was forced to resign. The school had been beset by financial troubles and controversies for years. The fall 1997 semester had witnessed a significant drop in enrollment. But most important, Hicks had crossed Eddie Robinson, godhead of the university. Though he did have his supporters on campus, most were not sorry to see Hicks go.³⁰

They were, instead, ready for Robinson's final season. But it didn't look good. In late July, just before the team was supposed to report for camp, the NCAA levied its punishment, giving Grambling two years' probation, limiting recruiting measures, and requiring a mandatory comprehensive



Robinson's end at Grambling was ignominious, but his legend surpassed the controversy surrounding his retirement.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

compliance program. Again, the turmoil surrounding the team translated into disappointment on the field. The team stumbled through yet another 3–7 campaign. In Robinson's home finale, his final game before the Bayou Classic, the Tigers lost in freezing temperatures to North Carolina A&T. Less than a thousand fans attended, fearing the cold and disillusioned by yet another losing season. They wished Robinson the best, but held little hope for the Bayou Classic.³¹

It didn't help that Southern was once again at the top of its game. The Jaguars were 9–1 and would again be playing for an outright SWAC championship. Richardson had returned the Southern program to glory. "I don't know much about the powers that used to be," he said. "All I know is that they had a transition of coaches in the recent past, when they hadn't been very successful on the field." Richardson still stood in the long shadow of Arnett Mumford, but he and his team were starting to see its edges.³²

But the 1997 Bayou Classic was about only one coaching legend, and the event became a monumental send-off for Robinson in his last game.



At the time of his retirement, Arnett “Ace” Mumford, the most successful coach in Jaguar history, had accrued a record of 169–57–14 with 6 black national championships at Southern. The university would later name the stadium, seen here in its modern form, after its legendary coach.

Photo taken by author

With Southern’s potential title and Robinson’s farewell, tickets became almost impossible to find. Though the Superdome sat 74,000, New Orleans police expected more than 100,000 to congregate around the city for the event.

Grambling’s coach, however, was leery of the celebration. “This has been the worst year I’ve ever had,” he told reporters. “I’m not able to sleep at night. I never thought it was any way possible for me to lose eight games in a season. It just ain’t right.” It wasn’t, but Robinson’s worst year was almost over. One more game. One more chance to beat Southern.³³

The chance passed quickly. Derek Jacoby’s two touchdown passes combined with two Chris Diaz field goals before Grambling ever scored. It was 20–7 by halftime, after a Mike Kornbleau to Silas Payne touchdown strike. But that would be the Tigers’ only score of the game. It was 30–7 when the final gun sounded, with the Jaguars en route to another Black National Championship. But though it was a rout, no one left the Dome. When the game ended, President Clinton called; organizers presented the coach with a new car. Stadium workers carried a podium to midfield, and Robinson stepped to it carefully, slowly, and he cried. He fell silently

into his wife's embrace, Doris reassuring him with nothing but her touch. The crowd cheered wildly, before the loud rumble dissipated into a methodical chant. "Eddie! Eddie! Eddie!" Everyone in black, everyone in blue, all stayed to say good-bye.³⁴

Even as the season progressed, Grambling was searching for a replacement, and the clear favorite for the job was former star quarterback Doug Williams, now a one-year head coach at Atlanta's Morehouse College. He, too, had a 3–8 record in 1997. The school interviewed other candidates, but word leaked in the days following the Classic that Williams was the choice. "The years of monotony have come to a screeching halt," reported *The Gramblinite*. "No longer can fans look to the sidelines for the ever-present Eddie G. Robinson. Instead, there is a new guy wearing his headset." On December 4, the official announcement came at a campus news conference. "You don't fill Eddie Robinson's shoes," said Grambling's new coach. "You pick them up, you get them bronzed, and you put them on a pedestal. Because there will never, ever be another Eddie Robinson."³⁵

Indeed. Robinson would not have stripped twenty players of their athletic scholarships after viewing the team's performance in spring football drills. Williams did. "He came in and told players he'd be making cuts," said linebacker Claudell Samford. "That no one had a job; nobody had a position. I looked at it as if he was talking to me." So he would impose discipline, demand excellence. He scrapped Robinson's fabled wing-T offense for a pro-style passing attack. The dividends from such changes wouldn't be immediate, he argued, but they would come. "I just want to see improvement. If we play hard, we have a chance to win."³⁶

Aside from the new discipline, however, and aside from the new offense, there was another reason Williams would never be like Eddie Robinson. He was coaching in a different era. Williams was Grambling's last first-round draft pick, the last representation of Grambling's national dominance. Since that time, the glut of quality black players—fed by the slow years of college football integration and the desire for celebrity at major colleges, fed by the desire for a quality education that players didn't think they could find at a school that constantly suffered academic crises—chose historically white programs. The NCAA's creation of Division 1-AA and its insistence that 1-A victories over 1-AA teams would not count in producing bowl eligibility kept schools like Grambling and Southern off the schedules of prominent larger universities. Williams could never match the full-program success of his predecessor. Circumstance simply wouldn't allow it.

His influence on the team was palpable, but influence only goes so far.

Though the season was an improvement over 1997, it was a bipolar affair nonetheless, leading the Tigers to enter the Bayou Classic at 5–5, hoping for their first winning record in years. For their first victory against Southern since 1992.³⁷

The Jaguars watched throughout 1997 as their stellar season went largely unnoticed in the hype surrounding Eddie Robinson's farewell tour. They watched again as Grambling's prodigal returned to coach the team. Though the Jags lost three games in the run-up to the 1998 Classic, all were against nonconference opponents. They were 7–0 in SWAC play, and a victory over the mediocre Tigers would give them their third conference title in six years. In the past five seasons, the team was undefeated in the Bayou Classic, maintained a consistent position in the 1-AA poll, and had won three Heritage Bowls.³⁸ The program was reborn, the dominance returned to Scotlandville. They were again the state's premier black university football team, just as they had been for so many years in the first half of the century. So why were they being ignored?

As the Jaguars carried the heft of their record, the gravity of their years of success, to the Superdome, the focus was squarely on the other sideline. Again. Williams played in the inaugural Bayou Classic as a freshman, standing in the sunshine allowed by the open air of Tulane Stadium and leading his team to victory. And now he was back, hoping to do it again. Of course, Tiger fans ignored Williams's stint as a Southern assistant coach, which brought him briefly back to the Classic on the opposing sideline. That wouldn't have fit nicely into the narrative of the game—a hero's return after a long absence, the Odysseus myth writ on the curved walls of the Superdome.³⁹

The Jaguars were clearly frustrated, and they played like it in the first half. Grambling seemingly moved the ball at will, led by quarterback Lionel Hayes's 191 first-half passing yards. Hayes wasn't even supposed to be here. A backup to start the season—and a transfer, no less, from Southern—Hayes replaced a struggling Lajun Burks in Grambling's season-opening win over Alcorn, throwing a 50-yard touchdown pass and cementing his new role as a starter. In the first half of the Bayou Classic, he did much the same, giving the upstart Tigers a 14–3 halftime lead. The largely pro-Southern crowd was stunned. Pete Richardson made it clear to his team in the locker room that publicity, attention, didn't matter. Championships mattered. And if the Jaguars wanted one of those, they were going to have to play differently in the second half.⁴⁰

They did. Southern took the ball in the third quarter and immediately marched it down the field for a touchdown, Sam George—like Hayes, a



No one leaves their seats during halftime at the Bayou Classic.

Courtesy Ryan Paul Knight (top). Courtesy Grambling State University Archive (bottom).

replacement quarterback—hitting receiver John George in the endzone. Exultant Southern fans finally saw the team they had come to expect. Two Southern students celebrated by riding around the stadium on unicycles. The Jaguars were back. Another George touchdown pass. Then a field goal. Then George again. Grambling's offense never again found the endzone. Southern coasted in the second half to a 26–14 victory.⁴¹

Again, though, Grambling seemed to steal the limelight. Though Sam George threw three touchdown passes in the second half and led his team to a win, Tiger quarterback Lionel Hayes was named the game's Most Valuable Player. Hayes threw for 357 yards and rushed for another 51, but that wasn't what he was there to do. "There is no satisfaction winning the MVP award if we don't win the game," he said. "I just wanted to win." Southern, again pushed to a secondary role, could at least take solace in that. They had, for the sixth straight year, won. A month later, they won again in the Heritage Bowl. The Tigers could keep their publicity, the Jaguars would settle for dominance.⁴²

That dominance fed from the tandem of athletic director Marino Casem and coach Pete Richardson, but their relationship would prove short-lived. In April 1999, Casem announced his retirement, effective at the end of June. Casem was contemplative about his success. "When I came here, we were changing coaches every three years. We had to get some stability, and that's what we did." He was right, and his legacy was secure—just as secure as Robinson's. But questions around Scotlandville centered on whether or not the program could sustain its success without Casem's guidance. Fans had watched their team defeat Grambling six years in a row, and they had no intentions of letting up now.⁴³

If there was anything to worry about entering the twenty-sixth Bayou Classic in 1999, however, it wasn't Southern's stability. It was Grambling's resurgence. The Tigers were 7–3 prior to the Bayou Classic, assured of their first winning record in four seasons. Lionel Hayes continued his stellar quarterbacking, leading the conference in passing, touchdown passes, and total offense.⁴⁴

But sorrow would quiet Grambling's confidence. The Tuesday before the Tigers' game against Southern, athletic director Robert Piper died from complications with cancer. Piper had not only steered the university athletic program through its mid-decade controversy, but served as coordinator for the Bayou Classic until 1994. His funeral would be held the following Tuesday.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Southern was still Southern. Even though the team had lost 23 seniors from the previous season's championship squad, it had a

9–1 record and led the Tigers by one game in the conference standings. The 1999 season saw the SWAC move to a divided schedule, splitting its teams into two divisions then playing a championship game. For the initial season of the experiment, only conference games against division opponents counted toward the league standings. There were, in other words, only four conference games. Southern was 3–0, Grambling 2–1. A win would send the Jaguars to the inaugural SWAC championship game and yet another Heritage Bowl. Again Southern had more than bragging rights and pride to play for in New Orleans.⁴⁶

And maybe that would be enough. After the Greeks had stepped and the bands had battled, the teams took the field in front of 67,641 frenzied fans. When the game got underway, they saw an almost identical first half performance from the previous year. Grambling came out electrified, and Lionel Hayes resumed his dominance. In the first quarter alone, Hayes ran for one touchdown and passed for another—17 yards to Levi Washington. After an early second-quarter Southern field goal, Hayes threw two more long touchdowns, both to receiver Randy Hymes. After Southern finally found the endzone, Hayes did it again (another to Washington), leaving the Tigers a 31–10 halftime lead.

But Grambling fans were wary. They had a halftime lead last year, too. As the bands played and the Tiger faithful celebrated, they did so with the cautious optimism of those beaten down by years of disappointment. But there was still hope. Jaguar starting quarterback Troy Williams left the game at the beginning of the second half, suffering a dislocated hip and leaving backup Terrance Levy to run the offense.

Run it he did. Dain Lewis ran for a 7-yard third-quarter touchdown. 31–17. On Grambling's next drive, the Tigers marched all the way to the Jaguar 19-yard line, only to watch as receiver Scotty Anderson dropped a fourth-down touchdown pass. Southern then took the ball and marched 73 yards down the field, led by its replacement quarterback. 31–24. Tiger fans were visibly worried. The Grambling offense had again stalled, had again lost its way in another second half. But they were still getting the ball, still had hope for recovery. But a Hayes fumble on the second play of the drive left Southern with the ball on the Grambling 9-yard line. The ensuing Jag touchdown—a Levy pass to Michael Hayes, the team's second score in less than 30 seconds—made the score 31–31. The lead had completely evaporated. The two late Southern field goals seemed inevitable at that point. The Jaguars won again. It was the largest comeback in the history of the rivalry. 37–31. "I never thought in my wildest dreams we

would lose it,” said Grambling receiver Levi Washington. The Tigers had their first winning season in recent memory, but none of that mattered anymore.⁴⁷

Southern defeated Grambling for the seventh time in seven years. It earned a place in the SWAC championship game against Jackson State, another Jaguar victory. And though the team stumbled in the Heritage Bowl, the season was clearly another success. There had been no hang-over after Casem’s departure. Richardson had kept the team in place.⁴⁸

And his success was paying dividends. It bred larger crowds, more demand, and thus more revenue. Southern already had an inherent advantage over Grambling in its urban setting, its larger alumni base, and its proximity to New Orleans. Now, the school was using its newfound success to create tangible results from those advantages.⁴⁹

But as the 2000 season unfolded, it was Grambling, not Southern, which found itself with the advantage. The school’s only loss of the season entering the Bayou Classic was to 1-A Louisville. It already had the SWAC western title when it arrived for the Bayou Classic.⁵⁰ Every Tiger fan knew, however, that a conference championship would remain hollow without a victory over Southern. Especially this year, when the 6–4 Jaguars seemed ultimately vulnerable.⁵¹

That was always the measure of success for Louisiana’s two major black college programs. Grambling’s championship would mean nothing if they lost to Southern. “It’s one of the most intense rivalries in the country,” explained Richardson, “as fierce as Florida–Florida State, Michigan–Ohio State, or Oklahoma–Nebraska. It’s the cause of bad blood between friends and families. It’s more than a football game. It’s a way of life.” It was a rivalry so powerful that both teams forwent the possibility of playing in the 1-AA playoffs, forwent the possibility of winning a national championship. Even a national championship would be poor consolation for a loss to an archrival. “When November rolls around most people think Veterans’ Day, Election Day, Thanksgiving, and how many more ‘shopping days to Christmas,’” noted Grambling’s school newspaper. “Gramblinites and Southernites are not like most people. For them, Bayou Classic is the only holiday in November. And it is a sacred one.”⁵²

And then, of course, there was the money. Each school stood to make more than \$1 million from the 2000 Classic, while almost every team that advanced in the 1-AA playoffs ultimately lost money. The University of Massachusetts, which won the title in 1998, lost more than \$200,000 in the endeavor. Meanwhile, Grambling and Southern played a nation-

ally televised game for a large payday. “This way,” said first-year Jaguar athletic director Floyd Kerr, “we know we can pay the bills. If we went to the I-AA playoffs, we would not.”⁵³

So with the stage set, with the money in the bank, 72,000 packed the Superdome yet again. Before the game, an opening ceremony presented a new Eddie Robinson banner in the stadium’s Wall of Fame. “This honor has got to be one of my finest moments,” said the coach, who had received constant honors. The Superdome “has been the scene of some of the finest moments of my life.” Gone were the rancor and frustration of his final seasons, replaced instead with memories of Grambling’s glory days. Both bands played. Everyone cheered. The legend had returned one more time.⁵⁴

But after Robinson slowly shuffled off the field, the teams entered it, ready for the next installment of their rivalry. For the first time in years, Grambling was the favorite. They were the champions. It was their coach honored before the game. Surely this would be their year.

If the first quarter was any indication, it wouldn’t be. Southern’s Terrence Levy passed for an 86-yard touchdown and threw again to set up 2 more Dain Lewis rushing touchdowns. Grambling’s lone score on a Randy Hymes run left them down 21–7 before the second quarter got underway. By halftime, however, it was 24–14 after Hymes threw to Levi Washington. Grambling was still within striking distance.

The second half went back-and-forth, before the Tigers, 8 points down, took the ball with 1:13 on the clock, 62 long yards away from the endzone. Eight plays later, with 7 seconds remaining, Tiger quarterback Randy Hymes found Scotty Anderson in the endzone, leaving the team with a 2-point conversion attempt to tie the game. The rushing game was ineffective all day, so Williams sent in a passing play. This would tie the game. The Grambling fans were deathly quiet, giving way to the roar of the Southern crowd, hoping to spur its defense to stop the play, to win. Hymes dropped back and looked, threw. But cornerback Lenny Williams tipped the pass to teammate Edreece Brown. Jaguar fans roared as Brown headed the other way, running the conversion attempt 96 yards to Grambling’s endzone. Two points. The game was over. 33–29, Southern.⁵⁵

For the eighth year in a row, the Tigers fell short. For the eighth year in a row, Grambling’s fans skulked slowly out of the Superdome, wondering where everything went wrong. Though the school from the north had dominated the headlines in the 1990s—Robinson’s retirement, Williams’s return, and scandal after scandal after scandal—the school from the south had dominated on the field. Even in Grambling’s best season, its

championship season, the Jaguars still prevailed. Marino Casem and Pete Richardson had overseen a Southern renaissance, a rise from the ashes of Grambling's fire of success. Once again the university from Scotlandville was the state's dominant black football team. Once again it was able to lord its success over its northern rival. As Jaguar fans left the Superdome, fresh off their eighth consecutive Bayou Classic victory, their former dominance echoed through the corridors of the stadium.

Go back, go back, go back to the woods . . .

12

And the Flood Waters Drove Them Away 2001-2007

As 2001 began, Grambling's immediate problems were legion. The school had been through five presidents in the 1990s and was faced with losing its accreditation if it didn't fix its financial woes. Enrollment had fallen precipitously. The football team had spent the past eight seasons losing to Southern. But while administrative turnover, budgetary discrepancies, and declining enrollment were complex problems that could only be solved with subtle machinations over time, the rivalry could be fixed on one late autumn afternoon.¹

But before the football season of 2001 could get underway, the world changed on an early autumn morning. Nineteen Islamic militants hijacked four flights on September 11, 2001, and, in a series of coordinated attacks, flew them into both towers of the World Trade Center and into the Pentagon. One plane was diverted and crashed in a field near Shanksville in rural Pennsylvania. Almost three thousand people died. The country responded with a massive outpouring of charitable giving, a new sense of vigilance against radical fundamentalism, and a far-flung retributive war. The sports world, meanwhile, wrung its hands about the viability and decorum of playing games in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. Most leagues canceled games. The NCAA left such decisions up to individual conferences.

The Southern and Grambling football teams continued their truncated seasons, but the devastating effect of the event lingered, as it did for all teams, all fans, all people. Michael Lamana, a graduate of Southern's Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), was working in the Pentagon that morning and died in the attack. In his honor, the ROTC added to

the Bayou Classic festivities by running the game ball ninety miles from Baton Rouge along Highway 61, down Airline Drive, into the city, to mid-field of the Superdome, just in time for kickoff. The run wouldn't be the first, but it would be the first time the event would have such meaning, and the power of the moment would ensure that the run would become another in a long line of traditions associated with the game.²

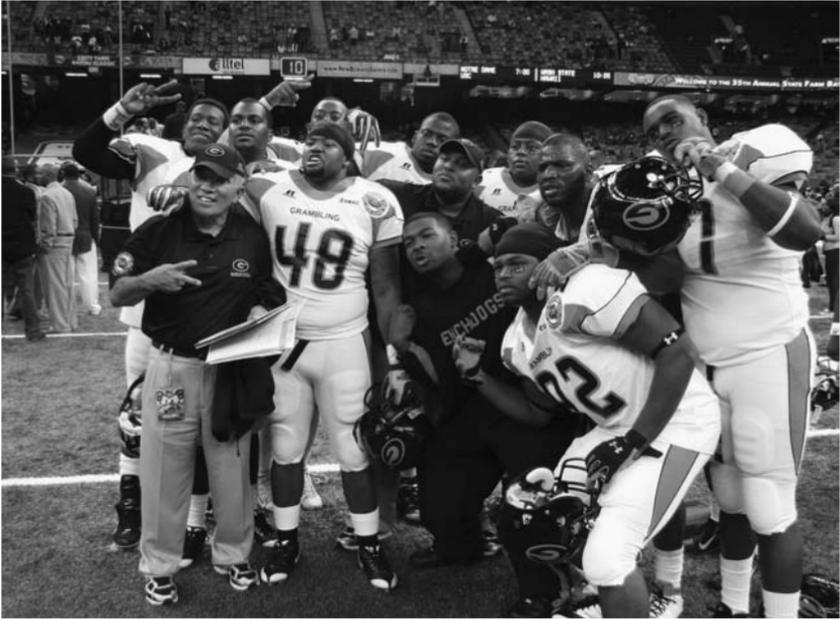
Southern's football team had been busy securing its winning tradition. The team managed a 7–3 record entering the Bayou Classic, with a chance for a Western Division title with a victory over Grambling. All the more impressive, the Jaguars set that mark through a mass of injuries that left only four offensive starters playing the same positions in the Classic that they played in the team's opening game.³

Along the way, the Jaguars reached another milestone in late September with a road loss to Tulane in the Superdome. It was the first time that one of the state's two premier white college teams played one of its two premier black universities.⁴ Through the full breadth of the twentieth century, as the racial makeup of teams changed, as integration became the norm, and as schools white and black made exceptionalism arguments about their various educational missions, never had Southern played Tulane or LSU. Never had Grambling.

Now, however, with only one game to play, the Tulane loss was a distant memory. The Tigers loomed. They were 8–1 with only one conference loss. They, too, could win the West with a victory.⁵

Williams successfully restored a winning tradition to Grambling, but without a victory over Southern, all of his success remained hollow. "It's as big a football game as I've had as a coach," he said. Grambling's first drive lasted only 11 seconds, as embattled quarterback Randy Hymes took a draw 61 yards for a touchdown. The Tigers' next drive took a full 38 seconds, Hymes passing to Levi Washington for another score. Then it was 71 seconds for Hymes to hit Ellis Spears on a 67-yard touchdown pass. Then 1:36 to find Washington again for a 49-yard strike. "I've never seen any quarterback have a better quarter," said Williams. No fan of the Bayou Classic ever had.

With Grambling's 27–0 lead entering the second quarter, the rest of the game became largely academic. Southern managed 20 points in the second and third quarters, but they wouldn't be sufficient. Hymes threw for 330 yards and ran for another 78. The final score was 30–20, Grambling. Though he left the game with a sprained ankle in the fourth period, he seemed to show no ill-effects after the game. "Man, that was a long curse," said the game's MVP. "I wanted to go to Grambling since I



Success in the Bayou Classic provided bragging rights for the next 365 days.

Courtesy Paul Letlow

saw them play on TV right here in the Superdome. This is all so special for a guy like me.” It was special to everyone wearing black in the stands, everyone watching from living rooms all over the country. The Tigers’ eight-game losing streak was over.⁶

But so, too, might have been the Bayou Classic’s run in New Orleans. The 2001 contest was the last under the current contract, and the schools began negotiations with the city. “We’d like to keep the game in New Orleans, but we’d like a little more respect from the hotels.” Though conditions in city hotels had improved, there was no hotel clause in the contract, setting rate structures and guaranteeing reasonable charges. Any contract the schools signed would have to have one, and Houston had already made an offer. The city had a new stadium for its NFL franchise and promised its use for a \$35,000 rental fee. It would cap hotel rates at \$125. Still, it was a Louisiana game between Louisiana schools, and if the city could provide a hotel clause, it was assumed that the Classic would stay in New Orleans.⁷

It would, and when Grambling showed up the following season in 2002, pundits predicted that another Bayou Classic victory was in the off-

ing. Accreditation woes lingered, but the football team showed no ill effects. The team stumbled in its first game of the season, then proceeded to win its next ten games. “I expected us to be 7–5 or maybe 8–4,” said Williams. “In fact, I’d have been very happy with that. I think the players heard that and got mad and said, ‘We’re a better team than you gave us credit for.’”⁸ Of course, there was still Southern, but the Jaguars seemed to be in the throes of another swoon.

Southern’s first game was another loss to Tulane. Then the losses kept coming. Injuries decimated the team, and though the squad closed its season by winning four of its final five games, it still entered the Bayou Classic with a 5–6 record, threatening to give Richardson his first losing season as a head coach.⁹

It had been a long year, punctuated two weeks before the Classic by the thirtieth anniversary of the fatal confrontation between police and students at Southern. “Some things kind of have a real traumatic impact on you,” said Tolar White, the school’s comptroller in 1972, a vice president in 2002. “This was one of those mornings.”¹⁰ But as Southern remembered its dead, and tried to forget its disappointing football record, the Classic crept closer and closer.

“There really are family members who don’t speak during this week,” Williams explained, “people who don’t want to go a year having to live down the outcome of their team losing to the team their next-door neighbor backs.” Richardson agreed. “It’s a different type of game. That’s our championship.” But for Southern the game would be even more special. J. C. Politz became the Jaguars’ play-by-play announcer in the mid-1950s, before moving on to success in television and radio all over the country. In the 1990s, he returned to Southern to close his career. But now he was seventy-seven years old, and the 2002 Bayou Classic would be his last game.¹¹

On November 30, radios across the state crackled to life, as Politz described the atmosphere, the uniforms, the stakes. There was no title on the line this time, as Grambling had already earned a place in the SWAC championship game, but that was always ancillary anyway. He couldn’t have been very optimistic. Southern’s record paled in comparison to Grambling’s. The team had recovered its balance nicely late in the season, but the Tigers had won ten in a row. Politz, however, masked his skepticism as he called the Jaguars’ opening kickoff.

Onside kick! Onside kick! Southern recovers! “From the opening kick-off,” Williams said after the game, “when we turned the ball over, we gave them momentum.” Southern used that momentum to score a touch-



The Southern defense upends a Grambling receiver.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

down on its opening possession. The Jaguars scored another in the second quarter. They scored three more in the third. Two more in the fourth. Favored Grambling tried to keep pace, but it was no use. Southern stayed in front all afternoon. Quincy Richard threw for 242 yards and 3 touchdowns. He also rushed for 59 yards and another score. As the crowd roared and the Jaguar players celebrated, Politz announced the final score of his final game. Southern 48, Grambling 24—a monumental rout for the underdogs from Scotlandville. “Everybody’s been hugging me today and the ladies have been kissing me,” said Politz, “so I would have been depressed if we hadn’t won. It’s a good way to go out.”¹²

But success came with a price. Pete Richardson dominated Grambling time and time again. He resurrected a moribund program to national prominence. After the victory, he acknowledged that Norfolk State had contacted him about its head coaching position. A cryptic Richardson simply

said, “We’re going to sit down and talk it over with our administration. If I have anything more to say about it, I’ll be back.”¹³

It came with another price as well. That weekend, a sixteen-year-old New Orleans boy was killed on Bourbon Street. Later, following the game, two more died in a shooting at a late-night postgame party. The violence was almost unthinkable and understandably tempered game celebrations. City officials scrambled to assure fans of both schools that coming to New Orleans for the Bayou Classic was safe, all the while wondering if the events were random and isolated, or a portent of things to come.¹⁴

Richardson, meanwhile, would stay at Southern. For all of his success against Grambling, the broader state of the program was less than ideal. His team’s 6–6 season was its worst under his tenure. He compiled consecutive records of 6–5, 7–4, and 6–6, while Grambling won 3 consecutive SWAC championships. He couldn’t leave now. Not with the current state of things. “We’ve got to get our respect back,” he told reporters in August 2003, visibly ready to get his team back on the field. This season, he assured them, they would be poised to bring another championship to Scotlandville.¹⁵

In January, long before the 2003 season got underway, the Jaguars suffered another major tragedy when linebacker James Allen was shot and killed. But as the year progressed, the team watched as Marino Casem was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame, then rode the wave of that exposure and Richardson’s resolve to seven consecutive wins to start the season. The team wore a 77 sticker—Allen’s number—on every helmet, in memory of their slain teammate. After a home loss to Alcorn, the Jaguars finished with 3 more victories, putting them at 10–1 entering the Bayou Classic. Richardson was right. Southern had its respect back.¹⁶

Grambling, meanwhile, never lost it. Though the Tigers had two losses on the season, both were against nonconference teams. Again Grambling’s season had been circumscribed by state audits and accreditation woes. But this year, things were improving. Enrollment was up, the school’s teacher education program improved its rating, a state audit showed marked improvement in budgetary management. Entering the Classic, the team was 9–2 with a chance at a conference title. The school was waiting expectantly for a December decision that would secure its reaccreditation and remove it from regional probation.¹⁷

Both sides had reason to be optimistic.

So, too, did New Orleans. The city had wrested the game back from the waiting arms of Houston. The Superdome replaced its hard, unforgiving AstroTurf with softer, modern field turf. And the game on November



The night before the Bayou Classic, the battle of the bands captivates another Superdome crowd, as the bands march into a darkened stadium to take their places and perform for a raucous crowd.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

29 would be more than just a rivalry, more than a simple grudge match. It was the thirtieth anniversary of the event. The teams coming to New Orleans would have only three losses between them; both would be playing for a division title and the chance to play for the conference championship. “This year,” said Richardson, “the magnitude of the game has changed a bit.” The game was secure, the scene was set, and the stakes were as high as they had ever been. The fans, knew every economist in the city, would come.¹⁸

They did. The job fair connected with Bayou Classic weekend was larger than at any other point in its fourteen-year history. Tickets disappeared in record time. Grambling alum Ray Jackson stood on Bourbon Street, taking it all in the Friday before the game. “There’s going to be 80,000 or 90,000 people down here in a little while.” He was right.¹⁹

But when the Grambling fans arrived, their hope was tempered by the history of the past ten years. A determined Williams scrambled to reassure them. “History is not important in this one,” he said. “If you’re going to deal with history, we can go way back and say Grambling has won a lot of them, too.” He led his team to three championships in a row, but

without a win over Southern, the SWAC title seemed like a consolation prize.²⁰ As the teams took the field, the deafening roar coming from the crowd argued that with every shout and whistle.

In honor of the event's thirtieth anniversary, both squads wore throwback uniforms. Still, no one in the stands would mistake Grambling's quarterback Bruce Eugene for Doug Williams. Eugene was large for a quarterback and probably could have blocked for Williams on the offensive line of the 1974 Grambling team. This was a new age, and though Eugene's numbers dipped slightly from his 2002 totals, he still passed for well over 3,000 yards and 31 touchdowns. He rushed for more than 300 and scored 8 times on the ground. Southern's Quincy Richard was no slouch, either. The Jaguar quarterback threw for more than 2,700 yards and was the team's second leading rusher. As the opening kickoff set the game in motion, it promised to be a showcase for the conference's two best quarterbacks.²¹

It was. Together the 2 quarterbacks combined for 961 passing yards. Eugene threw touchdown passes of 71 and 76 yards and ended the game with 409 yards through the air. He had another 80 on the ground. But the day would belong to Richard. Southern's quarterback threw for 552 yards and 5 touchdowns. No one in a Jaguar uniform had ever thrown for more.

The scoring frenzy gave Southern a 44–41 lead with just minutes remaining, but Grambling had one more chance. The offense—the same offense that had been scoring at will for most of the afternoon—broke down. Nothing seemed to work. Finally, on fourth down, Eugene threw his second interception, sealing the win for the Jaguars. Players took off their helmets, pointed to the 77 sticker. They won for Allen, they won for Richardson, and they were returning to the SWAC championship game.

The Tigers walked slowly off the new Superdome field turf. They watched as Southern celebrated a Bayou Classic win for the tenth time in eleven seasons. For the tenth time in eleven seasons, they vowed to get them next year.²²

Though Grambling's players were understandably dejected by another loss to Southern, the game itself was a massive success. Officials estimated that the Classic and its surrounding events brought more than two hundred thousand people to the city. The game was a compelling offensive masterpiece that surely pleased everyone at NBC and State Farm. There was revenue to go around.

But all was not well. The Sunday after the contest, as Bayou Classic fans streamed down Canal Street, eighteen-year-old Christopher Walker began arguing with a fellow fan. It escalated, then escalated again. Before

anyone could react, Walker pulled a gun and shot his debater in the thigh. It was the third shooting of the weekend. On gameday, two others were shot in the crowds teeming around Bayou Classic events.²³ Of course, confrontations are to be expected at sporting events, particularly rivalry games, but gun violence was a public relations nightmare. It threatened to keep more fans at home; it threatened to steal focus from the game itself, to say nothing of all the positive events that surrounded it—to shatter the friendliness of an otherwise friendly rivalry.

For Grambling, it only added to the shattering effects of losing yet again. The Tiger faithful received a brief respite in December, as the school achieved its reaccreditation, demonstrating marked improvement in almost every area of the university. “We’re just ready,” said president Neari Warner, “for this to be the springboard for many other things at the university.” And it was. By September 2004, Grambling’s enrollment was up 8 percent, the highest jump of any university in the state. Finally, agonizingly, the school’s economic house was in order.²⁴

Its football house, however, was still reeling. In February, Doug Williams announced he was resigning his position to become a personnel executive with the NFL’s Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the team that drafted him after his college playing career. “It wasn’t an easy decision,” he told reporters. “But I’ve been comfortable at Grambling. Some people are not able to handle change, but I’m a firm believer that change is good. Eventually they’ll understand.”²⁵

Perhaps. But for the moment, they were scrambling for a new coach. It was late in the recruiting process. Most potential candidates already had jobs. The Tigers wanted more than anything to maintain stability and assure new recruits that that the tenor of the program would remain largely unchanged. They turned to offensive coordinator Melvin Spears, naming him interim head coach for the upcoming season. But that, too, seemed problematic, when allegations arose that Spears had falsified a master’s degree from Northern Arizona University on his résumé. Spears did complete his master’s coursework, but the controversy wasn’t resolved until mid-July, leaving nothing but further distraction in its wake. The year 2004 was off to an inauspicious start.²⁶

And it only got worse. In August, Eddie Robinson announced that he had a disease resembling Alzheimer’s. The team went to visit the old coach, the players shaking his hand and taking pictures. Some cried. All were in awe. They sang the alma mater, and a tired, aging Robinson sang right along. “Old Grambling, dear Grambling. We love thee, dear old Grambling.”²⁷ Maybe everything would be fine, after all.



Doug Williams's resignation was difficult not only because a Grambling legend had decided to leave. The February announcement gave the university very little time to conduct a proper coaching search.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

But everything wouldn't be fine, as the third quarter of the season's first game saw senior quarterback Bruce Eugene damage his left anterior cruciate ligament. The knee injury ended his season even before it began. The Tigers lost that game. Then they lost their next game. The team that averaged 10 victories the past 4 seasons would slide to a 5–5 mark entering the Bayou Classic. Spears, however, remained confident. "We lost our All-American quarterback, three wide receivers, a defensive tackle, and two corners," he explained. "I think our team certainly has done an outstanding job of making adjustments."²⁸

Pete Richardson's team, meanwhile, was rolling. After a season-opening loss to McNeese State, the team managed an 8–1 record in its next 9 games, with an undefeated conference mark. The Jaguars had their share of injuries, just like Grambling. They started a new quarterback, as did the Tigers. But their record didn't suffer. Southern, as it always seemed to in the previous decade, managed to maintain its consistency through troubled times. Still, without a victory against Grambling in the Bayou Classic, the season's success would be marginal, and Richardson ensured that his team remembered the series' history of upsets. The favorite was always vulnerable in New Orleans.²⁹

The favorite was always vulnerable in New Orleans.

The rumor entering the game was that Grambling's Bruce Eugene would give up his medical redshirt and return to play in the Classic, but as the Tigers ran onto the field, Eugene followed in his street clothes. Still, the deception seemed to have its effects. Though Southern carried a 6–3 lead into halftime—spurred by a 49-yard touchdown pass from Thomas Ricks to Emile Bryant—the Tigers remained optimistic. They knew they could run the ball, and so went to it almost exclusively in the second half. Grambling controlled the ball for almost 18 minutes in the third and fourth quarters, rushing for 188 yards. Running back Ab Kuuan had 126 yards and scored 3 touchdowns. The season was saved. Grambling 24, Southern 13. Robinson watched from his home in Grambling, drifting in and out of sleep as the game wore on. But through the haze of confusion that accompanied the coach's illness, there was joy. "He was mighty happy when we told him we'd won," said his wife Doris. "We needed a good win like this so much."³⁰

Again, however, off-the-field incidents surrounding the Bayou Classic weekend marred the game itself. Cars moved up and down Canal Street, blaring music. There were parties and limousines and festivals. Grambling fans tumbled from the Superdome, out into the cool New Orleans night, crowding the French Quarter to celebrate their victory. As the crowd pressed into Bourbon Street, a gunman opened fire, wounding three people. It was the third shooting incident in the past three seasons and threatened to damage both the event's attendance and its reputation. Police assured fans that "none of the victims went to the game or any of the sanctioned festivities connected to the event," and reminded everyone that the crime statistics associated with the Bayou Classic paled in comparison to those of Mardi Gras.³¹

The threat of violence was real, and threatened the viability of the Classic in New Orleans, but as 2004 became 2005, as winter became spring and spring became summer, a new kind of violence would descend upon the city, upon the Bayou Classic, upon everything. In late August, a hurricane formed over the Bahamas, moving through Florida then back into the Gulf, where it strengthened in the warm waters off the southern coast. When it struck Louisiana in early morning, August 29, Betsy was on the minds of everyone old enough to remember the devastation of 1965. But Katrina was on their lips.

The massive flooding associated with the storm eroded New Orleans' inadequate levee system, drenching the city, killing almost 2,000 people, and causing more than \$80 million in property damage. Just as in 1965,



Greg Dillon runs free in the 2008 Bayou Classic.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

those who remained hurried to roofs and attics. Just as in 1965, the Ninth Ward was hardest hit, its proximity to the faulty levees making it particularly vulnerable, its black population, many argued, leaving relief efforts frustratingly delayed. Yet again, race and water conspired to erode the lives and confidence of Louisiana's black population. Frightened, desperate residents fled to higher ground and protected areas, many to the Superdome, which served as an emergency shelter for unprotected thousands.

But the Superdome wasn't immune to damage, and the storm ravaged the building. The mass of huddled life inside quickly produced squalid conditions in the structure, making it almost uninhabitable. But inhabit it the people did. There was nowhere else to go. A nightmare of filth, dis-

ease, and discomfort followed, as television cameras recorded the damage outside and in. People seethed at the slow pace of relief efforts, as they waited, waited, waited.³²

Meanwhile, the Dome's regular residents began looking for other shelter. "At this point you have to proceed on the assumption," said NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, "that [the Saints] may be unable to play in New Orleans at all for the entire season." The New York Giants offered to move its Louisiana game to the Meadowlands. LSU offered the use of Tiger Stadium. And San Antonio made an adamant bid to be the team's full-season home. As the Saints looked around for new venues—and a pathetic mass of humanity suffered inside its old one—everyone knew that football wouldn't return to the Superdome in 2005.³³

The Sugar Bowl would move to the Georgia Dome, a logical choice considering the Southeastern Conference (SEC) ties of the contest and the Atlanta facility's location. The SEC played its championship game in the stadium already.³⁴

The Bayou Classic didn't really fit in Georgia. But officials knew it had to move somewhere. "It's a little too early to make a call," said Greg LaFleur, Southern athletic director, "but obviously now we have to. The Bayou Classic means so much to so many people, and it especially will this year." The logical choice was Houston. Not only was the city's Reliant Stadium comparable to the Superdome in seating capacity and facilities, but there was already a teeming mass of black Louisianans seeking shelter in Houston. In a year in which the game would take on such a new symbolic importance, proximity and access seemed the two most important factors.

But just as New Orleans was reluctant to see its professional franchise move to San Antonio because of the city's well-known coveting of a football team, so too was it reluctant to see the Bayou Classic move—even temporarily—to Texas. Houston had courted the Classic several times, hoping to entice Grambling and Southern to relocate the game by promising lower hotel rates and better facilities. The city didn't dispel any of New Orleans' fears. "Houston would be an ideal location," said Reliant Stadium's manager. "We are the nearest large city with all of the amenities and a stadium to play host to the event." It was only a week after the storm had dissipated, and Houston was again lobbying to take the game from Louisiana. Reliant promised to hold the date open until university officials made a decision.³⁵

As the football teams opened the 2005 season, each with a win, other cities came calling as well. Shreveport, Orlando, and Birmingham all sub-

mitted bids to host the Bayou Classic. Jacksonville, Jackson, Detroit, and Los Angeles made inquiries. There was much popular sentiment behind Shreveport, because it would keep the game in the state, but also because the Independence Bowl, where the game would be played, hosted the 1973 game that had convinced university officials to bring the Classic to New Orleans in the first place. Shreveport had proximity, and it had history. But it didn't have the facilities of Houston, the only city bidding that had an NFL stadium. Still, LaFleur was adamant in reassuring fans that whatever decision the schools made, the move would ultimately be temporary. "We'll definitely go back to New Orleans," he said. "New Orleans is the Bayou Classic."³⁶

By late September, proximity won out. The choice was now between Shreveport and Houston. A statement from the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau insisted that "the Bayou Classic should remain in the Bayou State." The stadium, however, was small. There were approximately eight thousand hotel rooms in the area. The Classic usually filled a much larger stadium and used more than ten thousand New Orleans hotel rooms. Grambling and Southern officials remained patient. They were stewards of the schools' most important athletic event, and they wanted to be sure they got it right. "Nothing," said Bayou Classic coordinator Ralph Slaughter, "is etched in stone yet."³⁷

Of course, the other reason for the delay was the simple fact that hurricane season had yet to run its course. Hurricane Rita looked as though it might slam into Houston in much the same way Katrina had doused New Orleans. By September 27, however, Houston had escaped the worst of Rita. Word leaked that the schools would publicly announce that Reliant Stadium would host the 2005 Bayou Classic. Its size and NFL quality, along with the accompanying hotel rooms and convention space available in Houston, made it the most viable choice.

But the next day, the universities balked. There was no decision as of yet. The previous Saturday, Southern was forced to cancel its game against Albany State when Rita collided with the south Louisiana coast. There were more pressing matters to worry about. The choice would come soon.

Finally, on September's last day, the schools officially announced Houston as their choice. "Houston had the best proposal," said Angela Weaver, chair of Grambling's Bayou Classic committee. "But what really sold us was that Houston was one of the first cities to reach out to the people of New Orleans and the rest of our state. They've really shown themselves to be a friend of Louisiana."³⁸

There was concern among many in the state that Houston would at-

tempt to keep the game a permanent fixture. Those concerns, however, were dispelled as fans flocked to Texas for the Bayou Classic. Reliant Stadium was seven miles from the downtown hotel corridor, a creature of the modern suburban stadium building trend. "It's a little dead out here," commented one Southern student. "I thought change might be good, but I'm not so sure." While Houston lacked nightlife and ambiance, the game itself promised to be powerful. Southern had lost two games to the storms, and thus entered with a 4–4 record. Grambling had missed only one game, and its distance from the coast left it in far better shape. There were far fewer refugees, far fewer disruptions to the school year and the season. Bruce Eugene returned for another season after his medical redshirt and led the Tigers to an 8–1 mark entering the Classic.³⁹

Not only that, but the world was watching. ESPN's *College Gameday*, the nation's highest-rated college football program, broadcast live from the event, its first visit to a historically black game. Rain forced the broadcast indoors, disallowing the backdrop of fans that normally accompanied the show, but *Gameday's* simple presence at the event showcased the importance of the contest to an audience that may have been otherwise unfamiliar with it.⁴⁰

As hosts Chris Fowler, Lee Corso, and Kirk Herbstreit looked on—three among the 53,214 in attendance—and as NBC once again showcased the game on national television, Grambling demonstrated a showcase of its own. Bruce Eugene threw for 418 yards. But his two first-half touchdown passes were matched by Southern's J. C. Lewis, who threw two of his own. Southern made a monumentally valiant effort and managed to keep the score close for much of the game, but the wear of a season in the eye of two storms had clearly taken its toll. Eugene threw four more touchdowns in the second half, finishing with six on the day and making it impossible for Southern to keep up. Lewis's 301 passing yards and 3 touchdowns wasn't enough. The Tigers pulled away for a 50–35 win.⁴¹

As the game ended and the fans made the long trek back to their hotels, there remained concern about the state of the Classic. Reliant would host the game again in 2006 if the Superdome was unable to host. The fear was real, but it would soon dissipate. New Orleans was desperate to return the teams to the city. Mayor Ray Nagin made himself a household name throughout the Katrina ordeal by lobbying for more relief from a frustratingly slow-moving government and also for championing the blackness of New Orleans. It was, in Nagin's formulation, the only logical place for the country's premier black college football game.

New Orleans was even more desperate to ensure that San Antonio,

Los Angeles, or any other city wouldn't take the Saints from it. And with the global attention drawn to the Superdome from television coverage of deplorable conditions inside, the city and state were determined to fund the Dome's renovation. Construction began as soon as possible, New Orleans confident that the stadium would be open for the Saints' 2006 home opener on ESPN's *Monday Night Football*. It would be ready.⁴²

The Classic returned to the Crescent City.

Or, perhaps, the Classic limped back to the Crescent City. For the first time in the rivalry's history, both teams entered the game with losing records. Still, the 2006 contest was a return home. It was, by its very presence in New Orleans, a victory, and both Grambling and Southern were quick to remind people that records were unimportant in a rivalry, particularly one with such gravity. "The Bayou Classic is still one of the wonders of the world," said Tiger coach Melvin Spears. "It sent chills up my spine walking in this building today. This game is our way of helping in the rebuilding of New Orleans."⁴³

With the state still reeling from the economic effects of the hurricanes, and with New Orleans still in the process of revitalization, only 47,136 fans showed up for the game. When they arrived, they found the city almost unrecognizable. "It's like you're in a different place," explained Tiger cornerback Greg Fassit. "The places where I'd hang out like the mall are closed down. It's sort of like you're going through a ghost town or something out of a movie." But the Classic, whatever its attendance, was a core element of bringing the city back to life. "You've seen *The Wizard of Oz*?" asked a rapturous Jaguar fan. "When Dorothy says there's no place like home? It's home. This is one of those things that makes us forget Katrina. When you come back home and you have a problem, and then you hear the Classic is on . . . I don't have a problem now."⁴⁴

Everyone's problems disappeared, however briefly, when the teams took the field, each clad in new uniforms provided free of charge by Russell Athletic. Grambling's jerseys were designed by Antwan "Big Boi" Patton of the musical duo OutKast. In conjunction with Russell's Bayou Classic work, the company also donated uniforms to the St. Augustine High School football team, which had lost its equipment to Katrina.⁴⁵

The game proved just as impressive as the gear. Though Grambling led at halftime 7–0, on the strength of a Brandon Landers touchdown pass to Clyde Edwards, Southern's running game ignited in the third quarter, leading to two touchdowns by Darren Coates and Bryant Lee. A Tiger rushing score by Ab Kuuan tied the game entering the fourth quarter. An exchange of scores left Southern ahead 21–17 when Grambling launched

a final drive that brought them all the way to the Jag 2-yard line, leaving them with a fourth-and-1 with 1:43 left on the clock. Kuuan took the hand-off and it looked as though he had a clear path. But Southern defensive back Jarmaul George moved to the line and stopped him. The Jaguars, who had suffered so much at the hands of Katrina and Rita—so much more than their northern counterpart—won. In the process, New Orleans, still in the throes of its own unimaginable suffering, won, too.⁴⁶

As fans celebrated on Bourbon Street after the game, a man in the crowd was stabbed to death. Police again assured Grambling and Southern fans that the man was not there for the Bayou Classic and had nothing to do with the event. Still, it was yet another violent incident, another potential danger for fans entering the city for the game. In addition, Classic fans again complained about exorbitant hotel rates in the city. If they weren't lowered, some said, the game should return to Houston.⁴⁷

Despite certain setbacks, the weekend was an overwhelming success. Increased violent crime rates in New Orleans since Katrina made police claims that the stabbing was an isolated, unrelated event entirely believable. And complaints about hotel rates and threats of a Houston move had become a common refrain among Bayou Classic visitors. Everything seemed—as much as it could in the first year of Katrina recovery—back to normal.

Then, on April 3, 2007, Eddie Robinson died. Fans and alumni on both sides of the Bayou Classic divide mourned the loss. Testimonials and honors poured in from all over the country, from George Steinbrenner to Jesse Jackson. "Eddie was the measuring stick by which we compare everyone else," said Marino Casem. "This is a sad day for the world." Governor Kathleen Blanco extended an offer for Robinson's body to lie in state in the capitol rotunda.⁴⁸

Grambling's band played as Robinson's former players carried his casket up the capitol steps. After a players-only ceremony and a memorial service in the chamber of the House of Representatives, more than 5,600 mourners attended a public viewing to pay their respects. The next day, Robinson's body was returned to Grambling for a quiet ceremony at the church he had attended for decades. The day after that, the university opened its new seven-thousand-seat Assembly Center for another massive memorial service. It was the first event in the new building. City residents showed up, as did former players and dignitaries, all offering memories and memorials to the man who had made the town and the university nationally relevant. Jesse Jackson spoke. Richard Lapchick, Robinson's biographer, explained the coach's legacy: "He loved an America that wouldn't



The return of the Bayou Classic to New Orleans was a victory for both teams, for the Superdome, for New Orleans, and for the broader black community of Louisiana.

Courtesy Grambling State University Archive

let him buy a ticket to an LSU game when he was a child, but let him lie in state in Baton Rouge.”⁴⁹

It was a fitting farewell. And Lapchick’s statement was a fitting explanation of his legacy. Robinson’s death wasn’t the end of an era, it was a representation of a state’s evolution, of a state’s devotion to sports and the ability of those sports to salve racial tension. No one in Louisiana needed to appreciate football to appreciate Eddie Robinson. And now, after eighty-eight years, he was gone.

But then there were other state gatherings that argued against Lap-

chick. In mid-September, as the 2007 football season was just getting underway, thousands of protesters from around the state, from around the country, descended on the small town of Jena, Louisiana, to protest the criminal trial of Mychal Bell, one of six black teenagers to be tried as adults on felony charges for attacking a white classmate the previous year. Jena High School, which was 80 percent white, had considerable racial tension, and it escalated during the fall 2006 semester when a group of white students hung nooses from a campus tree. Eventually, arsonists destroyed the school building. A series of fights broke out between white and black students. Then Bell, in a separate incident, punched a particularly racist white student, and began, along with his friends, to kick the boy while he was unconscious. The boys, known now as the Jena Six, were arrested, and LaSalle Parish chose to charge them as adults, convicting the boys on felony charges that carried sentences of up to fifteen years.⁵⁰

There was only so much a revered figure like Robinson could do. Only so much the Bayou Classic could do. Twenty-first-century Louisiana, for all its progress, was still a southern state beset by racial division. And it was into this charged climate, with thousands of protesters descending on the state, railing against Louisiana for its racial insensitivity, that Southern and Grambling returned to the field for the 2007 football season. Southern, playing for the first time in 3 years without the consequences of natural disaster, rallied from its disappointing 2006 to reach a 7–2 mark by the Bayou Classic.⁵¹ The Tigers, meanwhile, were also having a remarkably successful season. But Robinson's death was not the only distraction for Grambling.

In December 2006, the university had fired Melvin Spears, partly for his sub-par record, but also because of a drug-testing scandal that witnessed Spears administering improper drug tests to players, NCAA recruiting violations that included payments and other benefits to players, and what the university termed “unsportsmanlike conduct.” There was plenty of unsportsmanlike conduct to go around. A later NCAA investigation determined that Spears had denied an appeal hearing to a player after revoking his scholarship. His assistants were also involved in unsanctioned practices. But as revelations about Spears's abuse of power emerged, the coach continued to deny involvement. He was a victim, he argued. Grambling had been dishonest. It was a messy divorce, and Spears sued early in 2007.⁵²

At the heart of the suit was Spears's contention that Grambling owed him for the final three years of his contract. The NCAA investigation and the evidence of Spears's mistakes seemed to justify the termination and

give Grambling sufficient legal standing, but the suit remained a nuisance, nonetheless. It remained a headache for an athletic department still grieving the death of Eddie Robinson. Eventually, Grambling settled on Rod Broadway, former coach at North Carolina Central, and through all of the turmoil at the university, Broadway's team succeeded. The Tigers were 8–2 before traveling to New Orleans.⁵³

The Spears debacle remained on the mouths and minds of many who made the trip to the Superdome in 2007. But everything at the thirty-fourth Bayou Classic would, inevitably, revolve around a different former Grambling coach. As Grambling's band took the field for its pregame performance, the musicians spelled out "408," the number of Eddie Robinson's wins, as well as "ROB." The coach's wife and son were honored on the field in a pregame ceremony. In conjunction with the Bayou Classic weekend, the university announced plans for an Eddie Robinson campus museum. "Eddie had so much pride in what the Classic became," said Doris. "Win or lose, he knew it was a great idea. It was his favorite week of the year."⁵⁴

Attendance had yet to recover from the disastrous effects of the storms, but 53,297 cheered wildly in honor of Robinson before the teams took the field and the fans divided into enemy camps. With the pomp and circumstance passed, there was no more call for unity. Fans watched as Southern got out to an early lead, as Darren Coates caught a touchdown pass and ran for another in the first quarter. A safety and two field goals gave the Jags 22 points. Grambling's touchdowns by Cornelius Walker and Clyde Edwards were not enough. The Jaguars won 22–13. On the sideline, former Grambling player Elfrid Payton berated the team's new coach for its lackluster performance. Payton and many other Grambling supporters thought Broadway didn't understand the importance of the Bayou Classic. Earlier in the week, he referred to the event as "my first dog-and-pony show." But the loss, and the fans' reaction to it, taught him quickly that the Southern game was not just another conference contest. It was the most important game of the year.⁵⁵

To many, it was the only game of the year.

Grambling went to the conference championship game in 2007, but Southern won the season. The Bayou Classic was all that mattered.

The year 2007 marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of Grambling and Southern's first meeting on a football field. The two now played in a nationally televised game in a massive professional stadium, a contest that generated millions of dollars in revenue for New Orleans, for the schools, for sponsors. But at its base, the rivalry was still the same. In 1932, the two

teams played a neutral-site game. They did so again in 2007. Through all of the calamity, all of the racial division that circumscribed the southern experience, the teams still played.

There was always, if nothing else, the game.

And so it was ultimately the similarity of the contest and its backdrop that gave the rivalry its power. Much had changed, but it was constancy more than anything else that made the Bayou Classic relevant, made it meaningful. It was that fundamental endurance and fidelity that made it a “happening.”

Epilogue

Yes We Can, 2008

The 2008 season had been typical, if there was such a thing, and the next installment of the Bayou Classic (the thirty-fifth) was going to determine which team would go to the SWAC championship game. Grambling was undefeated in conference play with only two losses on the season. Southern had lost four on the year, but Prairie View was the only conference opponent to defeat the team. If Southern beat Grambling—as it did in 2007, as it had twelve of the last fifteen years—there would be a three-way tie in the Western Division between Grambling, Southern, and Prairie View, leading to a coin toss to determine a champion. It was, in a game where competition is supposed to determine winners and losers, the nightmare scenario.

Interstate 10 was a nightmare of its own as I drove into New Orleans through the driving rain on Saturday morning, November 29. The game started at one o'clock, and I figured I had plenty of time, but the traffic was terrible, as cars with Southern and Grambling flags crowded the four available lanes. I listened to the radio and tried to stay patient. A Jaguar radio show presented a united front of cautious optimism. It was another disappointing season for the Jags, who had expected a much better record, but history seemed to say that they were destined to beat Grambling. They would leave the rest to a coin toss.

It was sound thinking—an infectious hope that made the best sense for fans entering a rivalry game with so much on the line. But then another Jaguar fan cut me off on the freeway. I momentarily lost my sympathy, my supposed neutrality in the game. You'll get yours from Grambling, I thought.

Like all forms of road rage, however, my ire dissipated soon enough,

and as the line crept toward the Superdome exit, all of us had only one thing on our minds—football.

The Superdome looms as a sleek brown monstrosity, corseted from a giant, raised square base to a vast hourglass top. The parking garages in and around it slowly but efficiently house all the vehicles that stream in for conventions, concerts, and games. When I finally made my way through the line of cars and trucks, festooned as they were with university paraphernalia, I paid the \$25 parking fee and took my place in the garage. 12:15. I was right on time.

(Well, I only paid \$23. “I only have \$23,” I told the attendant. “I’m really sorry. I can bring you more from the ATM when I get inside. But there’s nothing I can do at the moment. I don’t want to hold up the line, and I don’t want to . . .” She tried to force a smile through her obvious frustration. “Go ahead,” she said. “This is fine. Don’t worry about it.” And thus I entered.)

I was actually arriving at the Superdome for the second time in as many days. On Friday night, the Classic had held its annual battle of the bands and Greek show.

As I had searched for a seat in the darkened stadium on Friday night, the show was already underway. There was a platform in the middle of the field, flanked on either side by rows of seats on risers, obviously for the bands that would be entering soon. A giant blue curtain served as a backdrop. The setting made seating viable in only half of the stands, and they were filled to capacity, as fans piled in with snacks and drinks and cellular phones. Big Chief Alfred Doucette and the Flaming Arrows were on stage—men in full Mardi Gras regalia, plumed in bright feathers from head to toe. There were dancing and tamborines, moving to the jazz booming from the loudspeakers. The crowd was polite to “the Mardi Gras Indians,” but they were clearly waiting for something else. There was a restlessness that permeated the air. There was still pizza to buy, and beer. Friends to call on the phone.

The Superdome teems at night, giving way inside to rings of lights inside of rings of lights, pushing their way out to the outer edges of the highest seats, connecting with them through vertical lines, so that eventually the lights and the walls and the fans all merge together and become one. There were Saints banners in the rafters, and Tulane banners. There were flags for the Saints’ Archie Manning, Rickey Jackson, and Jim Finks. For the old New Orleans Jazz’s Pete Maravich. There was a banner for Dave Dixon, who had spearheaded the Superdome effort in the late 1960s and

early 1970s. And for Eddie Robinson, whose success in the Bayou Classic had defined the Dome's premier regular season college event.

After the performance by the Flaming Arrows, State Farm presented a check for \$202,000 to each school. Then it was time for the show—the real show. The judging pool for the Greek show—a step contest between fraternities and sororities of the two universities—was dominated by representatives from State Farm and McDonald's, the event's title sponsors, accompanied by a representative from each school. They would make the final call as to which groups made the best showing.

First up were the ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha from Southern. The girls arrived on stage as police officers, then began with a choreographed near-strip-show before finally weaning their way down to appropriate dancing attire. The floor was miked so that their steps could be heard. Stomping, clapping, and choreographed dancing permeated a broader skit about policewomen in search of crime. That's okay, university dance team, they seemed to be saying, we'll take it from here.

After the Zetas (Zeta Phi Beta) from Grambling performed, the master of ceremonies added guests to the pool. Phylcia Rashad arrived as a surprise judge. Then another surprise judge, whose name I didn't catch because I was acting as the middleman for an overly complex cotton candy negotiation on my row.

Debbie Allen! Debbie Allen was the other surprise celebrity judge. With the cotton candy paid for, I was now able to refocus my attention on the stage.

The Southern chapter of Delta Sigma Theta then closed the sorority portion of the show. Appearing as residents in an insane asylum, the girls cleverly shed their makeshift straitjackets before somersaulting, stomping, and stealing the show. It was obvious even to a layperson like me that they would eventually win.

But before any prizes could be distributed, it was the men's turn. Alpha Phi Alpha, from Southern, opened with a Martin Luther King, Jr., theme. They closed with a portion of the National Anthem, stopping the dance to give a black-gloved Black Power salute. (The year 2008 was the fortieth anniversary of the famed similar act of 200-meter sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.) The crowd went suitably wild.

And why not? Just three weeks prior, Barack Obama had been elected the first African American president. Only two weeks prior, ESPN's *College Gameday*—which had appeared at the Classic's Houston contest—

had broadcast from Tallahassee for the Florida A&M–Hampton game, its second show at a historically black event.

It wasn't surprising, then, that the Grambling chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha developed a Barack Obama theme for its performance, which understandably drove the crowd into a frenzy. Obama T-shirts littered the crowd. He wasn't at the event, but his presence seemed to be everywhere. On the clothes and mouths of the fans. On the stage and on the field.

When Southern's Kappa Alpha Psi took the stage, the dancers were dressed as surgeons. Soon, though, their lab coats gave way to more appropriate attire, including the fraternity's signature red-and-white-striped canes, which aided the group's rhythmic stomping. They were followed by Grambling's "Qs" (Omega Psi Phi), who performed as a prison chain gang, constantly working their signature gesture—arms raised from the side, hands above the shoulders, palms facing out from the head—into every pulse and shuffle.

The step routines were much more than dancing. They were musical skits, each with a plot and narrative arc. Each had at least one moment of humor. And each included a sexual breakdown at one point or another, when the music slowed and stopped its rhythmic beating. The dancers engaged in sexual mimics before returning to the stomping and movement.

After the stepping concluded, the master of ceremonies called out places all over the country. New York, California, Washington, D.C., Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee. Fans and alumni from everywhere in America cheered as their state was called. It was a national event. McDonald's representatives then took the stage (Ronald McDonald in tow) and handed out more ceremonial checks, these to the schools' bands.

McDonald's seemed to be everywhere. Allstate, Alltel, and State Farm were all conspicuous. Every element of the event had a corporate sponsor. Gone were the days of small crowds and relative anonymity. This grand event, this powerful force, has been commodified. But, significantly, the dominating presence of advertisers hasn't homogenized the event. It's just added more lights and flash.

But there were still more giant novelty checks to be given, as the step prizes were handed out. For the sororities, the Zetas came in third, AKA second, and the Deltas—they of asylum residency—took first place, as we all knew they would. The frat prizes went to the Omegas, Alpha Phi Alpha, and the Gammas, in ascending order.

Then the real show began. Grambling's band entered, stage right, moving, playing, shaking. Then Southern's band from the other side. The crowd was moving with each note and shuffle. Both bands took their seats, and

each took turns playing, back and forth, back and forth. Each placed a dance squad in front of the band, gyrating and pulsing with every blow from every horn. This wasn't a musical show. It was a sport. At one point, the cymbals players for Southern moved from their position to the line dividing the bands, dancing and playing directly to the Grambling band. It was cymbals-as-taunt, and later Grambling's cymbalists responded in kind.

The crowd danced and sang along to the popular cover songs, regardless of which band was producing them. But they saved their cheers for their respective schools. As always, Southern's fans were in the majority. With a New Orleans campus, with the school's larger size, and with Scotlandville only an hour away, this was inevitable. Since the 1930s, Southern had been the larger, richer university. It still was. And it was clear that they still saw themselves in that light. Gone were the chants of "Go back, go back, go back to the woods." They were instead replaced by various SU chants. But the Southern fans surrounding me in the Superdome's upper reaches did loudly urge the Grambling fans to "go home," and consistently responded to the Grambling band's efforts as "high school." It was the same smug Southern superiority that was present in 1932. Grambling was the rural north Louisiana school that would never measure up.

The Tigers, however, gave as good as they got. "G-S, G-S, G-S, U-U-U-U-U. I thought you knew!" The rhythm and repetition demonstrated a confidence that came from years of success and renown. We might be the second most popular team in the Superdome, they seemed to be saying. We might be the second most popular team in the state. But we're national. We're famous. Our success speaks for itself. "I thought you knew!"

The battle of the bands was decidedly not a pep rally. It was a game in and of itself. Thus the event ended. The game ended. As fans began filing out, the master of ceremonies reminded the crowd—almost as an afterthought—don't forget, we also have a football game tomorrow . . .

I entered the Superdome for the second time in as many days. The bands were playing their pregame programs. Everyone was laughing. Talking on their cellular phones—always the cell phones. The beer was cold and my cheeseburger was hot and huge, fit for someone with a far greater girth and appetite.

I settled into my seat in a decidedly pro-Southern section, with Grambling expatriates sprinkled throughout the Jaguar side of the field. I watched as the Southern ROTC ran the game ball—as they do annually—from Baton Rouge to New Orleans, through the traffic to the Superdome, into the stadium's bowels, out the tunnel, stopping at the 50-yard line.

A Tulane banner in the Superdome rafters celebrated a 1934 SEC and Sugar Bowl championship. As 1932 began—the year of the first game in the Grambling-Southern rivalry—Tulane was in Pasadena, playing USC in the Rose Bowl on an uncharacteristically cold and rainy afternoon. The Green Wave lost, but their presence there, and their Sugar Bowl victory two years later, stood as testaments to their long-ago dominance. The Superdome banner is all that remains.

I sat and watched the marching bands move to their respective positions on opposite sides of the field. I ate and drank. But after both squads had taken their seats, the battle of the bands continued, each group taking turns riling up their respective fans. Then they stopped taking turns. Music flooded the building as the teams ran out of their tunnels, driving the crowd to delirium. The players jumped around and played off the crowd in a sort of call-and-response. They fed off the music of the bands, dancing along and engaging the fans.

The bands weren't dependent upon the repetition of school fight songs, as are many collegiate bands. They had a full repertoire at the ready. Every song was different, with a new power for the fans and players who moved to the music. Those of us on the Southern side of the field were in a much better position to see and hear the Grambling band as it faced the field and projected the sound to the opposing sideline. Though the Tiger fans were greatly outnumbered, it was very easy to hear them across the way. "G-S, G-S, G-S, U-U-U-U-U. I thought you knew!"

Debbie Allen came out for the coin toss, but she was far from the only celebrity there. Former Southern basketball star Avery Johnson was stalking the sidelines, as was Grambling alum and Super Bowl MVP Doug Williams. Jerry Rice was there, too.

By the time the pomp had given way to the actual football game, my beer bottle was empty. So was my cheeseburger tray. No matter. There was always more of that. The teams were on the field. It was finally game time.

Southern's star quarterback Bryant Lee was a preseason All-American. He was the team's strength, and in the first quarter he proved it. He led the Jaguars on two scoring drives, giving the team a 14-0 lead. Just as in 2007, Grambling was playing for a place in the SWAC championship game, and just as in 2007, Southern seemed poised to spoil their chances.

But Grambling rallied in the second quarter, capping a drive that absorbed almost 10 minutes on the clock with a 14-yard run by quarterback Greg Dillon. Dillon was only a sophomore—the future for the Tiger football team—but had turned into a viable star throughout the season. Luis

Leal missed the extra point, but Grambling was on the board. Long gone were the days of the squirrel-cage shift and the single-wing. Both teams ran spread formation shotgun offenses, both seemed witheringly effective. Another touchdown before halftime (and a missed 2-point conversion attempt) made the halftime score 14–12. Far more devastating for Southern than the two Tiger touchdowns, however, was an injury to Bryant Lee. The quarterback twisted his knee late in the second quarter and wouldn't return. Up to that point, Lee had completed 12 of 17 passes for 184 yards and a touchdown. Southern's fate would now be in the hands of redshirt junior Warren Matthews.

At halftime, the bands again took center stage. Grambling went first, careful to spell out OBAMA during its performance. When Southern took its turn, the "Human Jukebox" followed suit, also spelling JAN 20, the date of Obama's inauguration. Everyone, regardless of fan affiliation, cheered. The sponsors offered fans in the stadium the opportunity to text their choices for best band, and in a stadium dominated by Jaguar fans, the vote pulled toward the group in blue. Southern won 69 percent to 31 percent of the votes, the victory a creature of a partisan crowd. Unlike most football games, fans kept their seats through the halftime festivities.

But the score was close, the stakes were high, and everyone was ready to get back to the game. I shared my program with the couple sitting next to me, Southern fans who remained confident despite the two Grambling scores. There were Tiger fans in our section displaying the false bravado of the minority in a crowd full of partisans. Several drunken Southern fans responded in kind. I laughed along with all of them. There is no better place to be than a college football game, especially one that is nationally or culturally relevant.

Before the second half got underway, the bands proved that they weren't yet done competing, engaging in a makeshift tuba duel, as low, rhythmic moans came from each sideline. No song. Just a heartbeat, a pulse. Back and forth, back and forth . . .

And then the kickoff.

It was clear early in the second half that Southern was a different team without Bryant Lee. Warren Matthews did his best in a difficult situation, but he couldn't muster the production of his predecessor. His first interception came at the Grambling 25-yard line, stopping what seemed to be a promising drive. A Grambling field goal left the score 14–15 at the end of the third quarter.

But then there was another interception. And another. Grambling running backs Cornelius Walker and Frank Warren both ran for fourth-

quarter touchdowns, paced by the running and passing of their quarterback, Greg Dillon. The Tiger fans in our section were in a state approaching euphoria. This was no longer the bluster of difference and defeat. This was the crowing of victory. The Southern fans responded in kind. “Yes we can! Yes we can!” screamed one Jaguar, mimicking one of the president-elect’s signature lines, to the laughter and delight of everyone.

The laughter was telling. No feelings were hurt in the back-and-forth between the Grambling and Southern fans. Even the insults managed to sound friendly. There was animosity, but there wasn’t hatred. “To appreciate the rivalry,” Eddie Robinson once said, “you have to realize Grambling and Southern fans are close friends as well as relatives.”¹ He was right.

I was a neutral party in a sea of partisans, and I never once felt uncomfortable. Such is not always the case. I have seen many fistfights at college football games, many violent outbursts. I may even have played a part in some of them. But this was different.

When the “Yes we can!” chant began, I laughed, too.

Southern was never able to recover from the three interceptions. After compiling 214 first-half yards, the Jaguars only managed 116 in the second. Meanwhile, Greg Dillon amassed 151 yards passing and 136 yards rushing. The Grambling fans barked and hollered; the Southern fans headed for the exits. When the final gun sounded, the score was 29–14. The Tigers had scored 29 unanswered points.

After the game, workers rushed onto the field to set up an awards podium. Grambling did its level best to ignore the flurry of activity, as the band played the alma mater for the team and assembled fans, calmed slightly from their euphoria just moments before.

An NBC commentator interviewed Greg Dillon and Coach Broadway. He interviewed linebacker Keefe Hall, who made one of the Tigers’ three interceptions. “This took a big load off of us,” said Dillon after the game. “This was a big monkey off our back. The only thing that was going through my head was we are finally going to win this game. This is something we needed.” A State Farm surrogate arrived on stage and presented the championship trophy to Dillon, who was also named the game’s Most Valuable Player. Sophomore wide receiver Juamorris Stewart—who caught 9 passes for 174 yards and a touchdown—was named Southern’s Player of the Game.

This, at its heart, was the charm of the rivalry—the moral center amid the swirling mass of a blood feud. Southern’s players never left the field after the loss. They, too, had a Player of the Game. After the contest, all of

the players and coaches lined up and shook hands. The rivalry is heated, but it is gilded with the soft veneer of sportsmanship.

As I left the stadium into a quiet New Orleans night, that sportsmanship was still there. Grambling fans and Southern fans nodded as they walked past each other on the ramps leading from the Superdome. They stopped and shook hands. As they had for the past thirty-five seasons of the Bayou Classic—for the past seventy-six seasons of the rivalry—they would be back next year.

Postscript: 2009

Between the writing and publishing of this account, the 2009 game came and went. I didn't attend the thirty-sixth Bayou Classic. Instead, I watched it on television. I knew when I tuned to NBC that neither team had experienced the season for which it had hoped. Grambling's 6–4 mark gave the team no postseason honors for which to play, Southern's 6–3 mark seemed a bit better (the Jags still had Texas Southern to follow), but all of its losses had come in conference play. Pride would be the only crown on the line.

But pride had proven time and time again to be enough. Grambling had quietly escaped Southern's dominance of the 1990s to win 3 of the last 5 Classics, but the Jaguar offense promised to present a challenge, averaging 33 points per game during the 2009 season. As I sat on the couch with a far inferior cheeseburger and a far smaller beer, I saw clearly that it was a promise that would remain unfulfilled. "What Grambling's defense did to the Southern offense in State Farm Bayou Classic XXXVI," wrote the *Times-Picayune's* John DeShazier, "you get arrested for on the street."

The Jaguars only mustered 232 yards on 56 plays, and most of those came in the first half. Bryant Lee returned from his injury the previous season and his second-quarter touchdown pass to Curry Allen, combined with a Gary Hollimon touchdown run, put the Jags down 13–14 at half-time. But in the second half, Southern only managed 38 total yards. The game belonged to Grambling. Along with the Tigers' penetrating defense, running back Frank Warren added 166 rushing yards and Greg Dillon threw for 134. Dillon also ran for a score, contributing to the Grambling rushing total of 308 yards. The star of the game, however, was Tiger defensive end Christian Anthony, who had nine tackles, two sacks, and a forced fumble.²

But that wouldn't be the end of the story. In an evolving rivalry that

was constantly changing, it couldn't be. The week following the Bayou Classic, Southern lost a close game to Texas Southern, and with a 6–5 final mark, with 4 losses to Grambling in the past 6 seasons, and with the Jaguars' last SWAC championship in distant 2003, Southern fired Pete Richardson. By all accounts the divorce was amicable, but the move was the definitive end to an era. Richardson's 134 wins were second in school history only to legendary coach Arnett Mumford. Perhaps more important, Richardson managed to take a decidedly moribund program and breathe life into it. He ended the Grambling dynasty. He won 5 SWAC titles, 5 Black National Championships. "It took 31 years for Southern to find a coach who had the smarts and staying power to approach Mumford's winning ways," wrote DeShazier. "I'm guessing Richardson's shoes won't be all that easy to fill, either."³

As Thanksgiving gave way to Christmas, I found myself visiting family in Monroe, driving through northeast Louisiana and listening to the sports radio station that also serves Lincoln Parish. The hosts seemed distraught. They had breaking news, alarming news. Southern had interviewed a new candidate for the head coaching vacancy.

It was Doug Williams.

Though the Jaguars ultimately hired Washington Redskins assistant and former Morgan State head coach Lyvonnia "Stump" Mitchell to replace Pete Richardson, Southern's overtures to Grambling's legendary quarterback ensured that the rivalry would remain hot throughout 2010.

As if it needed that.

Appendix 1

The Grambling-Southern Football Rivalry, Annual Results (1932–2009)

Date	Location	Winner	Score	Attendance
11 November 1932	Monroe	Southern	20–0	Unknown
11 November 1933	Unknown	Southern	20–0	Unknown
29 September 1934	Scotlandville	Southern	25–9	Unknown
31 October 1936	Grambling	Southern	39–0	Unknown
22 October 1938	Grambling	Southern	20–0	1,500 (estimate)
21 October 1939	Grambling	Southern	53–7	2,000 (estimate)
5 October 1946	Scotlandville	Southern	38–0	(record for first game)
4 October 1947	Grambling	Normal	21–6	over 5,000
2 October 1948	Scotlandville	Southern	18–0	almost 11,000 ¹
3 October 1959	Grambling	Southern	12–6	over 18,500
1 October 1960	Scotlandville	Southern	16–6	Unknown
30 September 1961	Grambling	Southern	20–9	18,232
29 September 1962	Scotlandville	Grambling	14–3	21,941
28 September 1963	Grambling	Southern	22–21	20,129
26 September 1964	Scotlandville	Grambling	20–17	26,000 ²
20 November 1965	Grambling	Grambling	34–14	19,310
19 November 1966	Scotlandville	Southern	41–13	(overflow crowd)
18 November 1967	Grambling	Grambling	27–10	27,171
23 November 1968	Scotlandville	Grambling	34–32	Unknown
22 November 1969	Grambling	Southern	21–17	32,115
21 November 1970	Scotlandville	Grambling	37–24	(mammoth gathering)
20 November 1971	Grambling	Grambling	31–3	33,897
18 November 1972	Scotlandville	Grambling	2–0 (forfeit)	0

Date	Location	Winner	Score	Attendance
17 November 1973	Shreveport	Grambling	19–14	over 36,000
23 November 1974	New Orleans	Grambling	21–0	76,753
22 November 1975	New Orleans	Grambling	33–17	73,214
27 November 1976	New Orleans	Grambling	10–2	76,188
26 November 1977	New Orleans	Grambling	55–20	68,518
25 November 1978	New Orleans	Grambling	28–15	64,188
1 December 1979	New Orleans	Southern	14–7	73,637
29 November 1980	New Orleans	Grambling	43–6	72,100
21 November 1981	New Orleans	Southern	50–20	67,500
27 November 1982	New Orleans	Southern	22–17	71,555
26 November 1983	New Orleans	Grambling	24–10	58,199
24 November 1984	New Orleans	Grambling	31–29	51,752
23 November 1985	New Orleans	Grambling	29–12	57,042
29 November 1986	New Orleans	Grambling	30–3	58,960
28 November 1987	New Orleans	Southern	27–21	55,783
26 November 1988	New Orleans	Southern	10–3	55,450
18 November 1989	New Orleans	Grambling	44–30	64,333
24 November 1990	New Orleans	Grambling	25–13	70,600
30 November 1991	New Orleans	Southern	31–30	62,891
28 November 1992	New Orleans	Grambling	30–27	71,283
27 November 1993	New Orleans	Southern	31–13	72,586
26 November 1994	New Orleans	Southern	34–7	76,641
25 November 1995	New Orleans	Southern	30–14	67,631
30 November 1996	New Orleans	Southern	17–12	69,387
29 November 1997	New Orleans	Southern	30–7	64,531
28 November 1998	New Orleans	Southern	26–14	60,986
27 November 1999	New Orleans	Southern	37–31	67,641
25 November 2000	New Orleans	Southern	33–29	72,000
24 November 2001	New Orleans	Grambling	30–20	67,435
30 November 2002	New Orleans	Southern	48–24	59,745
29 November 2003	New Orleans	Southern	44–41	70,151
27 November 2004	New Orleans	Grambling	24–13	68,911
26 November 2005	Houston, TX	Grambling	50–35	53,214
25 November 2006	New Orleans	Southern	21–17	47,136
24 November 2007	New Orleans	Southern	22–13	53,297

Date	Location	Winner	Score	Attendance
29 November 2008	New Orleans	Grambling	29–14	59,874
28 November 2009	New Orleans	Grambling	31–13	53,618

¹The *Louisiana Weekly* puts the crowd at 10,000, the *Baton Rouge Advocate* at “approximately 10,000.” The *Ruston Daily Leader* printed Collie Nicholson’s report of the game, which noted that “almost 11,000” were on hand. Nicholson’s authority led to the use of this figure, though the crowd was undoubtedly between 10,000 and 11,000. *Louisiana Weekly*, 9 October 1948, 6; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 3 October 1948, 10B; and *Ruston Daily Leader*, 4 October 1948, 5.

²The *Louisiana Weekly* describes “17,000 or more fans,” while the *Ruston Daily Leader* claims 26,000. That number was chosen because it was reported by Collie Nicholson, Grambling sports information director, and because it lacked the equivocation of “or more” presented in the *Weekly* article. *Louisiana Weekly*, 3 October 1964, 10; and *Ruston Daily Leader*, 26 September 1964, 3.

Appendix 2

The Grambling-Southern Football Rivalry, Cumulative Totals (1932–2009)

Wins

Grambling	28
Southern	32

Points

Grambling	1,207
Southern	1,272

Known Attendance

Monroe (attendance unknown)	
Grambling	150,854
	<u>27,000</u> (estimated)
	177,854
Scotlandville	21,941
	<u>37,000</u> (estimated)
	58,941
Shreveport	38,000 (between 36,000 and 40,000)
Houston	53,214
New Orleans	2,281,516
TOTAL	<u>2,609,525</u>

Appendix 3

All-Star Teams

State Farm Bayou Classic Silver Anniversary All-Star Team

In 1998, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bayou Classic, State Farm, Grambling, and Southern chose an all-star team, with one player representing every year in the twenty-four-year history of the Classic. “This group and this game are part of the reason why thousands return to New Orleans each year,” said State Farm representative Glenda Manson. The team was honored in a luncheon prior to the 1998 game. (Source: “State Farm Announces Bayou Classic Silver Anniversary All-Star Team,” *Business Wire*, 27 November 1998, 53.)

Player	Team	Year(s)	Position
Doug Williams	Grambling	1974, 1976	Quarterback
Sammy White	Grambling	1975	Running Back
Robert Woods	Grambling	1977	Wide Receiver
Mike Williams	Grambling	1978, 1980	Quarterback
Wilfred Charles	Southern	1979	Running Back
Jonathan Rochon	Southern	1981	Running Back
Norman Gibbs	Southern	1982	Quarterback
Reginald Pugh	Grambling	1983	Running Back
Wayne Hill	Grambling	1984	Running Back
Ardashir Nobashar	Grambling	1985	Kicker
Chauncey Allen	Grambling	1986	Quarterback
Daryl Garner	Southern	1987	Running Back
Chris Scott	Southern	1988	Linebacker

Player	Team	Year(s)	Position
Clemente Gordon	Grambling	1989	Quarterback
Shawn Burras	Grambling	1990	Quarterback
Nate Singleton	Grambling	1991	Wide Receiver
Alex Perkins	Grambling	1992	Quarterback
Eric Randall	Southern	1993	Quarterback
Jimmy Conner	Southern	1994	Linebacker
Jermaine Sharp	Southern	1995	Running Back
Peter Sheppard	Southern	1996	Wide Receiver
Marcus Jacoby	Southern	1997	Quarterback

R. L. Stockard's All-Bayou Classic Team

In 2000, as part of retrospective coverage of the Bayou Classic on the occasion of the new millennium, *New Orleans Times-Picayune* columnist Peter Finney asked R. L. Stockard, former Southwestern Athletic Conference reporter for the *Baton Rouge State-Times* and *New Orleans States-Item* and public relations director for the SWAC, to use his experience with the game to choose an All-Bayou Classic team. Stockard's choices carried no official weight, but his experience and expertise gave the list an undeniable authority. (Source: *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 24 November 2000, D4.)

OFFENSE

Position	Player	School	Year(s) Played
Quarterback	Doug Williams	Grambling	1974–1977
Running Back	Walter Dean	Grambling	1987–1989
Running Back	Sammie White	Grambling	1975
Flanker	Dwight Scales	Grambling	1974
Wide Receiver	Trumaine Johnson	Grambling	1980–1982
Wide Receiver	Scottie Anderson	Grambling	1998–2000
Tight End	Ron Singleton	Grambling	1974–1975
Tight End	Cal Magee	Southern	1982–1983
Tackle/Guard	Gerald Perry	Southern	1987–1988
Tackle/Guard	Gerald Ridge	Grambling	1978–1979
Tackle/Guard	Michael Harris	Grambling	1997–1998

DEFENSE

Position	Player	School	Year(s) Played
End/Tackle	Gary Johnson	Grambling	1974
End/Tackle	Mike Barber	Grambling	1980–1981
End/Tackle	Perry Brooks	Southern	1975–1976
End/Tackle	Ken Times	Southern	1977
End/Tackle	Demarcus Miller	Southern	1998–1999
Linebacker	Rufus Porter	Southern	1984–1985
Linebacker	Channing Warner	Southern	1998–1999
Cornerback/Safety	James Hunter	Grambling	1975–1976
Cornerback/Safety	Al Lewis	Grambling	1983–1984
Cornerback/Safety	Maurice Hurst	Southern	1985–1986
Cornerback/Safety	Aeneas Williams	Southern	1988–1989

Appendix 4

Team Statistics

No game statistics have been located for the meetings between 1932 and 1939.

	Grambling	Southern
1946		
First Downs	6	15
Yards Rushing	120	201
Yards Passing	28	54
Total Offense	148	255
Pass Attempts/Completions	14/3	9/5
Interceptions Against	1	3
Punts/Average	(unknown)/33	(unknown)/48
Fumbles/Lost	6/3	5/3
Penalty Yards	(unknown)	(unknown)

1947

First Downs	
Yards Rushing	
Yards Passing	
Total Offense	(statistics unknown)
Pass Attempts/Completions	
Interceptions Against	
Punts/Average	
Fumbles/Lost	
Penalty Yards	

	Grambling	Southern
1948		
First Downs	5	11
Yards Rushing	123	215*
Yards Passing	(unknown)	(unknown)
Total Offense	(unknown)	(unknown)
Pass Attempts/Completions	21/2	13/6
Interceptions Against	(unknown)	(unknown)
Punts/Average	(unknown)	(unknown)
Fumbles/Lost	(unknown)	(unknown)
Penalty Yards	(unknown)	(unknown)

(*The *Baton Rouge Advocate* cited rushing totals as 59 for Grambling, 297 for Southern. Collie Nicholson's report in the *Ruston Daily Leader* put those totals at 123 and 215. The fact that the *Leader* report had a byline, and that the byline was Grambling's sports information director, has led to those statistics being chosen. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 3 October 1948, 10B; and *Ruston Daily Leader*, 4 October 1948, 5.)

1959		
First Downs	8	6
Yards Rushing	146	253
Yards Passing	25	51
Total Offense	171	304
Pass Attempts/Completions	20/2	17/5
Interceptions Against	2	3
Punts/Average	9/37.3	8/33.3
Fumbles/Lost	7/3	4/3
Penalty Yards	75	65

1960		
First Downs	9	6
Yards Rushing	158	162
Yards Passing	76	53
Total Offense	234	215
Pass Attempts/Completions	(unknown)	(unknown)
Interceptions Against	(unknown)	(unknown)
Punts/Average	(unknown)	(unknown)
Fumbles/Lost	(unknown)	(unknown)
Penalty Yards	(unknown)	(unknown)

	Grambling	Southern
1961		
First Downs	13	8
Yards Rushing	(unknown)	(unknown)
Yards Passing	(unknown)	(unknown)
Total Offense	279	232
Pass Attempts/Completions	(unknown)	(unknown)
Interceptions Against	(unknown)	(unknown)
Punts/Average	(unknown)	(unknown)
Fumbles/Lost	(unknown)	(unknown)
Penalty Yards	(unknown)	(unknown)
1962		
First Downs	5	10
Yards Rushing	101	152
Yards Passing	28	96
Total Offense	129	248
Pass Attempts/Completions	7/2	33/10
Interceptions Against	2	1
Punts/Average	9/31.1	8/44.9
Fumbles/Lost	5/4	3/3
Penalty Yards	35	83
1963		
First Downs	18	8
Yards Rushing	128	65
Yards Passing	174	120
Total Offense	302	185
Pass Attempts/Completions	24/(unknown)	16/(unknown)
Interceptions Against	1	1
Punts/Average	4/(unknown)	7/(unknown)
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	0/0
Penalty Yards	(unknown)	(unknown)

	Grambling	Southern
1964		
First Downs		
Yards Rushing		
Yards Passing		
Total Offense		
Pass Attempts/Completions		(statistics unknown)
Interceptions Against		
Punts/Average		
Fumbles/Lost		
Penalty Yards		
1965		
First Downs	19	20
Yards Rushing	309	139
Yards Passing	69	272
Total Offense	378	411
Pass Attempts/Completions	10/7	31/14
Interceptions Against	1	2
Punts/Average	2/39.0	5/40.4
Fumbles/Lost	1/0	1/0
Penalty Yards	35	90
1966		
First Downs	21	12
Yards Rushing	166	146
Yards Passing	318	38
Total Offense	484	184
Pass Attempts/Completions	30/13	13/5
Interceptions Against	5	2
Punts/Average	2/18.5	4/52.0
Fumbles/Lost	3/3	0/0
Penalty Yards	126	95

	Grambling	Southern
1967		
First Downs	21	17
Yards Rushing	279	135
Yards Passing	153	121
Total Offense	432	256
Pass Attempts/Completions	22/13	27/12
Interceptions Against	0	2
Punts/Average	5/34.2	4/46.5
Fumbles/Lost	1/0	1/1
Penalty Yards	122	64
1968		
First Downs	22	22
Yards Rushing	292	274
Yards Passing	147	100
Total Offense	439	374
Pass Attempts/Completions	23/11	18/4
Interceptions Against	1	0
Punts/Average	2/34.0	4/37.7
Fumbles/Lost	4/4	2/1
Penalty Yards	85	90
1969		
First Downs	21	15
Yards Rushing	181	181
Yards Passing	245	181
Total Offense	426	362
Pass Attempts/Completions	35/16	21/8
Interceptions Against	1	3
Punts/Average	5/25.8	4/35.5
Fumbles/Lost	3/3	3/1
Penalty Yards	55	32

	Grambling	Southern
1970		
First Downs	28	19
Yards Rushing	282	100
Yards Passing	131	311
Total Offense	413	411
Pass Attempts/Completions	24/15	31/17
Interceptions Against	0	2
Punts/Average	1/39.0	3/24.6
Fumbles/Lost	5/5	0/0
Penalty Yards	127	120
1971		
First Downs	18	5
Yards Rushing	229	92
Yards Passing	68	57
Total Offense	297	149
Pass Attempts/Completions	12/6	19/4
Interceptions Against	0	1
Punts/Average	5/44.2	(unknown)
Fumbles/Lost	(unknown)	(unknown)
Penalty Yards	105	82
1972		
Game canceled. Listed as a Southern forfeit.		
1973		
First Downs	20	10
Yards Rushing	279	152
Yards Passing	118	15
Total Offense	397	167
Pass Attempts/Completions	15/8	13/2
Interceptions Against	2	3
Punts/Average	5/38.0	10/35.6
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	2/2
Penalty Yards	101	53

	Grambling	Southern
1974		
INCEPTION OF THE BAYOU CLASSIC		
First Downs	14	12
Yards Rushing	160	134
Yards Passing	177	40
Total Offense	337	174
Pass Attempts/Completions	18/9	20/4
Interceptions Against	3	1
Punts/Average	7/28	7/43
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	3/2
Penalty Yards	151	69
1975		
BAYOU CLASSIC II		
First Downs	20	11
Yards Rushing	230	66
Yards Passing	167	130
Total Offense	397	196
Pass Attempts/Completions	21/11	21/4
Interceptions Against	2	2
Punts/Average	7/40	8/43
Fumbles/Lost	2/1	2/1
Penalty Yards	125	96
1976		
BAYOU CLASSIC III		
First Downs	18	9
Yards Rushing	171	91
Yards Passing	187	11
Total Offense	358	102
Pass Attempts/Completions	29/11	11/1
Interceptions Against	0	3
Punts/Average	7/38.4	7/33.0
Fumbles/Lost	4/2	5/3
Penalty Yards	194	103

	Grambling	Southern
1977		
BAYOU CLASSIC IV		
First Downs	27	14
Yards Rushing	203	97
Yards Passing	310	123
Total Offense	513	220
Pass Attempts/Completions	34/20	22/5
Interceptions Against	2	2
Punts/Average	3/41	9/37
Fumbles/Lost	4/3	1/1
Penalty Yards	166	86
1978		
BAYOU CLASSIC V		
First Downs	17	8
Yards Rushing	110	21
Yards Passing	142	137
Total Offense	252	158
Pass Attempts/Completions	26/13	23/9
Interceptions Against	1	3
Punts/Average	4/27	7/31
Fumbles/Lost	5/3	0/0
Penalty Yards	85	80
1979		
BAYOU CLASSIC VI		
First Downs	14	14
Yards Rushing	140	59
Yards Passing	155	126
Total Offense	295	185
Pass Attempts/Completions	23/11	27/10
Interceptions Against	4	2
Punts/Average	3/40	6/38
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	2/1
Penalty Yards	102	65

	Grambling	Southern
1980		
BAYOU CLASSIC VII		
First Downs	25	14
Yards Rushing	203	109
Yards Passing	251	69
Total Offense	454	178
Pass Attempts/Completions	35/19	31/10
Interceptions Against	1	2
Punts/Average	7/42	5/42
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	2/1
Penalty Yards	206	75
1981		
BAYOU CLASSIC VIII		
First Downs	20	21
Yards Rushing	101	237
Yards Passing	227	163
Total Offense	328	400
Pass Attempts/Completions	31/19	12/7
Interceptions Against	1	1
Punts/Average	4/25	2/41
Fumbles/Lost	2/0	2/1
Penalty Yards	116	171
1982		
BAYOU CLASSIC IX		
First Downs	14	16
Yards Rushing	127	56
Yards Passing	147	214
Total Offense	274	270
Pass Attempts/Completions	27/10	22/12
Interceptions Against	1	1
Punts/Average	5/43.4	8/37.5
Fumbles/Lost	1/0	1/0
Penalty Yards	113	90

	Grambling	Southern
1983		
BAYOU CLASSIC X		
First Downs	17	12
Yards Rushing	209	156
Yards Passing	168	88
Total Offense	377	244
Pass Attempts/Completions	12/4	24/9
Interceptions Against	1	4
Punts/Average	5/41	5/43
Fumbles/Lost	4/2	2/0
Penalty Yards	63	58
1984		
BAYOU CLASSIC XI		
First Downs	24	14
Yards Rushing	228	17
Yards Passing	158	313
Total Offense	386	330
Pass Attempts/Completions	23/9	41/18
Interceptions Against	1	0
Punts/Average	4/36.8	6/32.1
Fumbles/Lost	2/1	3/0
Penalty Yards	100	110
1985		
BAYOU CLASSIC XII		
First Downs	18	17
Yards Rushing	201	70
Yards Passing	157	170
Total Offense	358	240
Pass Attempts/Completions	27/11	27/10
Interceptions Against	1	3
Punts/Average	6/32.5	7/40.8
Fumbles/Lost	3/0	3/2
Penalty Yards	110	100

	Grambling	Southern
1986		
BAYOU CLASSIC XIII		
First Downs	19	11
Yards Rushing	296	95
Yards Passing	176	136
Total Offense	472	231
Pass Attempts/Completions	26/17	27/10
Interceptions Against	0	3
Punts/Average	6/33.7	7/38.1
Fumbles/Lost	3/2	3/3
Penalty Yards	108	25
1987		
BAYOU CLASSIC XIV		
First Downs	11	17
Yards Rushing	149	202
Yards Passing	129	168
Total Offense	278	370
Pass Attempts/Completions	26/8	19/8
Interceptions Against	2	1
Punts/Average	7/38.8	6/39.3
Fumbles/Lost	5/3	1/0
Penalty Yards	90	88
1988		
BAYOU CLASSIC XV		
First Downs	14	15
Yards Rushing	152	182
Yards Passing	153	116
Total Offense	305	298
Pass Attempts/Completions	31/9	22/8
Interceptions Against	0	3
Punts/Average	11/32.2	8/37.1
Fumbles/Lost	5/4	3/2
Penalty Yards	100	22

	Grambling	Southern
1989		
BAYOU CLASSIC XVI		
First Downs	20	19
Yards Rushing	265	19
Yards Passing	287	309
Total Offense	552	328
Pass Attempts/Completions	40/22	40/13
Interceptions Against	1	1
Punts/Average	5/36.2	7/40.4
Fumbles/Lost	2/0	3/3
Penalty Yards	141	55
1990		
BAYOU CLASSIC XVII		
First Downs	20	14
Yards Rushing	164	48
Yards Passing	255	194
Total Offense	419	242
Pass Attempts/Completions	30/14	34/10
Interceptions Against	0	2
Punts/Average	5/41.2	5/44.4
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	5/3
Penalty Yards	116	54
1991		
BAYOU CLASSIC XVIII		
First Downs	22	16
Yards Rushing	148	15
Yards Passing	169	325
Total Offense	317	340
Pass Attempts/Completions	36/10	36/18
Interceptions Against	2	0
Punts/Average	5/39.8	2/50.5
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	6/6
Penalty Yards	120	85

	Grambling	Southern
1992		
BAYOU CLASSIC XIX		
First Downs	22	15
Yards Rushing	201	101
Yards Passing	202	158
Total Offense	403	259
Pass Attempts/Completions	27/13	34/13
Interceptions Against	4	2
Punts/Average	5/31.2	6/39.2
Fumbles/Lost	3/2	1/0
Penalty Yards	100	44
1993		
BAYOU CLASSIC XX		
First Downs	18	16
Yards Rushing	168	216
Yards Passing	193	153
Total Offense	361	369
Pass Attempts/Completions	35/11	24/13
Interceptions Against	4	2
Punts/Average	7/36.3	6/34.5
Fumbles/Lost	2/2	0/0
Penalty Yards	75	30
1994		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXI		
First Downs	13	16
Yards Rushing	45	114
Yards Passing	142	127
Total Offense	187	241
Pass Attempts/Completions	28/13	20/10
Interceptions Against	4	3
Punts/Average	9/46.0	4/41.0
Fumbles/Lost	0/0	0/0
Penalty Yards	55	25

	Grambling	Southern
1995		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXII		
First Downs	19	23
Yards Rushing	318	234
Yards Passing	86	165
Total Offense	404	399
Pass Attempts/Completions	27/10	27/18
Interceptions Against	1	2
Punts/Average	5/30.6	3/38.0
Fumbles/Lost	3/3	2/0
Penalty Yards	56	42
1996		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXIII		
First Downs	20	10
Yards Rushing	261	86
Yards Passing	70	130
Total Offense	331	216
Pass Attempts/Completions	18/6	20/11
Interceptions Against	2	0
Punts/Average	6/29.7	6/40.3
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	4/2
Penalty Yards	151	83
1997		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXIV		
First Downs	8	22
Yards Rushing	8	153
Yards Passing	115	207
Total Offense	123	360
Pass Attempts/Completions	23/8	34/17
Interceptions Against	0	2
Punts/Average	9/40.3	4/56.5
Fumbles/Lost	0/0	0/0
Penalty Yards	40	25

	Grambling	Southern
1998		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXV		
First Downs	14	26
Yards Rushing	115	134
Yards Passing	357	274
Total Offense	472	408
Pass Attempts/Completions	46/21	37/18
Interceptions Against	0	0
Punts/Average	7/35.4	7/42.4
Fumbles/Lost	4/2	3/2
Penalty Yards	137	55
1999		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXVI		
First Downs	18	20
Yards Rushing	-65	71
Yards Passing	346	313
Total Offense	281	384
Pass Attempts/Completions	52/24	39/26
Interceptions Against	2	1
Punts/Average	5/42.4	5/42.2
Fumbles/Lost	3/2	5/3
Penalty Yards	127	59
2000		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXVII		
First Downs	25	22
Yards Rushing	109	51
Yards Passing	338	425
Total Offense	447	476
Pass Attempts/Completions	52/22	39/28
Interceptions Against	3	2
Punts/Average	6/34.0	4/40.8
Fumbles/Lost	0/0	3/1
Penalty Yards	43	70

	Grambling	Southern
2001		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXVIII		
First Downs	21	9
Yards Rushing	214	-5
Yards Passing	330	224
Total Offense	544	219
Pass Attempts/Completions	36/17	45/21
Interceptions Against	1	2
Punts/Average	8/42.3	10/38.0
Fumbles/Lost	3/2	1/1
Penalty Yards	92	23
2002		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXIX		
First Downs	22	22
Yards Rushing	94	140
Yards Passing	325	242
Total Offense	419	382
Pass Attempts/Completions	55/25	38/21
Interceptions Against	3	2
Punts/Average	3/39.3	5/31.6
Fumbles/Lost	5/3	1/0
Penalty Yards	54	49
2003		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXX		
First Downs	24	24
Yards Rushing	131	44
Yards Passing	409	552
Total Offense	540	596
Pass Attempts/Completions	48/26	42/34
Interceptions Against	2	2
Punts/Average	1/36.0	2/36.0
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	1/1
Penalty Yards	60	31

	Grambling	Southern
2004		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXXI		
First Downs	18	20
Yards Rushing	279	120
Yards Passing	72	176
Total Offense	351	296
Pass Attempts/Completions	13/8	41/20
Interceptions Against	0	0
Punts/Average	2/34.5	3/42.0
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	2/1
Penalty Yards	78	46
2005		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXXII		
First Downs	33	20
Yards Rushing	239	38
Yards Passing	418	301
Total Offense	657	339
Pass Attempts/Completions	45/22	53/28
Interceptions Against	1	3
Punts/Average	2/44.0	6/37.0
Fumbles/Lost	2/2	1/0
Penalty Yards	63	25
2006		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXXIII		
First Downs	13	23
Yards Rushing	69	131
Yards Passing	169	254
Total Offense	238	385
Pass Attempts/Completions	26/15	31/25
Interceptions Against	0	0
Punts/Average	6/35.5	3/42.3
Fumbles/Lost	1/1	2/1
Penalty Yards	69	48

	Grambling	Southern
2007		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXXIV		
First Downs	15	20
Yards Rushing	58	152
Yards Passing	195	214
Total Offense	253	366
Pass Attempts/Completions	37/23	31/21
Interceptions Against	2	1
Punts/Average	7/29.4	5/48.2
Fumbles/Lost	0/0	2/1
Penalty Yards	30	72
2008		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXXV		
First Downs	18	12
Yards Rushing	217	42
Yards Passing	151	291
Total Offense	368	333
Pass Attempts/Completions	14/9	33/21
Interceptions Against	0	3
Punts/Average	5/33.2	5/42.2
Fumbles/Lost	3/3	1/1
Penalty Yards	35	97
2009		
BAYOU CLASSIC XXXVI		
First Downs	28	11
Yards Rushing	308	95
Yards Passing	123	137
Total Offense	431	232
Pass Attempts/Completions	27/13	28/13
Interceptions Against	1	0
Punts/Average	5/33.6	6/43.5
Fumbles/Lost	0/0	2/2
Penalty Yards	58	50

	Grambling	Southern
BAYOU CLASSIC TOTALS (1974–2009)		
First Downs	683	585
Yards Rushing	6,026	3,591
Yards Passing	7,456	7,175
Total Offense	13,482	10,766
Pass Attempts/Completions	1,104/513	1,075/524
Interceptions Against	53	61
Punts/Average	204/35.5	202/39.6
Fumbles/Lost	79/51	78/45
Penalty Yards	3,529	2,306
CUMULATIVE KNOWN STATISTICAL TOTALS (1932–2009)		
First Downs	917	769
Yards Rushing	8,819	5,858
Yards Passing	9,036	8,644
Total Offense	17,855	14,502
Pass Attempts/Completions	1,361/611	1,336/616
Interceptions Against	69	84
Punts/Average	253/35.3	259/39.5
Fumbles/Lost	116/78	99/59
Penalty Yards	4,395	3,080

A Note on Sources

The “happening” of the Bayou Classic is lived in the moment, the visceral immediacy of the game acting on its fans in real time. To try to find the core of that immediacy, I have attempted to stick to sources and quotes contemporary to the game itself, rather than conduct extensive oral histories with people who remember their experiences of games long past. Such a project would fall beyond the scope of these pages, but the endeavor seems ultimately useful and inordinately beneficial. There is still valuable work to be done by archivists and historians with backgrounds in oral history. Fans, too, could get involved. If anything in this book has jogged memories of games past, please consider recording your stories and donating them to the archives of your chosen school. The collection of oral histories, or the development of some larger Bayou Classic oral history project, would remain a valuable resource for historians, authors, and fans alike.

Furthermore, as I mention in the introduction, this is a book about the Bayou Classic’s meaning, about its impact on Louisiana and the state’s black population. I have, therefore, tried whenever possible to use newspapers as my primary source material for reconstructing the game’s history. Newspapers were (and are) the conduits whereby many, if not most, fans receive their information about the games. Even those who attend find an order and function in the game’s re-presentation the following day. It is where they learn about the trials and travails surrounding the game—problems at the universities, the slow pace of construction at the Superdome, postgame violence in the French Quarter. In the game’s early years, the *Shreveport Sun* and *Louisiana Weekly*, the state’s dominant black newspapers, provided the only real coverage of games. Later, the *Ruston Daily Leader*, *Monroe News-Star*, *Baton Rouge Advocate*, and *New Orleans Times-Picayune* became the primary channels for public information on the

schools and the game. For students and alumni of Grambling and Southern, *The Gramblinite* and *The Southern Digest* student newspapers also provided coverage. *The Gramblinite* only survives from 1971, and though *The Southern Digest* extends farther back, the extant issues are scattered and sometimes incomplete. So, too, is Baton Rouge's black weekly of the 1960s and 1970s, the *Baton Rouge News Leader*.

Most of the information in Louisiana's city dailies is replicated by each. All attended the same press conferences. All used the same quotes. All described the same game. To keep the notes to a minimum, then, I have used (in early chapters) the *Louisiana Weekly* and (in later chapters) the *Times-Picayune* as guiding points for dates and source material in the notes, though each of their companions was also consulted.

This formula, of course, does not always hold. In the game's early days, much less was written, much less reported. The state of black colleges and their athletic teams was shrouded by Jim Crow, poor funding, and a dearth of media outlets. There is necessarily far more archival and secondary source material for those early chapters, as the lack of publicity made reconstruction of events more difficult. Other instances are scattered throughout. Chapter 6, for example, also required more archival work because of the nature of campus violence and the secrecy with which city officials and university administrators greeted it. (The papers of Leon G. Netterville, which would have been inordinately helpful in telling the story of campus violence in chapter 6, exist, but are uncataloged and unavailable for viewing.)

And so, to some historians, the notes may seem thin in places, with (for example) long strings of *Times-Picayune* citations in later chapters bursting from the pages as if the notes themselves were engaged in a ritual chant of "ibid." At first, such a state of affairs was bothersome to me as well. But the public nature of the event itself and that lived immediacy of experiencing the game's power from any available outlet seem to argue in defense of such a tactic. Those *Times-Picayune* citations (for example) are not stand-ins for more involved research. They are instead representations of that research, the best composite of state coverage from Louisiana's largest newspaper.

Though many of the newspapers and other sources in these notes require special collections libraries for viewing, they were at the time of their publication public. And I have tried whenever possible to adhere to the idea that my sources for this story should be as public as possible. The Bayou Classic, after all, gains its meaning from the tens of thousands who follow it through the media. It derives its power from its public nature. It wouldn't be a "happening" otherwise.

Notes

Introduction: The Happening

1. "Black Players Left at Home," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 23 November 1974, 3-7.
2. Fred Robinson, "Bates Took Long Route to Southern U.," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 19 November 1974, 4-5.
3. "Eddie Robinson Beat Odds at Gambling," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 19 November 1974, 4-8, 4-12.
4. Bobby Hall, "Ho Hum! G-Men 21, Jags Zip," *Louisiana Weekly*, 30 November 1974, 2-6.
5. Fred Robinson, "Bayou Classic Was Big Success," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 25 November 1974, 4-15.
6. Joyce M. Davis, "Southern Wins in Music but Doesn't in Football," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 24 November 1974, 1-5.
7. Bob Hille, "Fifty States, Fifty Rivalries," *Sporting News*, 11 May 2009, 14-29; Michael Hurd, *Collie J': Gambling's Man with the Golden Pen* (Haworth, NJ: St. Johann Press, 2007), 182.
8. Marty Mule, "Tiger Ground Game Kayos Jags," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 24 November 1974, 6-8.

1. Competitive Disadvantages

1. Straight was the creation of the American Missionary Association, founded in 1868. New Orleans University grew out of Union Normal. Charles Vincent, *A Centennial History of Southern University and A&M College, 1880-1980* (Baton Rouge: Charles Vincent, 1981), 3-6; Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007), 192.
2. Pinchback also served briefly as Louisiana's governor during Reconstruction. Vincent, *A Centennial History of Southern University and A&M College*, 3-12. See also Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Evolution of the Negro College* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934); Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education In the South: From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); "The New Southern University for the Education of Colored Students," *Louisiana Journal of Education* 2 (January 1881): 269-272.

3. Vincent, *A Centennial History of Southern University and A&M College*, 63–91. See also James M. Frazier, “The History of Negro Education in the Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana” (MA thesis, State University of Iowa, 1937).

4. Vincent, *A Centennial History of Southern University and A&M College*, 84–114.

5. *Ibid.*, 111–116; “Joseph Samuel Clark,” Presidents—Clark, J. S., Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA; Shelby M. Jackson, *A Historical Sketch of Louisiana State Colleges*, vol. 2 (Baton Rouge: State Superintendent of Public Education, 1960), 24. See also John B. Cade, *The Man Christened Josiah Clark* (New York: The American Press, 1966).

6. In the late 1880s, Alfred Richmond leased a tract of land to white entrepreneur P. G. Grambling for a sawmill, and the community ultimately took his name. Doris Dorcas Carter, “Charles P. Adams and Grambling College” (MA thesis, Louisiana Tech University, 1971), 10–15.

7. Allen Green, meanwhile, continued to operate—now under the auspices of the Baptist Church—until 1929. Carter, “Charles P. Adams and Grambling College,” 17–25; Vertical File, Adams, Charles P., Mary Watson Hymon Afro-American Center, A. C. Lewis Memorial Library, Grambling State University, Grambling, LA.

8. Carter, “Charles P. Adams and Grambling College,” 17–25.

9. *Ibid.*, 25–29.

10. O. K. Davis, *Grambling’s Gridiron Glory: Eddie Robinson and the Tigers’ Success Story* (Ruston, LA: M&M Printing Co., 1983), 16; Carter, “Charles P. Adams and Grambling College,” 30–36; Hurd, *Collie J*, vi.

11. This phenomenon was by no means limited to Louisiana. Even on the major college teams of the CIAA and SIAC conferences, student-athletes often paid for their own equipment. Often student-body fundraisers helped defray the cost of keeping the school’s football team solvent. Bullock, *A History of Negro Education In the South*, 172, 180–181; Ryan J. Davis and Marybeth Gasman, “Path of Racial Uplift or Status Quo? The Role of Sports at Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” in *The Hidden Gifts of Black Colleges*, ed. Jason De Sousa (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishers, forthcoming; unpublished manuscript in possession of the author), 5.

12. Michael Hurd, “Collie J”: *Grambling’s Man with the Golden Pen* (Haworth, NJ: St. Johann Press, 2007), v; Vincent, *A Centennial History of Southern University and A&M College*, 27–28, 133–135; Raymond Schmidt, *Shaping College Football: The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919–1930* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 147; Roger B. Saylor, *Historically Black Colleges Football Teams Record Book, 1892–1999* (Hobe Sound, FL: self-published, 2000), 36.

13. Arthur R. Ashe, Jr., *A Hard Road to Glory: Football: The African-American Athlete in Football* (New York: Amistad, 1993), 6–10, 23–25; Michael Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992: One Hundred Years of History, Education, and Pride* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Co., 1998), 27–29; Monroe H. Little, “The Extra-Curricular Activities of Black College Students, 1868–1940,” *Journal of Negro History* 65 (Spring 1980): 143–144; Edwin B. Henderson, “The Colored College Athlete,” *Crisis* 2 (July 1911): 115.

14. The early University of New Orleans was a Methodist Episcopal institution that operated between 1873 and 1934 and is unrelated to the current University of New Orleans, which was founded as an integrated university in 1958. In 1935, Straight and New Orleans would combine to form Dillard University. George W. Streator, “Football in Negro

Colleges,” *Crisis* 39 (April 1932): 129; “SWAC History,” www.swac.org/ssp/history, accessed 18 January 2008; Bennett H. Wall, *Louisiana: A History* (Wheeling, IL: Harland Davidson, 2002), 211, 290, 346.

15. Davis, *Grambling’s Gridiron Glory*, 3.

16. *Ibid.*, 15; Grambling State Alumni Foundation, *Grambling: Cradle of the Pros* (Baton Rouge: Moran Publishing, 1981), 1. See also www.gram.edu/about/history.asp.

2. The Direction of Depression and Progress, 1932–1939

1. *Southern University Digest*, 1 November 1932, 1, 14 November 1932, 4, John B. Cade Library Archives, Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, LA.

2. Stovall, already an experienced oil man, moved to the area in 1917 from the Spindletop region near Beaumont, Texas. The date of Casino’s opening is unknown, but one of Stovall’s companies purchased the land in 1927 and the first reported activities at the facility appear in the local papers in 1930. On June 30, a sixteen-year-old girl drowned in the swimming pool of “the Negro amusement park two miles east of the city” after being “struck by a chair that fell from the lifeguard’s tower in the center of the pool.” This is the first mention in Monroe’s daily *Morning World* of what could be Casino Park. Judith Walker Linsley, Ellen Walker Rienstra, and Jo Ann Stiles, *Giant Under the Hill: A History of the Spindletop Oil Discovery at Beaumont, Texas, in 1901* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2002), 1–4, 211–212; “Fred A. Stovall,” in *Eastern Louisiana: A History of the Watershed of the Ouachita River and the Florida Parishes*, 585–586; Ollie Burns, interview with Paul J. Letlow, 13 May 1992; *Memphis World*, 18 September 1932, 5; *Monroe Morning World*, 27 June 1930, 1, 1 July 1930, 2, 14 July 30, 9, 10 October 1958, 5A; Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White: A History of Legendary Black Players and All-Black Professional Teams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 122; DeMorris Smith, interview, 2 September 2004; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 April 1932, 4; “The Realty Investment Co. Ltd. to J.M. Supply Co. Inc.—Mortgage Deed, Sale of Land,” Record 79482, 23 April 1927, Conveyance Record, Ouachita Parish, Book 157, page 775–778, Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court; “J.M. Supply Co., Inc. to The Realty Investment Co., Ltd.—Mortgage Deed, Vendor’s Lien,” Record 79482, 23 April 1927, Mortgage Record, Ouachita Parish, Book 129, page 707–710, Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court; “J.M. Supply Co., Inc. to Fred Stovall—Cash Deed, Sale of Land,” Record 139386, 21 May 1930, Conveyance Record, Ouachita Parish, Book 20, page 435–456, Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court; *Who’s Who in the Twin Cities* (West Monroe: H. H. Brinsmade, 1931), 167.

3. Baseball historian Philip J. Lowry cites these dimensions as of 1940. Ten years later, the fences were extended to 360 feet in left, 450 in center, and 330 in right. Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of Major League and Negro League Ballparks* (New York: Walker & Co., 2006), 135–136. Lowry’s information came from interviews conducted with Negro League veterans at a 1982 Negro League Players Reunion in Ashland, Kentucky. Email correspondence with the author, 2 November 2006.

4. Herein lies another discrepancy in the historical record. The *Southern University Digest*, the Bushmen’s school newspaper, noted that the game was to be played at night. Casino Park did not have lights. But the only other option was Forsythe Park, the stadium used for Monroe’s white minor league baseball team. That stadium was also the home of Neville High’s Tigers. More than likely, Southern’s expectation that the game would take

place at night was not fulfilled. Casino Park seems the only logical venue for the event. *Monroe Morning World*, 14 October 1932, 7, 24 December 1932, 6, 25 December 1932, 9, 26 December 1932, 6, 27 December 1932, 6; *Southern University Digest*, 1 November 1932, 1, John B. Cade Library Archives, Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, LA.

5. Monroe's two dailies, the *Monroe Morning World* and the *Monroe News Star*, were not the only newspapers to ignore the game. In fact, Shreveport's black weekly, the *Shreveport Sun*, would be the only state newspaper to announce the existence of the game. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* ignored the game. The *Baton Rouge State-Times* covered the LSU freshman team in depth, providing sustained analysis of the team's game with Ouachita Junior College, but never mentioned that the city's other team was also in Monroe for the Armistice Day holiday. The *Ruston Daily Leader*, Lincoln Parish's largest newspaper, mentioned nothing about the game in its Armistice Day coverage. The paper's only Negro coverage on Armistice Day was a crime report recounting the actions of Robert and Henry Bass, "negro[es] living in Ward 7, on a charge of stealing hogs." *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 12 November 1932, 9; *Baton Rouge State-Times*, 10 November 1932, 18, 11 November 1932, 11, 12 November 1932, 8; *Ruston Daily Leader*, 10 November 1932, 1, 11 November 1932, 1.

6. *Shreveport Sun*, 22 October 1932, 5.

7. *Southern University Digest*, 1 November 1932, 1, 14 November 1932, 4, John B. Cade Library Archives, Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, LA.

8. Davis and Gasman, "Path of Racial Uplift or Status Quo?" 7; Miller, "To Bring the Race Along Rapidly," 119.

9. See chapter 1, note 14, for New Orleans university distinction.

10. They would finish the season with losses to Texas College and Langston College. "Football Record, 1932," Southern University of Baton Rouge Athletic Department; and *Shreveport Sun*, 29 October 1932, 1, 8.

11. *Louisiana Weekly* (hereinafter cited as *LW*), 21 October 1933, 5, 11 November 1933, 5, 18 November 1933, 5, 25 November 1933, 5, 2 December 1933, 5, 9 December 1933, 5.

12. *LW*, 14 October 1933, 1, 21 October 1933, 1, 4 November 1933, 1, 4, 11 November 1933, 1.

13. *LW*, 25 June 1932, 8; Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 82–83.

14. Norman Thomas, *Human Exploitation in the United States* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1934), xiv–xv; Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932–1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 13; Harris Gaylord Warren, *Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1967), 241–242.

15. *LW*, 21 October 1933, 5, 29 September 1934, 5.

16. *LW*, 6 October 1934, 5.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *LW*, 13 October 1934, 1, 4, 20 October 1934, 1.

19. *LW*, 3 November 1934, 5; Michael Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992: One Hundred Years of History, Education, and Pride* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Co., 1998), 146; *Shreveport Sun*, 23 December 1933, 5.

20. *LW*, 19 October 1935, 5, 7, 26 October 1935, 5; Roger B. Saylor, *Historically Black Colleges Football Teams Record Book, 1892–1999* (Hobe Sound, FL: self-published, 2000), 36.

21. *LW*, 19 September 1936, 8; *Shreveport Sun*, 12 September 1936, 5; Hurd, *Black Col-*

lege Football, 1892–1992, 164; Michael Hurd, “Collie J”: *Grambling’s Man with the Golden Pen* (Haworth, NJ: St. Johann Press, 2007), 176–177.

22. O. K. Davis, *Grambling’s Gridiron Glory: Eddie Robinson and the Tigers’ Success Story* (Ruston, LA: M&M Printing Co., 1983), 11; Hurd, “Collie J,” 179.

23. *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 30 January 1977, 15. See also Frances Swayzer Conley, *Prez Lives!: Remembering Grambling’s Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2006).

24. *Shreveport Sun*, 19 September 1936, 5, 31 October 1936, 5.

25. *Shreveport Sun*, 31 October 1936, 5.

26. *LW*, 19 September 1936, 8, 17 October 1936, 4, 8, 31 October 1936, 8, 5 December 1936, 4, 12 December 1936, 4; *Shreveport Sun*, 19 September 1936, 5, 17 October 1936, 5, 24 October 1936, 5.

27. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 23 October 1936, 1, 24 October 1936, 1, 28 October 1936, 1, 6.

28. *LW*, 25 September 1937, 6, 13 November 1937, 5, 20 November 1937, 5.

29. *Shreveport Sun*, 1 October 1938, 6, 29 October 1938, 6, 7.

30. Southern’s conference record was 4–1–1, while Langston’s was 3–0–3. Though Langston had no conference losses, both schools had a winning percentage of .750. *LW*, 10 December 1938, 5, 22 October 1938, 1, 2, 29 October 1938, 1, 8; *Shreveport Sun*, 24 September 1938, 6, 10 December 1938, 6.

31. The *New Orleans Item* and the *Times-Picayune* carried similar commentary about north Louisiana’s racial problems, as did the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*. *New Orleans Item*, 6 May 1919, 8; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 12 May 1919, 8; “The Monroe Lynching,” *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, 12 June 1919, 1–2; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1918* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 71–73, 104–105; *Papers of the NAACP*, part 7, series A, reel 12, 348–352, 354, 356, 373–380, 383, 393.

32. *LW*, 28 October 1939, 5.

33. *Shreveport Sun*, 7 October 1939, 6, 14 October 1939, 6, 11 November 1939, 6, 23 December 1939, 6; Saylor, *Historically Black Colleges Football Teams Record Book*, 34.

34. *LW*, 11 November 1939, 5, 25 November 1939, 5, 7; *Shreveport Sun*, 25 November 1939, 6.

3. The Birth and Death of a Legitimate Rivalry, 1940–1948

1. *Shreveport Sun*, 7 December 1940, 6, 22 February 1941, 8.

2. Mildred B. G. Gallot, *A History of Grambling State University* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 70, 74–75.

3. Eddie Robinson, *Never Before, Never Again: The Stirring Autobiography of Eddie Robinson, The Winningest Coach in the History of College Football* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 9–46, quotes from pages 16, 41.

4. *Ibid.*, 47–53, quotes from pages 52–53, 51.

5. *Ibid.*, 52–54; *Louisiana Weekly* (hereinafter cited as *LW*), 27 September 1941, 8.

6. Among Robinson’s losses that first season were a 7–0 defeat at the hands of Dillard and a 27–0 defeat to Alabama A&M. “Coaching Record,” Hickock Sports, www.hickoksports.com/biograph/robinsoneddie.shtml; *LW*, 25 October 1941, 7, 1 November 1941, 7.

7. This was not nepotism. The younger Clark held a PhD in educational administra-

tion from Columbia. He would continue as Southern's president until 1969. J. S. Clark, his father, would die in late October 1944. "Felton Grandison Clark," Presidents—Clark, Felton G., Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA; Michael Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992: One Hundred Years of History, Education, and Pride* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Co., 1998), 147.

8. Nighttime sports made their debut in Louisiana ten years prior in 1931, when on October 3, the LSU Tiger football team played its first game under artificial lights in Tiger Stadium. Thomas Pinckney "Skipper" Heard, a graduate athletic manager and eventual athletic director, first introduced the idea, arguing that night games in Louisiana were only logical. They allowed fans and players to avoid the state's notorious heat and humidity, and they gave working people a better chance to attend games. LSU's football attendance immediately rose. (Of course, Heard's other motive was more specific to LSU's situation. Playing night games avoided scheduling conflicts with New Orleans universities Tulane and Loyola.) Throughout the 1930s, many of the state's minor league baseball teams added artificial lighting to ballparks to increase their accessibility to fans. The state's black universities, however, were not initially included in the technological revolution. *LW*, 14 December 1940, 1, 6 September 1941, 6, 4 October 1941, 8, 18 October 1941, 6; *Shreveport Sun*, 4 November 1944, 1.

9. *LW*, 19 September 1942, 8, 3 November 1945, 8, 10 November 1945, 8, 24 November 1945, 8; "Robinson, 'Eddie' (Edward G.)," Hickock Sports, www.hickoksports.com/biograph/robinsoneddie.shtml; Gallot, *A History of Grambling State University*, 78–79; "Coaching Record," Hickock Sports, www.hickoksports.com/biograph/robinsoneddie.shtml.

10. Much of the growth at both Grambling and Southern was facilitated by the G.I. Bill, which brought thousands of new students to universities in the late 1940s. Gallot, *A History of Grambling State University*, 83.

11. *LW*, 5 October 1946, 6; *Shreveport Sun*, 5 October 1946, 5.

12. *LW*, 5 October 1946, 6.

13. *LW*, 12 October 1946, 6; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 6 October 1946, 11B; *Shreveport Sun*, 12 October 1946, 8.

14. Roger B. Saylor, *Historically Black Colleges Football Teams Record Book, 1892–1999* (Hobe Sound, FL: self-published, 2000), 36; Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992*, 147.

15. *LW*, 4 October 1947, 13; *Shreveport Sun*, 20 September 1947, 7, 20 October 1947, 8.

16. *LW*, 11 October 1947, 6.

17. *Shreveport Sun*, 6 September 1947, 7; O. K. Davis, *Grambling's Gridiron Glory: Eddie Robinson and the Tigers' Success Story* (Ruston, LA: M&M Printing Co., 1983), 7; Michael Hurd, "Collie J": *Grambling's Man with the Golden Pen* (Haworth, NJ: St. Johann Press, 2007), 180.

18. *LW*, 11 October 1947, 6.

19. *Shreveport Sun*, 11 October 1947, 2; *LW*, 11 October 1947, 6.

20. *LW*, 2 October 1948, 6; *Shreveport Sun*, 4 October 1947, 8.

21. *LW*, 2 October 1948, 6; *Shreveport Sun*, 4 October 1947, 8.

22. *LW*, 2 October 1948, 6.

23. *LW*, 9 October 1948, 6; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 2 October 1948, 8B.

24. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 4 October 1948, 5; *LW*, 9 October 1948, 6; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 3 October 1948, 10B.

25. *LW*, 9 October 1948, 6, 16 October 1948, 6; Saylor, *Historically Black Colleges Football Teams Record Book*, 36; Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992*, 147.

4. Civilities and Civil Rights, 1959–1965

1. Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 106–107.
2. *Ibid.*, 106, 112–117.
3. *Ibid.*, 191–195.
4. *Ibid.*, 195.
5. *Ibid.*, 109.
6. Roger B. Saylor, *Historically Black Colleges Football Teams Record Book, 1892–1999* (Hobe Sound, FL: self-published, 2000), 34; Michael Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992: One Hundred Years of History, Education, and Pride* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Co., 1998), 164, 183; *Shreveport Sun*, 13 September 1958, 7, 11 October 1958, 7.
7. Southern's 1949 SWAC championship was shared with Langston. Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992*, 147, 164; *Shreveport Sun*, 18 November 1958, 7, 29 November 1958, 7.
8. *Louisiana Weekly* (hereinafter cited as *LW*), 3 October 1959, 9.
9. *LW*, 3 October 1959, 10.
10. *Ibid.*, 9, 10.
11. *LW*, 10 October 1959, 1.
12. *Ibid.*, 9.
13. *Ibid.*, 9, 10.
14. “1960’s Sit-In’s, They Refused to Be Refused: Historical Statement,” 1960 Sit-Ins, Archive, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA (hereinafter cited as 1960 Sit-Ins, Archive); “Group Recalls 1960 Sit-In During Reunion Here,” 1960 Sit-Ins, Archive; and Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 266–267.
15. “Timeline of 1960 Sit-Ins,” prepared two months following the events, 1960 Sit-Ins, Archive; and Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 267–268.
16. The Baton Rouge sit-ins by Southern University students and others would ultimately lead to the Supreme Court’s *Garner v. Louisiana* decision, the first such case to be heard. There was, ruled the Court, no evidence for imprisoning the protesters under Louisiana “disturbing the peace” statutes, and therefore arrest and detainment was unlawful. “1960’s Sit-In’s, They Refused to Be Refused: Historical Statement,” 1960 Sit-Ins, Archive; “Timeline of 1960 Sit-Ins,” 1960 Sit-Ins, Archive; and *Garner v. Louisiana*, 368 U.S. 157, 82 S.Ct. 248 (1961).
17. Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 234–264.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *LW*, 3 September 1960, 9.
20. *LW*, 10 September 1960, 1, 6, 17 September 1960, 9.
21. *LW*, 27 August 1960, 9.
22. *LW*, 1 October 1960, 9, 10.
23. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 3 October 1960, 5; *LW*, 8 October 1960, 9.
24. Despite its loss to Prairie View, Southern was named Black National Champion for 1960 by the *Pittsburgh Courier*. *LW*, 3 December 1960, 10; Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992*, 147, 164.
25. *LW*, 2 September 1961, 9; Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892–1992*, 160, 164.
26. *LW*, 2 September 1961, 9.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *LW*, 16 September 1961, 10, 30 September 1961, 9.

29. *LW*, 30 September 1961, 9, 7 October 1961, 9.
30. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 2 October 1961, 4; *LW*, 7 October 1961, 9.
31. *LW*, 25 November 1961, 9, 2 December 1961, 9, 9 December 1961, 9.
32. *LW*, 6 October 1962, 1.
33. *LW*, 15 September 1962, 9, 22 September 1962, 13, 6 October 1962, 1.
34. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 30 September 1962, 5C; *LW*, 6 October 1962, 9.
35. *LW*, 1 December 1962, 9, 21 September 1963, 13.
36. Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*, ed. James Melvin Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 101–106.
37. *LW*, 31 August 1963, 10, 7 September 1963, 10.
38. *LW*, 14 September 1963, 9, 21 September 1963, 13, 28 September 1963, 9.
39. *LW*, 5 October 1963, 9.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 29 September 1963, 5C; *LW*, 5 October 1963, 9.
42. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 29 September 1963, 5C; *LW*, 5 October 1963, 9.
43. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 20 September 1963, 3; *LW*, 5 October 1963, 9.
44. *LW*, 12 October 1963, 9, 23 November 1963, 10, 30 November 1963, 11.
45. Dorothy Dunbar Bromley and Susan McCabe, "Impact of the 'Sit-In' Movement on Academic Freedom," *Negro Education Review* 12 (April 1961): 64–69; Dean Sinclair, "Equal in All Places: The Civil Rights Struggle in Baton Rouge, 1953–1963," *Louisiana History* 39 (Summer 1998): 364–365.
46. *LW*, 29 August 1964, 11.
47. *LW*, 29 August 1964, 11, 5 September 1964.
48. *LW*, 5 September 1964, 11.
49. *LW*, 26 September 1964, 10.
50. *LW*, 3 October 1964, 10; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 27 September 1964, 7C.
51. *LW*, 17 October 1964, 9, 21 November 1964, 9, 5 December 1964, 10.
52. *LW*, 28 November 1964, 10, 5 December 1964, 10.
53. *LW*, 12 December 1964, 9.
54. William G. Ramroth, *Planning for Disaster: How Natural and Man-Made Disasters Shape the Built Environment* (Washington, DC: Kaplan Publishing, 2007), 133.
55. Angus M. Gunn, *Encyclopedia of Disasters: Environmental Catastrophes and Human Tragedies* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), 484–485.
56. Ramroth, *Planning for Disaster*, 134; Gunn, *Encyclopedia of Disasters*, 485–486; Elizabeth Rogers Papers, UNO Library, "Riding the Nightmare Express," Hurricane Digital Memory Bank, Object #26649, www.hurricanearchive.org/object/26649.
57. *LW*, 11 September 1965, 6, 18 September 1965, 10.
58. *LW*, 25 September 1965, 6.
59. *LW*, 25 October 1965, 2.
60. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 21 November 1965, 3C; *LW*, 27 November 1965, 6.
61. *LW*, 27 November 1965, 8, 4 December 1965, 7.

5. Black Power, White Power, 1966–1971

1. *Louisiana Weekly* (hereinafter cited as *LW*), 2 July 1966, 2–8.
2. *LW*, 17 September 1966, 2–10.
3. *LW*, 2 July 1966, 2–9.

4. *LW*, 9 July 1966, 2–7, 30 July 1966, 2–9, 20 August 1966, 2–8.
5. *LW*, 24 September 1966, 2–6.
6. *LW*, 15 October 1966, 2–6.
7. *Baton Rouge News Leader*, 28 May 1967, 1A, 6A; *LW*, 12 November 1966, 1, 8.
8. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 20 November 1966, 8C; *LW*, 26 November 1966, 2–8.
9. *LW*, 8 July 1967, 2–8.
10. *LW*, 12 August 1967, 2–6, 2–7.
11. *LW*, 7 November 1967, 2–8.
12. *LW*, 19 August 1967, 2–8, 22 July 1967, 2–7, 2 September 1967, 2–8.
13. *LW*, 2 September 1967, 2–8, 16 September 1967, 3–10, 23 September 1967, 2–6.
14. *LW*, 8 July 1967, 2–9, 7 November 1967, 2–9.
15. *LW*, 7 November 1967, 2–9.
16. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 19 November 1967, 12C; *LW*, 25 November 1967, 2–9.
17. *LW*, 13 July 1968, 2–9, 3 August 1968, 2–8, 10 August 1968, 2–8.
18. *LW*, 17 August 1968, 2–10.
19. *LW*, 20 July 1968, 2–10.
20. Bruce Bahrenburg, *My Little Brother's Coming Tomorrow* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 17; *LW*, 14 September 1968, 2–8.
21. David Coulson, "Grambling's 'White Tiger' Remembers the Coach," *College Sporting News*, www.collegesportingnews.com/article.asp?articleid=85153; *LW*, 14 September 1968, 2–8.
22. Robert Deitz, "Grambling? A 'Football Factory' Is in an Educational Uproar," *National Observer*, 6 November 1967, 4; "Grambling College (Louisiana)," *AAUP Bulletin* 57 (Spring 1971): 50–52.
23. *LW*, 13 July 1968, 2–8, 27 July 1968, 2–7, 31 August 1968, 2–8.
24. *LW*, 17 August 1968, 2–10, 21 September 1968, 2–8.
25. *LW*, 16 November 1968, 1, 6.
26. The dismissed faulty members were Woodrow Wilson Teaching Interns, participants in a program that brought young, northern (and usually white) academics to black southern universities. Similar instances occurred at Bishop College and South Carolina State. "Academic Freedom and Tenure: Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College," *AAUP Bulletin* 54 (Spring 1968): 14–24.
27. Raphael Cassimere, "Crisis in Public Higher Education in Louisiana," *Integrated Education* 13 (September 1975): 10–14; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 3 April 1969, 22, 7 April 1969, 12, 10 April 1969, 1, 19, 10 May 1969, 1, 25, 13 May 1969, 5, 15 May 1969, 16, 20 May 1969, 4, 21 May 1969, 9.
28. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 24 November 1968, 10C; *LW*, 23 November 1968, 2–8, 30 November 1968, 2–7.
29. *LW*, 7 December 1968, 2–9, 14 December 1968, 2–8.
30. *LW*, 30 August 1969, 2–6, 19 July 1969, 2–7, 26 July 1969, 2–7.
31. *LW*, 12 July 1969, 2–8, 19 July 1969, 1.
32. *LW*, 16 August 1969, 2–9, 23 August 1969, 2–7, 30 August 1969, 2–8.
33. *LW*, 20 September 1969, 2–8.
34. *LW*, 27 September 1969, 2–7, 4 October 1969, 2–8, 2–10.
35. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 23 November 1969, 7C; *LW*, 29 November 1969, 2–6.
36. *LW*, 29 November 1969, 2–9, 2–10, 6 December 1969, 2–9.
37. *LW*, 11 July 1970, 1, 10.

38. *Ibid.*, 2–6.
39. *LW*, 29 August 1970, 2–11.
40. *LW*, 7 November 1970, 2–7, 14 November 1970, 2–1, 2–8.
41. *LW*, 18 July 1970, 2–8.
42. *LW*, 5 September 1970, 2–10.
43. *LW*, 21 November 1970, 2–6, 2–7.
44. Bahrenburg, *My Little Brother's Coming Tomorrow*, 223, 227; *LW*, 21 November 1970, 2–6.
45. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 22 November 1970, 6C; *LW*, 21 November 1970, 2–6, 5 December 1970, 2–8.
46. *LW*, 5 December 1970, 2–8.
47. *LW*, 5 December 1970, 2–7, 12 December 1970, 2–6.
48. Bahrenburg, *My Little Brother's Coming Tomorrow*, 56.
49. *Ibid.*, 57–78.
50. *Ibid.*, 65.
51. *Ibid.*, 70–72.
52. Rachel Knudson, “The Grambling State University of Louisiana and University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire Student Exchange Program, 1970–1980” (Senior thesis, University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, 2007); *Grambling's White Tiger*, Interplanetary Pictures, 1981.
53. Bahrenburg, *My Little Brother's Coming Tomorrow*, 223–224.
54. *LW*, 17 July 1971, 2–8, 14 August 1971, 2–1, 28 August 1971, 2–2, 4 September 1971, 2–8; *The Gramblinite*, 24 September 1971, 11, 5 November 1971, 1, 12 November 1971, 8.
55. *LW*, 28 August 1971, 2–2, 4 September 1971, 2–8, 2–9, 2–10, 11 September 1971, 2–2.
56. *LW*, 21 August 1971, 2–10, 2–11.
57. *LW*, 2 October 1971, 2–3.
58. *LW*, 25 September 1971, 2–6, 20 November 1971, 2–1, 2–3.
59. Along with the football game, Southern's tennis team also made the trip for a match that took place the Friday before the game. *The Gramblinite*, 19 November 1971, 12; *Ruston Daily Leader*, 22 November 1971, 10; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 21 November 1971, 8C; *LW*, 27 November 1971, 10, 4 December 1971, 2–1, 18 December 1971, 3–2.

6. The Greatest Game Never Played, 1972

1. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 31 October 1972, 7, 1 November 1972, 10; *Louisiana Weekly* (hereinafter cited as *LW*), 21 October 1972, 2–6.
2. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 31 October 1972, 7, 1 November 1972, 11.
3. *The Gramblinite*, 3 November 1972, 1; *Ruston Daily Leader*, 3 November 1972, 1, 3.
4. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 3 November 1972, 1, 3.
5. *Ibid.*, 3.
6. *The Gramblinite*, 10 November 1972, 1, 9; *Ruston Daily Leader*, 3 November 1972, 1, 3.
7. Kenneth Newman, the school's business manager, estimated the damage to the campus at \$52,563. *The Gramblinite*, 1 December 1972, 1; *Ruston Daily Leader*, 3 November 1972, 1, 3, 6 November 1972, 1.
8. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 6 November 1972, 10, 7 November 1972, 7.
9. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 13 November 1972, 13, 14 November 1972, 6.
10. *Baton Rouge News Leader*, 12 November 1972, 1D; *LW*, 4 November 1972, 3–8.
11. Netterville was a Southern alum, with a master's degree from Columbia Univer-

sity. By the time of his 1969 appointment as president, he had also received an honorary doctorate from Wiley College. “George Leon Netterville, Jr.,” Presidents—Netterville G. Leon, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA.

12. “The University’s Response to Student Grievances As Approved By the University Senate, October 24, 1972,” Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA.

13. “Students United List of Grievances,” Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA.

14. *LW*, 4 November 1972, 1, 6.

15. *LW*, 11 November 1972, 1, 8.

16. *LW*, 18 November 1972, 1, 12.

17. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 17 November 1972, 1, 3; “Denver Smith and Leonard Brown,” Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA; and “Chronology of Events That Led to Death of Students,” Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA (hereinafter cited as “Chronology of Events”).

18. “Chronology of Events”; *Ruston Daily Leader*, 17 November 1972, 1, 3.

19. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 17 November 1972, 1, 3.

20. *LW*, 25 November 1972, 1, 8, 9.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *LW*, 2 December 1972, 1, 10. The events at Southern in fall 1972 were documented by the university in painstaking detail and printed on December 9, 1972. For a description of all of the events at Southern in fall 1972, see “A Chronology of a Crisis at Southern University,” Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA.

23. *LW*, 2 December 1972, 1, 10.

24. *LW*, 25 November 1972, 1, 8, 9, 2 December 1972, 1, 10.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *LW*, 9 December 1972, 1, 9.

27. “Black People’s Committee of Inquiry Report,” Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA.

28. “Report of the Attorney General’s Special Commission of Inquiry on the Southern University Tragedy of November 16, 1972,” July 1973, Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA. Southern responded with a follow-up report responding to the commission’s findings and proposing to make suggested changes outlined in the report. “A Response to the Attorney General’s Special Commission of Inquiry On the Southern University Tragedy of November 16, 1972,” Smith, Denver and Brown, Leonard Shooting Tragedy, 16 November 1972, Box 1, Archives, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA.

29. *LW*, 9 December 1972, 1, 9.

30. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 17 November 1972, 1; *LW*, 18 November 1972, 2–6, 25 November 1972, 10.

31. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 17 November 1972, 1; *LW*, 9 December 1972, 2–3.

32. *The Gramblinite*, 8 December 1972, 11; *LW*, 2 December 1972, 2–2, 9 December 1972, 2–3.

7. The Second Battle of New Orleans, 1973–1974

1. Michael Hurd, “*Collie J*”: *Grambling’s Man with the Golden Pen* (Haworth, NJ: St. John Press, 2007), 6; *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (hereinafter cited as *T-P*), 25 November 1994, C1, C3, 23 November 2001, D1, D4.

2. Hurd, “*Collie J*,” 34–57, 101–103.

3. *Louisiana Weekly* (hereinafter cited as *LW*), 17 July 1971, 2–8, 20 November 1971, 2–1.

4. *LW*, 9 July 1966, 2–7.

5. *T-P*, 9 January 1925; Jeff Davis, *Papa Bear: The Life and Legacy of George Halas* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 80–81; Gregory Richard, email correspondence in possession of the author.

6. Michael S. Martin, “New Orleans Becomes a Big-League City: The NFL-AFL Merger and the Creation of the New Orleans Saints,” in *Horsehide, Pigskin, Oval Tracks, and Apple Pie*, ed. James A. Vlasich (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006), 123–125, 128–129.

7. *LW*, 16 July 1966, 2–9, 1 October 1966, 2–6.

8. Martin, “New Orleans Becomes a Big-League City,” 128–129; *LW*, 5 November 1966, 1, 10, 25 July 1970, 2–6.

9. *LW*, 25 July 1970, 2–6.

10. Hurd, “*Collie J*,” 183.

11. *Ibid.*, 183–184.

12. *Ibid.*, 184.

13. *Shreveport Sun*, 9 August 1973, 2–2, 16 August 1973, 2–3, 30 August 1973, 2–2, 2–3, 11 October 1973, 2–3, 8 November 1973, 2–1.

14. *Shreveport Sun*, 18 October 1973, 1, 25 October 1973, 2–1.

15. *Shreveport Times*, 8 November 1973, 3B.

16. *LW*, 24 November 1973, 2.

17. *LW*, 27 October 1973, 27, 3 November 1973, 2–4, 10 November 1973, 2–9.

18. *Shreveport Sun*, 23 August 1973, 2–3, 27 September 1973, 2–2.

19. *Shreveport Sun*, 23 August 1973, 2–2, 13 September 1973, 2–2; *Shreveport Times*, 13 November 1973, 7D, 12D.

20. *Shreveport Sun*, 13 September 1973, 2–1, 18 October 1973, 2–1; *Shreveport Times*, 13 November 1973, 7D.

21. *LW*, 24 November 1973, 1.

22. *Shreveport Times*, 13 November 1973, 4D, 27D, 30D.

23. *Shreveport Times*, 13 November 1973, 18D, 24D.

24. *Shreveport Times*, 13 November 1973, 2D, 30D.

25. *Shreveport Times*, 13 November 1973, 6D, 12D, 14D, 21D.

26. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 18 November 1973, 2C; *Shreveport Times*, 18 November 1973, 1A, 1D.

27. *Shreveport Times*, 18 November 1973, 1D.

28. *Shreveport Sun*, 8 November 1973, 2–2.

29. *Shreveport Times*, 13 November 1973, 26D; *Shreveport Sun*, 8 November 1973, 2–2; *Louisiana Weekly*, 7 November 1967, 11, 5 September 1970, 2–8, 2–9.

30. *Shreveport Times*, 18 November 1973, 1D, 4D; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 18 November 1973, 2C; *LW*, 24 November 1973, 2–6.
31. *T-P*, 15 July 1974, 2, 3–12, 3–13, 3–17, 16 July 1974, 1, 2–2; *LW*, 20 July 1974, 2–7.
32. *T-P*, 13 November 1974, 2–5; *LW*, 2 November 1974, 2–6; Mildred B. G. Gallot, *A History of Grambling State University* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 117.
33. *T-P*, 17 November 1974, 6–1, 18 November 1974, 3–16, 3–18.
34. *Baton Rouge News Leader*, 20 October 1974, 1; *LW*, 2 November 1974, 1.
35. *The Gramblinite*, 21 November 1974, 1, 5; *LW*, 16 November 1974, 2–7; *T-P*, 19 November 1974, 4–4, 4–5.
36. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 November 1924, quoted in Raymond Schmidt, *Shaping College Football: The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919–1930* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 134–135.
37. Schmidt, *Shaping College Football*, 143–145.
38. *LW*, 16 November 1974, 2–7; *T-P*, 19 November 1974, 4–12.
39. *The Gramblinite*, 21 November 1974, 2; *T-P*, 20 November 1974, 2–4.
40. *T-P*, 23 November 1974, 3–1, 24 November 1974, 1–5.
41. *The Gramblinite*, 21 November 1974, 2.
42. The field's usual home team was in Baton Rouge that Saturday, losing to rival LSU 24–22. *T-P*, 24 November 1974, 6–1, 25 November 1974, 1.
43. *LW*, 30 November 1974, 1, 13 July 1974, 1.
44. *T-P*, 24 November 1974, 6–1, 6–8, 1 December 1974, 6–3; *LW*, 30 November 1974, 2–6.
45. *T-P*, 24 November 1974, 6–1, 6–8; *LW*, 30 November 1974, 2–6; *The Gramblinite*, 6 December 1974, 16.
46. *LW*, 7 December 1974, 2–6; and *T-P*, 27 November 1974, 3–12, 8 December 1974, 6–1, 6–5.
47. *LW*, 30 November 1974, 2–6.

8. The Mother Ship Lands, 1975–1979

1. *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (hereinafter cited as *T-P*), 18 November 1975, 6–2. Citations used in this chapter are almost solely dependent upon the *Times-Picayune*. The *Baton Rouge Advocate*, the *Ruston Daily Leader*, the *Shreveport Times*, and the *Monroe News-Star* all carry similar accounts on similar dates, but to eliminate superfluous notation (and because the author used the *Times-Picayune* as his principal guide through the state's other accounts) the *Times-Picayune* is, with some exceptions, the paper of record for the chapter.
2. *T-P*, 15 February 1975, 1, 10, 16 February 1975, 1, 22, 19 February 1975, 1, 5.
3. *T-P*, 25 March 1975, 10, 27 March 1975, 8, 29 June 1975, 1, 14.
4. *T-P*, *DIXIE Magazine*, 3 August 1975, 11.
5. *T-P*, 10 August 1975, 1, 8.
6. *T-P*, 23 August 1975, 1, 8, 28 August 1975, 15, 29 August 1975, 2.
7. *T-P*, 1 August 1975, 1, 8.
8. *T-P*, 29 September 1975, 6, 8 October 1975, 1, 14.
9. *T-P*, 14 October 1975, 1, 14, 4 November 1975, 6.
10. *T-P*, 24 September 1975, 3, 4 October 1975, 1, 5 October 1975, 18, 7 November 1975, 7.
11. *T-P*, 11 November 1975, 1, 6.

12. T-P, 13 November 1975, 1, 10, 16 November 1975, 1, 10, 28.
13. T-P, 17 November 1975, 2, 18 November 1975, 1, 14.
14. T-P, 18 November 1975, 14, 20 November 1975, 1, 19, 22 November 1975, 1, 4.
15. T-P, 1 August 1975, 2.
16. T-P, 25 February 1975, 5, 27 February 1975, 6.
17. T-P, 24 November 1975, 4-16.
18. T-P, 16 November 1975, 6-8, 17 November 1975, 2-7.
19. T-P, 25 November 1975, 3-4, 26 November 1975, 2-1.
20. *The Gramblinite*, 21 November 1975, 8; T-P, 26 November 1975, 2-1.
21. *The Gramblinite*, 21 November 1975, 1, 5 December 1975, 1; T-P, 27 November 1975, 4-1.
22. T-P, 28 November 1975, 4-11.

23. The battle of the bands was supposed to be held in the Superdome, but instead took place at the Rivergate with the other pregame festivities. There was a scheduling conflict with a soul concert slated for the Dome the same night. The compromise that led to the bands' move to the Rivergate ended weeks of controversy on the Grambling and Southern campuses, with alumni of both schools threatening to boycott the event if a decision wasn't reached. *The Gramblinite*, 14 November 1975, 15, 5 December 1975, 6.

24. *The Gramblinite*, 5 December 1975, 10.

25. Kelly Nix, a candidate for state superintendent of education, presented an award at halftime. Advertisements for his campaign were in the program. NCAA events were not allowed to be used for political advertising, and Nix's opponent, Louis Michot, accused the schools of duplicity. Both Grambling and Southern, however, denied the charges. Promoters were responsible for both the halftime award and the printing of programs. *The Gramblinite*, 5 December 1975, 6.

26. *The Gramblinite*, 5 December 1975, 8; T-P, 25 November 1975, 3-4, 30 November 1975, 1-18, 6-21.

27. T-P, 28 December 1975, 8, 13 January 1976, 3.

28. T-P, 25 January 1976, 8-6, 8-14, 8-15.

29. T-P, 28 January 1976, 4, 5 February 1976, 1, 12.

30. *The Gramblinite*, 19 November 1976, 1, 7; T-P, 29 November 1976, 4-6, 4-7.

31. Halftime featured the bands as it always did. The Grambling band, which at that point was still all-male, included for the first time featured female dancers, the Orchiesis Dance Group, as well as three female singers, who performed an Earth, Wind, and Fire song. Among the awards doled out during the event were two plaques of recognition to Atsushi Fujita and Jack K. Sakazaki, the president and vice president of Japan who were in attendance. *The Gramblinite*, 3 December 1976, 4, 7, 10, 12; *Ruston Daily Leader*, 29 November 1976, 7; T-P, 28 November 1976, 20, 6-1, 6-16

32. *The Gramblinite*, 3 December 1976, 10, 12; T-P, 28 November 1976, 20, 6-1, 6-16.

33. T-P, 30 January 1977, 15, 25 March 1977, 4, 13 April 1977, 11, 30 April 1977, 21.

34. T-P, 18 May 1977, 10, 24 May 1977, 8, 14 June 1977, 11.

35. T-P, 30 January 1977, 15, 25 March 1977, 4, 13 April 1977, 11, 30 April 1977, 21, 18 May 1977, 10, 24 May 1977, 8, 25 May 1977, 11, 27 May 1977, 8, 14 June 1977, 11, 30 September 1977, 2-11, 7 October 1977, 21.

36. T-P, 25 July 1977, 10.

37. T-P, 22 September 1977, 14.

38. T-P, 30 December 1976, 1, 4, 31 December 1976, 1, 8, 8 January 1977, 3.

39. T-P, 24 August 1976, 3, 18 May 1977, 1, 20 May 1977, 8, 2 June 1977, 14, 3 June 1977,

- 4, 11 October 1977, 1, 17, 12 October 1977, 1, 15 October 1977, 1, 17, 21 October 1977, 4, 25 October 1977, 1, 8, 4 November 1977, 1, 20.
40. T-P, 11 November 1977, 8, 16 November 1977, 8.
41. T-P, 13 August 1977, 4.
42. T-P 26 November 1977, 1, 7; *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 3C.
43. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 23 October 1977, 1C, 4C, 24 October 1977, 1C, 27 October 1977, 1C, 2C.
44. *Baton Rouge Advocate*, 30 October 1977, 11C; T-P, 26 November 1977, 1, 7.
45. T-P, 8 November 1977, 4–1, 24 November 1977, 3–1, 3–8, 26 November 1977, 1, 7.
46. T-P, 26 November 1977, 1, 7.
47. T-P, 27 November 1977, 3, 6–1, 6–10.
48. T-P, 28 April 1978, 4–10, 23 May 1978, 6, 1 July 1978, 3.
49. T-P, 3 July 1978, 6.
50. T-P, 22 July 1978, 10, 24 September 1978, 12.
51. T-P, 24 September 1978, 8, 27 November 1978, 3–8.
52. *The Gramblinite*, 17 November 1978, 13; T-P, 24 September 1978, 5, 27 November 1978, 3–8.
53. T-P, 22 November 1978, 3–3, 24 November 1978, 5–4, 25 November 1978, 4–1, 4–7.
54. With the victory came another SWAC title for Grambling. “Boy! These Grambling Tigers, they’re something else!” reported Jeffery Hudson, *Gramblinite* sports editor. “How do they do it? Who knows or who really cares? There’s one thing for certain, and that is, they do it, and they do it well. Big Red keeps moving on, Big Red keeps moving on, right, right on!” *The Gramblinite*, 1 December 1978, 16, 18; T-P, 26 November 1978, 6–3, 6–11.
55. T-P, 26 November 1978, 16, 3 December 1978, 16.
56. Grambling’s optimism also stemmed from approval of a new on-campus football stadium. As early as 1974, calls for a new stadium—from alumni, fans, and Eddie Robinson himself—had permeated the campus. But the funding never came. Though Grambling was a dominant national program, they played so many of their games on the road that a new home stadium didn’t seem economically viable. In November 1979, however, approval for an \$8.5 million facility assured the Tigers of a luxurious new home field. Though the site would never host a Bayou Classic because of the neutral-site contract, the announcement was still a boon to fans. *The Gramblinite*, 15 November 1974, 1, 2, 30 November 1979, 1; T-P, 1 December 1979, 2–1, 3 December 1979, 3–4.
57. T-P, 23 November 1979, 3–1, 3–7.
58. T-P, 27 November 1979, 4–6.
59. It wasn’t the first time the Classic had to deal with such trickery. In 1976, a similar forgery scheme kept some fans out of both the game and the festivities surrounding it. The scam was part of a larger ticket fraud involving musical events, the New Orleans Jazz basketball games, and the Sugar Bowl. *The Gramblinite*, 3 December 1976, 16; T-P, 1 December 1979, 2–2, 2 December 1979, 6–1, 6–10.
60. *Ruston Daily Leader*, 2 December 1979, 18; T-P, 2 December 1979, 6–1, 6–10.

9. Last Night of the Tiger Dynasty, 1980–1986

1. *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (hereinafter cited as T-P), 24 November 1980, 4–10. Citations used in this chapter are almost solely dependent upon the *Times-Picayune*. The *Baton Rouge Advocate*, the *Ruston Daily Leader*, the *Shreveport Times*, and the *Monroe News-*

Star all carry similar accounts on similar dates, but to eliminate superfluous notation (and because the author used the *Times-Picayune* as his principal guide through the state's other accounts) the *Times-Picayune* is, with some exceptions, the paper of record for the chapter.

2. *T-P*, 6 June 1980, 13, 22 July 1980, 2-2.
3. *T-P*, 23 July 1980, 1, 4, 17 August 1980, 30.
4. *T-P*, 16 November 1976, 4-4.
5. *T-P*, 26 September 1980, 15, 27 September 1980, 19, 30 September 1980, 17, 1 October 1980, 11.
6. *The Gramblinite*, 21 November 1980, 13; *T-P*, 24 November 1980, 4-10, 4-14, 26 November 1980, 3-9.
7. *T-P*, 28 November 1980, 3-13, 29 November 1980, 4-2, 4-9.
8. *T-P*, 30 November 1980, 6-1, 6-6.
9. *The Gramblinite*, 12 December 1980, 11; *T-P*, 1 December 1980, 35, 14 December 1980, 6-5.
10. *T-P*, 7 February 1981, 2-5, 11 February 1981, 13.
11. *T-P*, 22 August 1981, 1, 4, 9 September 1981, 14, 3 October 1981, 23.
12. *T-P*, 15 November 1981, 6-8, 23 November 1981, 4-8.
13. *T-P*, 15 November 1981, 6-8, 17 November 1981, 3-1, 3-6, 21 November 1981, 3-1, 3-9.
14. *T-P*, 15 November 1981, 6-1, 17 November 1981, 3-1, 3-6.
15. *T-P*, 22 November 1981, 6-1, 6-8.
16. *T-P*, 7 January 1981, 20.
17. *T-P*, 10 April 1982, 19, 11 April 1982, 22.
18. *T-P*, 18 November 1982, 2-7, 23 November 1982, 5-6.
19. *T-P*, 23 November 1982, 5-6.
20. *T-P*, 27 October 1982, 4-2, 17 November 1982, 1, 4, 4-3, 18 November 1982, 6-1, 6-3.
21. *T-P*, 23 November 1982, 5-1, 25 November 1982, 5-2.
22. *T-P*, 25 November 1982, 5-2.
23. *T-P*, 28 November 1982, 6-1, 6-6.
24. *T-P*, 22 November 1983, 2-10, 23 November 1983, 4-2.
25. *T-P*, 23 November 1983, 4-2.
26. *T-P*, 27 November 1983, 3.
27. The Nicaraguan Contras dominated the headlines in November 1983, but the economy still seemed relatively stable, finally recovering from the oil crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Economics wasn't the reason for the attendance decline. Rather, television was probably the culprit. For the second season, the Bayou Classic was on national television, leaving many to decide to watch from the comfort of their own homes. *T-P*, 27 November 1983, 1, 6-1, 6-12; Sylvia Ostry, "The World Economy in 1983: Marking Time," *Foreign Affairs* 62 (Winter 1983-84): 533-560.
28. *Southern Digest*, 2 December 1983, 6; *T-P* 27 November 1983, 6-1, 6-12.
29. By 1983, the Sheridan Broadcasting Network had taken over the annual black college football poll from the *Pittsburgh Courier*. *T-P*, 27 November 1983, 6-12; Michael Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892-1992: One Hundred Years of History, Education, and Pride* (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Co., 1998), 165.
30. *T-P*, 25 June 1984, 4-1, 4-5, 1 July 1984, A22, A23.
31. *T-P*, 22 November 1984, D1, D18.

32. *T-P*, 24 November 1984, B6, 25 November 1984, E1, E9.
33. *T-P*, 27 January 1985, A1, A4.
34. *T-P*, 17 February 1985, A1, A5, 6 November 1985, A15.
35. *T-P*, 20 November 1985, B1, B2, B8, B12.
36. *T-P*, 19 November 1985, B1, B4, 20 November 1985, B8.
37. *Southern Digest*, 22 November 1985, 9.
38. *T-P*, 21 November 1985, B3.
39. *T-P*, 23 November 1985, B1, B2.
40. *Southern Digest*, 6 December 1985, 9; *T-P*, 24 November 1985, E1, E14.
41. *T-P*, 18 June 1986, A1, A4.
42. *T-P*, 23 June 1986, B4, 24 June 1986, A1, A4.
43. *The Gramblinite*, 19 November 1986, 7; *T-P*, 24 November 1986, C9, 25 November 1986, C1, C5.
44. *T-P*, 29 November 1986, C1, C10.
45. *The Gramblinite*, 5 December 1986, 7; *T-P*, 30 November 1986, D1, D14.

10. Winters of Discontent, 1987–1992

1. Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, 10 August 2003, C1; “Marino ‘The Godfather’ Casem: Member Biography,” *National Football Foundation’s College Football Hall of Fame*, www.collegefootball.org/famersearch.php?id=70072, accessed 18 January 2009. Citations used in this chapter are almost solely dependent upon the *Times-Picayune*. The *Baton Rouge Advocate*, the *Ruston Daily Leader*, the *Shreveport Times*, and the *Monroe News-Star* all carry similar accounts on similar dates, but to eliminate superfluous notation (and because the author used the *Times-Picayune* as his principal guide through the state’s other accounts) the *Times-Picayune* is, with some exceptions, the paper of record for the chapter.

2. *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (hereinafter cited as *T-P*), 30 November 1987, D14.
3. *T-P*, 24 November 1987, F1, F8, 28 November 1987, D4.
4. *T-P*, 28 November 1987, B1, B2.
5. *T-P*, 29 November 1987, C1, C8, C9.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *T-P*, 1 February 1988, B2, 10 February 1988, E8.
8. *T-P*, 28 August 1988, B1, B6, 28 October 1988, A1, A4, 17 November 1988, B12.
9. *T-P*, 18 November 1988, B6.
10. *T-P*, 27 August 1988, B1, B2.
11. *T-P*, 28 August 1988, C11, 28 November 1988, C7.
12. *T-P*, 29 August 1988, C11, 28 November 1988, C7.
13. *T-P*, 22 November 1988, E1.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *T-P*, 27 November 1988, B1, B6.
16. *Ibid.*, C1, C8, C9.
17. *Ibid.*, B6.
18. *T-P*, 7 December 1988, D1, D2.
19. *T-P*, 13 December 1988, E1, E5.
20. *T-P*, 21 December 1988, B1, B2, 21 February 1989, B5.
21. *T-P*, 21 February 1989, C1, C5.

22. *T-P*, 7 March 1989, B1, B2, 8 March 1989, B1, B2, 9 March 1989, B8, 26 March 1989, A1, A5, 1 April 1989, B1, B2, B3, 23 July 1989, B1, 29 July 1989, B8, 30 July 1989, B4, 30 July 1989, C15, 1 August 1989, B8, 2 August 1989, B5.
23. *T-P*, 30 July 1989, C15.
24. *T-P*, 11 August 1989, B1, B2, 15 August 1989, A1, A6, 17 August 1989, B1, B2, 7 September 1989, B5.
25. *T-P*, 1 August 1989, E1, E4, 11 August 1989, D2.
26. *T-P*, 20 October 1989, D4, 18 November 1989, D1, D2.
27. *T-P*, 19 November 1989, C1, C11, C12.
28. *T-P*, 22 November 1989, B5.
29. *T-P*, 25 August 1990, D1, D5, 7 September 1990, B8, 20 November 1990, E8.
30. *T-P*, 19 August 1990, C1, C8, 5 September 1990, C4, 27 October 1990, D2, 20 November 1990, E1, E8, 23 November 1990, C1, C2.
31. *T-P*, 25 November 1990, C1, C11.
32. *T-P*, 17 April 1991, BB4, 2 May 1991, A1, A6, 2 June 1991, B5.
33. *T-P*, 26 November 1991, E1, E3, 28 November 1991, C1, C6.
34. *T-P*, 12 September 1991, C1, C8, 22 November 1991, D2.
35. The charges would persist, and students of both Grambling and Southern were frustrated by the problems. But as the Grambling student newspaper noted, "All these things notwithstanding, the Classic is still the Classic." *The Gramblinite*, 16 November 2000, 1; *T-P*, 4 October 1991, D3, 13 October 1991, C3, 30 November 1991, B1, B3.
36. *T-P*, 3 April 1991, D1, 29 November 1991, C3.
37. *T-P*, 30 November 1991, D2.
38. *T-P*, 1 December 1991, C1, C8.
39. *T-P*, 30 November 1991, D1, D2.
40. *T-P*, 1 December 1991, C1, C8.
41. *T-P*, 15 December 1991, C1, C5.
42. *T-P*, 11 January 1992, D1, D8, 12 January 1992, C3, 14 January 1992, E3, 16 January 1992, C1, C7, 19 January 1992, C5.
43. *T-P*, 25 May 1992, C3.
44. *T-P*, 11 September 1992, D1, D10, 13 September 1992, C13.
45. *T-P*, 24 November 1992, C2.
46. *T-P*, 24 November 1992, C2, 25 November 1992, D2.
47. *T-P*, 29 November 1992, C1, C10, C11.

11. Southern Renaissance, 1993–2000

1. *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (hereinafter cited as *T-P*), 19 December 1992, D1, D2, 1 September 1993, D1, D4. Citations used in this chapter are almost solely dependent upon the *Times-Picayune*. The *Baton Rouge Advocate*, the *Ruston Daily Leader*, the *Shreveport Times*, and the *Monroe News-Star* all carry similar accounts on similar dates, but to eliminate superfluous notation (and because the author used the *Times-Picayune* as his principal guide through the state's other accounts) the *Times-Picayune* is, with some exceptions, the paper of record for the chapter.

2. *T-P*, 7 January 1993, B4, 8 January 1993, B1, B2, 9 January 1993, B4.
3. *T-P*, 12 June 1993, B5.
4. *T-P*, 17 July 1993, B4, 24 July 1993, B5, 28 July 1993, A1, A12.

5. T-P, 1 September 1993, D1, D4, 20 October 1993, D1, D5, 23 October 1993, D1, D7, 23 November 1993, E4.
6. T-P, 4 November 1993, D1, 25 November 1993, C1, C9, 26 November 1993, C1, C2.
7. T-P, 29 November 1993, C1, C2.
8. T-P, 28 November 1993, C1, C11, 30 November 1993, E6.
9. T-P, 31 December 1993, D8, 2 January 1994, C11.
10. *The Gramblinite*, 2 December 1993, 8.
11. T-P, 26 November 1994, D1.
12. T-P, 24 November 1994, C1, C5.
13. T-P, 2 October 1994, C8, 25 November 1994, B1, 26 November 1994, A1, A6.
14. T-P, 27 November 1994, C1, C4, C13.
15. T-P, 21 October 1994, D1, D5, 27 August 1995, C11.
16. Along with the many tributes that came following Robinson's four hundredth win, the Grambling student newspaper issued a special edition, "One Coach, One Team, One Tradition: A Window Into the Life of Eddie Robinson." *The Gramblinite*, 12 October 1995, 4A, 6B, 8B; T-P, 27 August 1995, C12, 29 September 1995, D4, 6 October 1995, D1, D5, 8 October 1995, C1, C3.
17. T-P, 20 November 1995, C2.
18. T-P, 27 August 1995, C12, 20 November 1995, C2, 22 November 1995, F1, F5.
19. T-P, 25 November 1995, D1, D2.
20. *The Gramblinite*, 30 November 1995, 5, 6, 7, 8; T-P, 26 November 1995, C1, C11.
21. T-P, 26 November 1995, C11.
22. T-P, 30 December 1995, D1, D10, 8 June 1996, D8, 9 July 1996, E3, 8 August 1996, A8, 16 August 1996, A3, 24 August 1996, A3.
23. T-P, 26 November 1996, E3, 27 November 1996, F1, F3.
24. T-P, 25 August 1996, C15, C16, 20 September 1996, D4, 29 November 1996, C1, C8.
25. T-P, 5 September 1996, D1, 30 November 1996, A1, A24.
26. T-P, 29 November 1996, C1, C8; *New York Times*, 30 November 1996.
27. T-P, 1 December 1996, C1, C10, C11.
28. T-P, 10 December 1996, A1, A6, E1, E7, 11 December 1996, A1, A4, 12 December 1996, A1, A28, 13 December 1996, D1, 14 December 1996, A1, A10, 17 December 1996, A1, A3, A6.
29. T-P, 7 December 1996, A3, 8 January 1997, D1.
30. T-P, 10 January 1997, A2, 14 October 1997, A1, A7, 19 October 1997, A1, A20.
31. T-P, 1 August 1997, D1, D3, 16 November 1997, C12.
32. T-P, 24 November 1997, D1, D10.
33. T-P, 25 November 1997, E1, E4, 29 November 1997, B1, B2.
34. T-P, 30 November 1997, A1, A16, C1, C9, C10, C11.
35. *The Gramblinite*, 19 November 1998, 8; T-P, 11 October 1997, D3, D8, 13 November 1997, D1, D4, 2 December 1997, E1, E5, 4 December 1997, D4, 5 December 1997, A1, A11.
36. T-P, 5 September 1998, D3, D7.
37. T-P, 6 September 1998, C7, 29 November 1998, C1.
38. T-P, 25 August 1998, E1, E2, 29 November 1998, C1.
39. T-P, 28 November 1998, D1, D5.
40. T-P, 6 September 1998, C7, 29 November 1998, C11.
41. T-P, 29 November 1998, C1, C11, C12.
42. T-P, 29 November 1998, C11, 27 December 1998, C1, C4, C5.

43. *T-P*, 15 April 1999, D3.
44. *T-P*, 25 November 1999, C1, C7.
45. *T-P*, 24 November 1999, C4.
46. *T-P*, 24 November 1999, C1, C4, 26 November 1999, C5, 27 November 1999, D2.
47. *The Gramblinite*, 2 December 1999, 12; *T-P*, 28 November 1999, C1, C4, C5.
48. *T-P*, 27 November 1998, C6, 12 December 1999, C1, C7, 19 December 1999, C1, C4.
49. *T-P*, 21 September 2000, D2.
50. *T-P*, 14 October 2000, D7, 5 November 2000, C11, 20 November 2000, D2.
51. *T-P*, 12 November 2000, C11, 20 November 2000, D2.
52. *The Gramblinite*, 16 November 2000, 1.
53. *T-P*, 21 November 2000, E1, E8.
54. *T-P*, 20 November 2000, D1, D12.
55. *T-P*, 26 November 2000, C1, C10, C11.

12. And the Flood Waters Drove Them Away, 2001–2007

1. *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (hereinafter cited as *T-P*), 18 January 2001, A1, A6. Citations used in this chapter are almost solely dependent upon the *Times-Picayune*. The *Baton Rouge Advocate*, the *Ruston Daily Leader*, the *Shreveport Times*, and the *Monroe News-Star* all carry similar accounts on similar dates, but to eliminate superfluous notation (and because the author used the *Times-Picayune* as his principal guide through the state's other accounts) the *Times-Picayune* is, with some exceptions, the paper of record for the chapter.

2. *T-P*, 22 November 2001, B1; "SU Midshipmen Run 91-Mile Relay to Honor Military Service Members," *Southern Digest*, 21 November 2003, *Southern Digest Digital Archive*, www.southerndigest.com (hereinafter cited as Digital Archive).

3. *T-P*, 21 November 2001, C1, C3.

4. *T-P*, 29 September 2001, D4.

5. The season's inspiration went beyond the tragedy at the World Trade Center. On September 15, 2001, Paul "Tank" Younger, famed Grambling running back and linebacker, died. "Younger was big and fast like a tank," said Curtis Amand, one of Younger's Grambling teammates, "a jack-of-all-trade type who played running back and linebacker." *The Gramblinite*, 20 September 2001, 10; *New York Times*, 19 September 2001, C15; *T-P*, 21 November 2001, C1, C3.

6. *The Gramblinite*, 29 November 2001, 9, 10; *T-P*, 25 November 2001, C1, C8, C9.

7. Louisiana governor Mike Foster sent chief-of-staff Stephen Perry to negotiations, hoping to demonstrate to Classic officials the importance of the game not only to New Orleans, but to the state itself. *T-P*, 25 November 2001, C9; Niqueta Williams, "Governor Sends Chief of Staff to Aid in New Orleans Bayou Classic Bid," *Southern Digest*, 30 November 2001, Digital Archive; Gary Holloway, "Contract Up," *Southern Digest*, 16 November 2001, Digital Archive.

8. *T-P*, 12 December 2001, A2, 8 August 2002, A1, A7, 1 September 2002, C6, 27 November 2002, D1, D8, 28 November 2002, C1, C10.

9. *T-P*, 25 August 2002, C2, 1 September 2002, C5, 28 November 2002, C1, C10.

10. *T-P*, 16 November 2002, A1, A6.

11. *T-P*, 27 November 2002, D1, D8, 30 November 2002, D1, D6.

12. "All the G-Men can do is shake off the Su loss and the Su haters," reported *The Gramblinite*. *The Gramblinite*, 5 December 2002, 12; *T-P*, 1 December 2002, C1, C10, C11.

13. T-P, 1 December 2002, C10, C11.
14. T-P, 29 November 2004, B1.
15. T-P, 2 August 2003, SPORTS 3, 29 August 2003, SPORTS 26. Citation styles for 2003–2007 change, as the articles in use come from Lexis Nexus, which uses descriptive captions for section titles, rather than that section's letter designation.
16. T-P, 25 April 2003, SPORTS 7, 16 October 2003, SPORTS 4, 26 October 2003, SPORTS 11.
17. T-P, 29 April 2003, B1, 19 September 2003, A2, 3 October 2003, A3, 13 November 2003, A2, 30 November 2003, A1.
18. Kimberly Davis, "The Bayou Classic: Black America's Biggest Football Game: Grambling State and Southern Continue a 30-Year Tradition," *Ebony*, November 2003, 55–68; T-P, 18 November 2003, SPORTS 3, 25 November 2003, SPORTS 1.
19. T-P, 25 November 2003, B1, 29 November 2003, B1, SPORTS 1.
20. T-P, 25 November 2003, SPORTS 4, 27 November 2003, SPORTS 4.
21. T-P, 28 November 2003, SPORTS 1, 8, 29 November 2003, SPORTS 1.
22. T-P, 30 November 2003, SPORTS 1, 9.
23. "Bayou Classic Crowds Scattered By Gunfire, 2 Injured," *Southern Digest*, 2 December 2003, Digital Archive; T-P, 2 December 2003, B1.
24. T-P, 9 December 2003, A1, 10 December 2003, A1, 26 September 2004, B1.
25. T-P, 13 February 2004, SPORTS 1.
26. T-P, 16 July 2004, SPORTS 2.
27. T-P, 18 August 2004, A1.
28. T-P, 8 September 2004, SPORTS 7, 12 September 2004, SPORTS 12, 24 November 2004, SPORTS 8.
29. "The State Farm Bayou Classic: Black America's Biggest Football Game: An Enduring Tradition, Grambling State University vs. Southern University," *Ebony*, November 2004, 174–178; T-P, 12 September 2004, SPORTS 12, 14 November 2004, SPORTS 10, 23 November 2004, SPORTS 1, 24 November 2004, SPORTS 8, 26 November 2004, SPORTS 1, 27 November 2004, SPORTS 1.
30. T-P, 28 November 2004, SPORTS 1, 9.
31. T-P, 28 November 2004, A1, 29 November 2004, B1, 5 December 2004, A1.
32. See Douglas Brinkley, *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast* (New York: William Morrow, 2006); Jenni Bergal, Sara Shipley Hiles, Frank Koughan, John McQuaid, Jim Morris, Katy Reckdahl, and Curtis Wilke, *City Adrift: New Orleans Before and After Katrina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); Sally Forman, *Eye of the Storm: Inside City Hall During Katrina* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2007).
33. T-P, 1 September 2005, WEB EDITION, 99, www.nola.com.
34. T-P, 6 October 2005, SPORTS 1.
35. T-P, 8 September 2005, SPORTS 1.
36. T-P, 17 September 2005, SPORTS 1, 18 September 2005, SPORTS 1.
37. Their veil of secrecy was pierced somewhat in early September, when a memo from the Texas Southern Alumni Association president to various TSU alums noted the change, as it affected the date and time of their game against Prairie View. Nikki G. Bannister, "Next Bayou Classic Location Stirs Rumors," *Southern Digest*, 18 September 2005, Digital Archive; Nikki G. Bannister, "Houston Not Definite for Next Bayou Classic," *Southern Digest*, 28 September 2005, Digital Archive; T-P, 23 September 2005, C7.

38. T-P, 28 September 2005, C5, 29 September 2005, C10, 1 October 2005, C7.
39. T-P, 15 October 2005, SPORTS 9, 22 October 2005, SPORTS 4, 25 November 2005, SPORTS 1, 26 November 2005, SPORTS 1.
40. There was another new feature of the Bayou Classic in 2005, though it went without the national publicity of *College Gameday*. Planned in 2004 (and thus having nothing to do with the game's temporary move to Houston), the student newspapers of both schools, *The Gramblinite* and *Southern Digest*, began publishing an annual joint edition for the Bayou Classic. Venecia Gray, "History of SU/GSU Joint Issue," *Southern Digest*, 23 November 2007, Digital Archive; "ESPN, College Gameday to Broadcast into 90 Million Homes Live from Bayou Classic XXXII," *Southern Digest*, 21 November 2005, Digital Archive.
41. T-P, 27 November 2005, SPORTS 1.
42. T-P, 27 November 2005, SPORTS 11, 29 October 2006, B6.
43. T-P, 21 November 2006, SPORTS 6.
44. "Back to New Orleans: The Return of the State Farm Bayou Classic," *Ebony*, November 2006, 142–144; T-P, 25 November 2006, A1, SPORTS 1, 26 November 2006, SPORTS 9.
45. T-P, 25 November 2006, LIVING 1.
46. "SU Defense Comes Up Huge in 21–17 Bayou Classic Win," *Southern Digest*, 7 December 2006, Digital Archive; T-P, 26 November 2006, SPORTS 1, 7, 9.
47. T-P, 28 November 2006, B1, MONEY 1.
48. T-P, 5 April 2007, A1, B6, SPORTS 1, 6, 7, 8, 7 April 2007, SPORTS 8.
49. T-P, 10 April 2007, A1, 11 April 2007, SPORTS 1, 12 April 2007, A1.
50. T-P, 15 September 2007, A1.
51. T-P, 28 September 2007, SPORTS 9, 29 September 2007, SPORTS 4, 20 October 2007, SPORTS 8, 3 November 2007, SPORTS 8, 10 November 2007, SPORTS 8.
52. "NCAA Clears Gambling in Wide-Ranging Probe," Associated Press wire, 26 September 2007; *Monroe News-Star*, 27 March 2007, C1; T-P, 20 November 2007, SPORTS 1.
53. As of the close of the 2008 season, Spears's breach-of-contract lawsuit had yet to go to trial. In early 2009, Spears's request for a pretrial ruling was denied, leaving the case open for trial. As of 2010, however, events remained at a standstill. "Trial Due for Fired Gambling State Coach," Associated Press wire, 3 February 2009; *Monroe News-Star*, 27 March 2007, C1; "Rod Broadway Takes Gambling State Job," Associated Press wire, 19 January 2007; T-P, 20 November 2007, SPORTS 1.
54. T-P, 21 November 2007, SPORTS 1, 22 November 2007, SPORTS 5, 25 November 2007, SPORTS 13.
55. T-P, 25 November 2007, A1, SPORTS 1, 12, 13.

Epilogue: Yes We Can, 2008

1. Michael Hurd, "Collie J": *Grambling's Man with the Golden Pen* (Haworth, NJ: St. Johann Press, 2007), 182.
2. John DeShazier, "Gambling Smothers Southern in Bayou Classic," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 28 November 2009, www.nola.com/bayouclassic/index.ssf/2009/11/grambling_smothers_southern_in.html.
3. John DeShazier, "Southern might have tough time finding the next Pete Richardson," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 9 December 2009, www.nola.com/bayouclassic/index.ssf/2009/12/southern_might_have_tough_time.html.

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