

SPORTS OF THE WORLD

BY MARION E. JACKSON



Prairie View is the undisputed mythical national Negro champions as a result of its impressive 26-8 conquest of Florida A&M. The Rattlers were up against the jinx of no team having repeated as U. S. titlists two years in a row since Eddie Hurt's Morgan State eleven turned the trick in the Thirties. A great number of Atlantans were in W. J. Nicks Sr.'s corner despite obviously loyalty to the SIAC's A. S. Gaiher and FAMU. Prairie View won the national title in 1953 beating Florida A&M 33-27 in the Orange Blossom Classic.

PV posted an overall 9-0-1 record. There were critics who contended that the Panthers couldn't claim the title on account they hadn't played but one non-loop foe in Mississippi Vocational. These pundits railed out Grambling College and Jackson State as loop foes since the two schools weren't eligible for the Southwestern Conference title.

Grambling and Jackson State will be eligible for loop honors with the current basketball season. The lone blight on Prairie View's record was a 14-14 tie with Jackson State.

Here is the national championship team's record for '58:

PRAIRIE VIEW

14	.....	Jackson State	.....	14
26	.....	Texas Southern	.....	19
44	.....	Grambling	.....	4
37	.....	Arkansas State	.....	13
43	.....	Texas College	.....	0
48	.....	Miss. Vocational	.....	19
13	.....	Wiley College	.....	0
20	.....	Southern	.....	14
20	.....	Florida A. & M.	.....	8

Coach Nicks censured the football rating experts during his stay in Miami. He believed that some unfair tactics had been used against his team in not judging them national champions on the basis of regular season play. He took newspapermen to task for what he termed a farce in billing the Orange Blossom Classic yearly as a national championship game when it was purely a post-season exhibition fight or wrong, Coach Nick, is entitled to his views. However, take it from this writer, the newspapers have never been in collusion with anyone to decide a national championship.

It seems to me, that if one is to decry the promotional gimmicks used to build crowds for the Orange Blossom Classic, it seems to me that some objections ought to have been made some years ago. In the

past decade since I have been covering the Classic I have seen North Carolina College, Virginia State, Maryland State, Prairie View, Grambling and Tennessee State play in the Orange Blossom Classic — all with unbeaten records — and not a single one of the coaches uttered a single outcry against the publicity hallyhooping the game.

If anyone is to end this silly symphony over the national championship it ought to be coaches. They ought to join the sportswriters, through the support of their conferences, in deciding that the national championship will be recognized on the basis of regular season play.

I don't think it wise to entrust such vast powers to sportswriters. As it has happened the past few years, the sole judgment of the U.S. championship has been left to Eric (Rie) Roberts of the Pittsburgh Courier staff. To show you how flimsy this standard is one should check the records and see that Roberts is not on the Courier's regular payroll but is a mere contributing writer.

The Associated Negro Press for several years has based its selection on regular season play. Prairie View was announced as champion by Luix Virgil Overbea a week ago but here again is a paradox. For Overbea is on the staff of the Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel.

For years, most newspapers have gone along with Roberts' yardstick. It was not because of the genuineness of his yardstick, but for the reason there were no protests from the men who had the most to gain and lose: the coaches.

A year ago, Wiley College won 10 games while tying one. The lone stalemate was a 19-19 stalemate with Mississippi Vocational. Here's how the Wildcats finished the '57

campaign:

WILEY COLLEGE

40	.....	Bishop	.....	0
12	.....	Texas Southern	.....	6
20	.....	Arkansas State	.....	0
40	.....	Grambling	.....	12
46	.....	Alcorn A. and M.	.....	7
19	.....	Miss. Vocational	.....	10
21	.....	Langston	.....	7
24	.....	Southern	.....	20
40	.....	Texas College	.....	20
14	.....	Prairie View	.....	20
78	.....	Mexico Academy	.....	6

When the season climaxed we waited for some comment from Fred T. Long and the Southwest newspaper's. There was echoing silence from the sportswriters. No comment from the Southwestern Conference. Here again, Roberts and the Courier boomed unbeaten Florida A. and M. for the title. Apparently, the only thing that gave the Wildcats a setback was the 19-19 tie with Mississippi Vocational.

In 1951, when Morris Brown lost only to Tennessee State 13-12, we didn't allow the pollsters to get away with it. When Overbea tried to launch a boom for N. C. A. & T. as national champions, we quickly put a spear into the trial balloon and shot it down. And at the same time we leveled a blast at Roberts' ratings. When the smoke had winged away MBC had the prize.

If our coaches are dissatisfied with the "system" which has handed out the U. S. championships, they ought to do something about it. However, I warn against going back to the spoils system of the past which saw two of three national champions based on conference play.

Finally, if the coaches are going to leave the selection of the mythical national champions to the sportswriters, then they are going to have to trust the integrity of these men. Sportswriters are not for sale on the ethical auction block. Neither are they willing to play favorites.

I sincerely hope that Coach W. J. Nicks, Sr., and the men who work with him in the Southwest Conference will understand that the sportswriters are as dedicated in their labor as the coaches. There are a few charlatans in every profession but the challenge of excellence quickly weeds them out. The same premise that exists in coaching parallels that of coaching: the good ones stay in business and succeed and the unworthy eliminate themselves.

Prairie View has proved itself a worthy champion in winning the Southwest and national championships. Through the years, Coach Nicks has been an organizer, a skilled judge of talent, and an all-time winning coach.

However, he should not see fury in the action of men who are doing the very best they can. The sportswriters need some assistance in blueprinting a program for determining an undisputed national champion, and it's high time that our coaches and conferences provide just such a plan and assistance in implementing it.

However, I must warn that the determining factor won't be easy. Florida A. and M. could still claim a national championship despite the Orange Blossom Classic unless the calibre of SIAC and CIAA competition improves. Florida A. and M. has played N. C. College and N. C. A. and T. in the CIAA, but hasn't lost to either in regular season play. A. and T. won 20-14 in the OB Classic. The teams tied 7-7 in '51 and 28-28 in '55.

Florida A. and M. hasn't lost a game in the SIAC since 1952 when Bethune-Cookman turned the trick 3-7. Southern hadn't won over FAMU since '54 until the Jaguar Cats triumphed 35-6 last fall.

Prairie View lost two regular season games to the Rattlers in 1952 (10-7) and 1954 (19-7) so have pity on the poor scribes who must wrestle with this mythical situation.