



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Tiger Football HISTORY



The first edition of the Tiger Football team hit the field six months after the 50th Legislature of Texas formally created the Texas State University for Negroes. That was in September 1947.

But to get a better picture of Texas Southern University's first football team, you must go back one full year to September 1946. That's when the predecessor to TSU, Houston College for Negroes, fielded its first inter-collegiate football team...which had a mascot known as the Tigers.

Even further before Houston College, there was Houston Colored Junior College. That educational institution worked with Wiley College of Marshall to play football in the late twenties and early thirties.

Following Houston College's move to the present 62 acre tract in 1946, E.V. Rettig and the Tigers recorded a record of 4-2-3 in its first season as an independent. In the first year of competition as Texas State, Rettig and a team of mostly Houston schoolboys went 7-3-0. In Rettig's final season, the Tigers went 0-5-2.

Coach Alexander Durley was given the ball as TSU's second head football coach. He was highly successful at Texas College in Tyler, and his new challenge was to overhaul the athletic program and turn it into a first rate collegiate power.

Durley planned to bring the young school into the highly regarded Southwestern Athletic Conference, but this goal was delayed six years. Meanwhile, the Tigers played in the Midwestern Athletic Conference from 1951 to 1955. Durley's 1952 team captured the school's first championship with a 10-0-1 record. All-American quarterback Audrey Ford (21 TDs) and halfback Edward Smith (1,087 yards) led the Tigers in defeating such modern day opponents as Grambling (46-16), Alcorn State (19-0), Jackson State (20-6) and Bishop (85-0). The Tigers tied against Lincoln University of Missouri (13-13). TSU claimed title to the National Negro Championship with a 13-12 victory over Prairie View in the annual Prairie View Bowl. Lincoln was the other undefeated Black team in the nation. The 1952 Team's 10-0-1 record still stands as the best in TSU history.

TSU joined the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) in 1956, and promptly earned a co-championship with Wiley. Durley was the head coach for 15 years (1949 to 1964) and compiled a 101-54-7 record, including the 1952 national championship and the SWAC co-title.

The next five years would belong to Clifford Paul, the third head coach to lead the Tiger football program. He massed a record of 26-18-4 from 1965 through 1969, capturing Tri-championships in 1966 and 1968 along the way.

Paul's assistant, Al Benefield took the helm in 1970 as the fourth football coach at TSU. Benefield lasted one season, with a record of 6-3-0...good enough for third place in the conference.

Rod Paige became the fifth TSU mentor in September 1971 and went on to compile a 7-2-1 record in his first year of competition. Following the 1975 season, Paige resigned his football coaching duties to devote full time as athletic director.

Wendell Mosley, a former Tiger who played football for Coach Alexander Durley, became the sixth TSU head coach in 1976. In three seasons, he earned a record of 11-20-2.

James Sorey, a defensive coordinator under Mosley, was named the seventh head coach in the 34-year history of the athletic football program. In two seasons, he compiled a 5-17-0 record.

In 1981, Joe Redmond was hired to revamp a Tiger squad that compiled a combined 20-43-4 recorded in the previous six seasons. TSU's eighth coach finished his three seasons at 9-20-3.



Lionel Taylor came to TSU after enjoying an outstanding career at New Mexico Highlands University and playing stints in the NFL. Taylor became the ninth head football coach of the Tigers. He brought a new excitement to the TSU football program with his deployment of a wide-open offense. His overall record stands at 13-41-1.

In 1989, TSU turned to Walter Highsmith, a former Houston Oiler football player. The tenth coach of

Tigers put the team on the road to recovery. Highsmith improved his squad's record, season after season, during the first four years of his reign. His tenure ended in 1993 with an overall record of 19-34-2.

William "Bill" Thomas enjoyed 10 seasons as the head football coach of the Tigers...the longest reign at TSU since Alexander Durley in 40's, 50's and 60's. Thomas was the eleventh head coach of the Tigers. His best season was in 1996 when the team finished 7-4-0 and tied for second place in the SWAC. That was the best overall finish for the university since 1971, and the best conference finish in 29 years. The 2000 season was another highlight year for Thomas. His 8-3-0 record, earned a third place finish in the conference.

The Texas Southern Tigers are now in a new era of its football history. Steve Wilson became the twelfth head coach of the Tigers in 2004. He came to TSU after compiling a 78-67-0 record, in 13 seasons at Howard University. Expect TSU football history to be rewritten under this talented, energetic and dynamic coach.