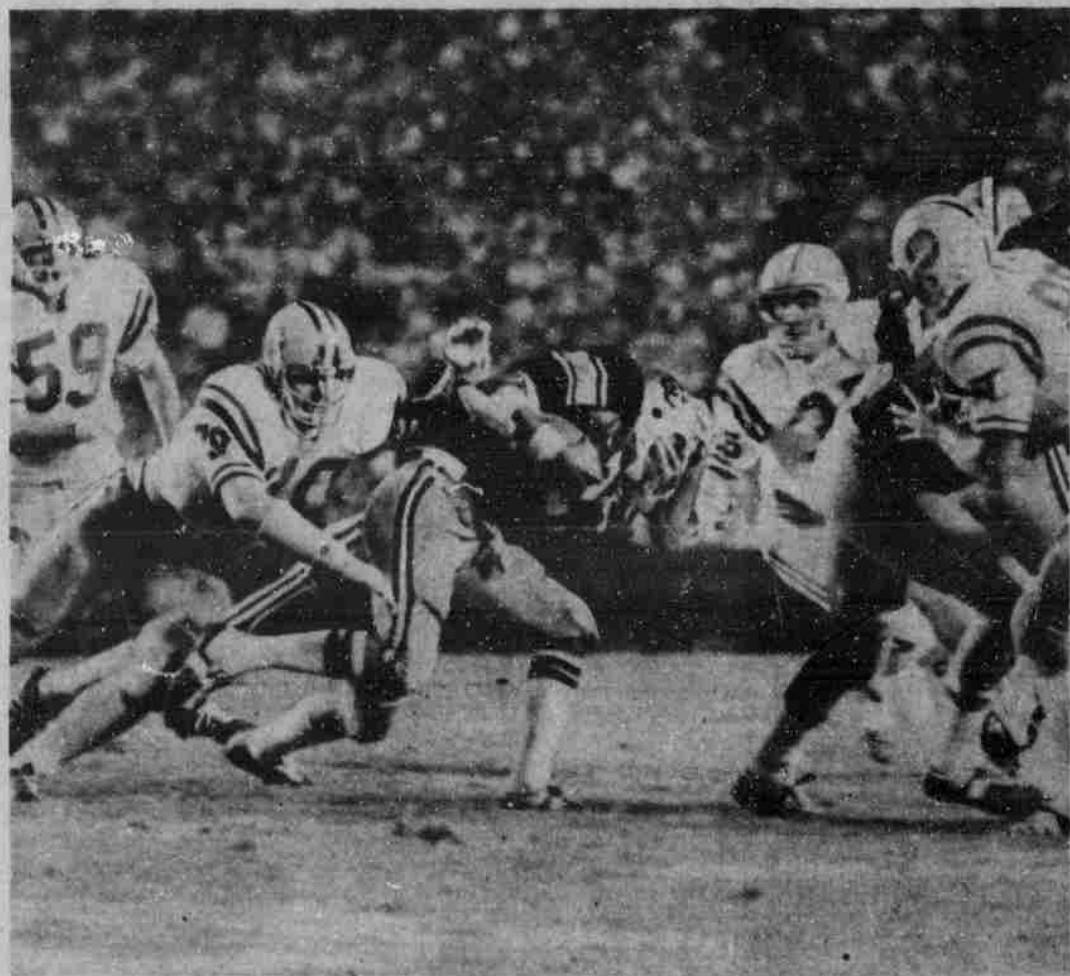


LSU: Tough defense, inexperienced offense



photos and story
by Richard Tucker

By Richard Tucker, Sports Editor
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Following years as a perennial bowl team, Louisiana State (LSU) fans were horrified when the Tigers, after blasting Colorado in the season opener, literally fumbled to a 5-5-1 record last year.

Attempted suicides in Baton Rouge were up, liquor sales sky-rocketed and disenchantment grew with the newly installed veer offense. The veer, similar to the run-oriented wishbone, resulted in so many fumbles that the bouncing football had some spectators thinking basketball season had started.

While the off-season lifted many of the clouds which had hung over the Tigers, graduation took its toll leaving in its wake an inexperienced team.

With only 32 returning lettermen, three offensive and five defensive starters, the Tigers must rank as one of the youngest teams in the nation. Facing them is one of the toughest schedules in recent years, featuring Nebraska, Alabama, Texas A&M, Florida and Tennessee. As a result, forecasters have not been kind to the Tigers, predicting a won-loss record of about 6-5.

Veer abandoned

Coach Charles McClendon, entering his 14th year as the Tiger mentor, has abandoned the veer for the I-formation. The I-formation was until last year, the traditional offense at LSU.

Problems of utmost importance facing McClendon are producing a passing quarterback and strengthening the offensive line—two areas which hurt the Tigers last season.

Candidates for the quarterbacking position include four sophomores with a grand total of ten-plays varsity experience.

Chances are the quarterbacking will be alternated between two players, as McClendon has practiced for nearly ten years. This year, Pat Lyons and Bobby Moreau should alternate.

Revamping the offensive line is also necessary. While several lettermen are available for the line, McClendon must find the right blocking combinations to make the offense go.

Running behind that blocking will be a young but talented backfield. Top prospects include tailback Terry Robiski and fullback Harrison Francis. Carl Otis Trimble, quarterback last season, has been moved to splitback while Charles Alexander, a freshman speedster, could join the starting lineup.

If the offense can generate any fire-power, the Bengals will be in business, since the defense should rank as one of the best in the Southeastern Conference.

All-American possibles Steve Cassidy and Adam Duhe, both defensive tackles will be the heart of a defense which promises to be tough against the pass and even tougher against the rush.

Despite the graduation losses, the Tiger defense should continue the tradition of outstanding defense at LSU.

All in all, the Tigers will depend heavily on the defense in the early stages of the 1975 season while the offense reorganizes.

Louisiana State will bring a young and inexperienced team into Lincoln, and only time will tell how well and how quickly the Tigers will mature.