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Jerry Izenberg

Jerry Izenberg (b. 1930) learned his first serious lessons in sportswriting from Stanley Woodward, arguably the greatest sports editor ever, and then he went out and practiced them. (Rule No. 1, according to Woodward: "Stop godding up the athletes.") Izenberg broke in as a reporter at the *Newark Star-Ledger*, followed the authority-challenging Woodward to the *New York Herald Tribune*, and returned to Newark in 1962 to write a column for the next half century. Izenberg was tireless, pugnacious, trusted by the people who counted in sports, and the possessor of a finely tuned social conscience that some editors weren't ready for in a time of freedom marches and antiwar demonstrations. Case in point: his 1967 story on Grambling, a small black college in Louisiana that was then sending some large talent to the NFL. Izenberg wrote the story for *The Saturday Evening Post* only to see a top editor there shoot it down. But he bounced back by taking the story to *True* magazine, where it found a home and went on to be selected for publisher E. P. Dutton's annual *Best Sports Stories* anthology and to inspire the groundbreaking ABC documentary *Grambling: 100 Yards to Glory*.

A Whistle-Stop School with Big-Time Talent

It is not an easy place to find. Once a day, a train will wheeze to a coughing stop next to the deserted wooden depot if you get the flagman to go out on the tracks and stop it. But the train won't take you anywhere except deeper into the heart of sharecropper country.

If you are lucky and plan well, you can go by airplane. Coming from New York, your plane will stop at Birmingham, Alabama, and Jackson, Mississippi, and when it touches down at Shreveport, Louisiana, you will still be an hour and a half away.

But the men who scout the colleges for America's 25 major-league pro football teams know the way. This fall, as they have done every year since a man named Eddie Kotal first played pathfinder back in 1947, they will climb into their rented cars at the Shreveport airport and drive 61 miles east into the red clay country and pull off the highway at Grambling, Louisiana (population: 3,600). Grambling is one of the few all-Negro incorporated towns in the United States. Years ago

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it was a sawmill town but the mill is long since gone. Today the town has no major industry, no office buildings and no motels. But it fronts the campus of Grambling College and some of the Grambling students have had a harder time getting there than the scouts. The length of their journey and the new road they hope it will open for them cannot be measured in terms of highway markers.

Mostly the students come from the hard, bedrock country of northern Louisiana or from the teeming cosmopolis which is Greater New Orleans, some 300-odd miles to the south. Some have made the long trek from the dark ghettos of Houston, Dallas and Birmingham and some from the mule-and-a-cabin sharecropper plots which ring the Mississippi Delta. When you ask members of the football team about themselves, you learn almost casually that most of their parents will live their entire lives without ever having earned more than $3,000 in a single year.

The thing which brings them to Grambling is a get-away dream and its vehicle is the promise of the affluent world of professional football. Among the Negro kids who play segregated high-school football in the Deep South, the word has been out for 20 years now: the logical starting point is Grambling College, where a slender, determined 47-year-old coach named Eddie Robinson recruits his team like a psychologist, runs his practice sessions like a paratroop jump-master and guards his players' rights like Clarence Darrow.

Together, Grambling College and Eddie Robinson broke through the amber light professional football used to hold up for all Negroes and the red one it displayed to kids from all-Negro colleges. Today Grambling honor graduates can be seen operating summa cum laude on television screens all over America any fall Sunday. People like Willie Davis of the Packers and Ernie Ladd of Houston; Junious Buchanan of Kansas City and Roosevelt Taylor of the Bears; Mike Howell of the Browns and Willie Williams of the Oakland Raiders.

The list is long and you have to move fast to update it because from last year's team, one of the poorest Robinson has ever had in won-lost records (6-2-1), eight more players signed professional contracts.

Since he sent his first kid off to challenge pro football's then antiquated racial policy, Robinson has seen more than 60 sign with professional teams in both the United States and Canada. Last year, for example, the National League alone had 11, more than it had from

UCLA or Texas or Alabama. This year 32 Grambling players reported to pro football training camps in the NFL, AFL and Canada.

Today every professional roster is dotted with players from all-Negro colleges like Florida A&M, Jackson State, Prairie View, Morgan State, Maryland State, Tennessee State and Southern U., to name just a few. The scouts know them all now and the underground railway they provide for kids with little hope of otherwise obtaining equal job opportunities grows each year.

But in the beginning, there was only Grambling and Robinson, then a neophyte coach, plus a man by the name of Dr. Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones, who was and still is the school president. There was also a yellowed old newspaper clipping which somehow found its way to the front office of the Los Angeles Rams.

That was in 1947 and the impact which an insurgent league called the All-America Conference would have on the employment of Negro football players had not yet made itself felt on the old guard National League. Kenny Washington, who should have had the shot when he was younger, was dragging his aching legs through the tail end of his career as the Rams' showpiece (and only) Negro performer.

And then somebody sent Kenny Washington the clipping from a Negro newspaper which told about a young fullback named Paul Younger who had scored 25 touchdowns in a single season for a school called Grambling. Washington took the clipping to Eddie Kotal, the Rams' chief scout.

"I had never heard of Grambling much less of Paul Younger," Kotal, now retired, recalled recently, "but I could multiply and 25 times six is still 150 points and I don't care if a guy scores them against The Little Sisters of the Poor. I got me a plane ticket and a road map and I went down to see that boy play."

Paul "Tank" Younger was out of Ruston, Louisiana, which is the nearest sizeable town to Grambling. By a strange coincidence, his family had moved to Los Angeles several years earlier. Younger stayed behind and was raised by Doctor Jones right on the Grambling campus. Like all Grambling football players, he was large and hungry and the first time Eddie Robinson ever saw him in a football uniform he marked him down as a tackle. It was a natural mistake because Younger looked as though he should be up front where he could knock people down.

But it could have been a costly mistake because the only player who could possibly attract enough attention to make pro football change its racial ways would surely have to be a boy who ran with the ball. And if Eddie Robinson hadn't tried to teach Paul Younger a lesson one afternoon, all of this might have begun somewhere else. Eddie Robinson got the message in the middle of a punt-return drill.

This is a basic football exercise in which a kicker lofts a high spiral at a group of backs who are waiting for it in a column of twos. The receiver is immediately rushed by a pair of large linemen. On this afternoon, Tank Younger dutifully thundered downfield and made his tackle but instead of rejoining the other serfs, he hid behind the remaining backs. When the next kick arched downfield, Younger elbowed the other receivers aside, slipped in front, caught the ball and returned it unmolested.

"You simply cannot allow that kind of foolishness at practice and expect to get things done," Robinson says, "so I called the linemen together and I told them we were going to straighten this out right now. If Younger wanted to play games, we'd let him. I told them to run down under that next kick and bust him up but good."

Thunk went the ball, down went the tackles, and then Paul Younger was running and laughing at the same time and both linemen were rolling on the ground with acute knee problems.

"Dammit," Robinson said, feeling a great deal of heat beginning to spread under the collar of his sweat shirt, "do it again." *Thunk, bang, ouch*. Exit two more linemen.

"I went home that night," Robinson recalls, "and I said to myself 'Man, you got to be the world's biggest dope. You are going to kill every lineman you got just to prove a point and Old Tank Younger has already proved one for you. That boy has got to be a back.' "

Which is how that yellowed newspaper clipping had its genesis. Switched to the backfield, Tank Younger scored 60 touchdowns in three seasons and Eddie Kotal (who went down to see him play four times) knew the school song by heart before Younger graduated.

In June of 1948, Kotal, Younger, Doctor Jones and Robinson began to rewrite athletic and social history on a lonely road between Grambling and Ruston. They rode around in Doctor Jones' old car and they talked salary terms and when they finally returned to the campus several hours later, they had begun to bury an incredibly shortsighted

professional football myth. For the first time the pros were going to offer a kid from an all-Negro college a chance to play football for a living.

Kotal remembers leaving Grambling with Eddie Robinson's parting remark still fresh in his mind. "Just give him the ball in practice," Robinson had said. "You make sure they get to see him run and then stop worrying because nobody is going to cut that boy off your squad."

They gave Tank Younger the ball and he became an All-Pro. Then they took it away from him and played him on defense and he was an All-Pro there as well. By that time other scouts from other teams were on their way South to put their organizations into the 20th century. Nobody had to wait for the new day dawning after that. Grambling had set the thing in motion.

And when CBS and NBC poured thousands of dollars and millions of decibels into advertising what they called "Super Sunday—the Super Bowl Showdown," Dr. Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones, a small gray-haired man of 62 with rimless glasses, flew out to Los Angeles last January to see it.

In the first half, he saw Junious Buchanan (Grambling '64), a magnificent 6-7, 285-pound tackle, play brilliant football as Kansas City stunned people all over the country by dinging within striking distance of heavily favored Green Bay. In the second half, he saw Willie Davis (Grambling '58) come thundering in from his defensive end position to raise great bruises on Len Dawson, the KC quarterback. And at intermission, he saw the world's fastest-stepping college musical aggregation, the Grambling Tiger Marching Band, steal the half-time show away from a cast of hundreds without straining a single grace note.

"It was," Doctor Jones said afterwards, "a very nice afternoon for all of us."

It had taken a long time for Grambling to get there. In 1936, Doctor Jones became the college's second president. He took over a school with 120 students, six frame buildings and a mountain of debts.

Under Doctor Jones the school has grown to a dazzling collection of colonial brick buildings on a 380-acre campus with 4,000 full-time students (roughly one-third male) and a 70,000-volume library. It is fully state supported, offers several different degrees and supplies more than half the teachers for Louisiana's still heavily segregated school systems.

But in the beginning, Doctor Jones not only taught and administered, he also coached football, basketball and baseball. In 1941, with great reluctance, he gave up coaching football and basketball. He kept baseball, however, and Tommie Agee, the American League's rookie of the year in 1966 with the Chicago White Sox, is a Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones player. So 1941 becomes a very large year in Grambling history. It was the year in which Doctor Jones hired a young man named Eddie Robinson.

As a kid, Eddie Robinson had played segregated high-school football in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and spent a brief period haunting the local gym because "I figured all I needed was a little training and I could be a regular Joe Louis and go out and conquer the world." His widowed mother insisted that he go to college and since Leland, a now defunct Baptist school, was handy in nearby Baker, Louisiana, geography suddenly brought him into contact with the man who gave him a direction.

Leland did not have a very good football team. For three years, Eddie Robinson was its 170-pound tailback and nobody was much impressed. But when classes recessed at the conclusion of Robinson's junior year, a man named Rubin Turner hit town. Eddie Robinson had just been elected football captain and he had taken a job on the ice wagon for three dollars a week that summer to raise the money for his fall school clothes.

"Turner hit that town like a hurricane," Eddie Robinson says. "He was a preacher. But he wasn't just any preacher. Man, he was *the* preacher. When he got to preachin' there just wasn't anyone could touch him. He could outpreach you and outdance you and outtalk you and outjoke you and, if he had to, he could outfight you.

"One day I came home from work and my mother said that Mr. Turner was the new football coach at Leland and that he wanted me to take a trip with him that summer looking for football players.

"I told her that I needed my job and that I wasn't going to go off on some crazy trip but she just looked me in the eye and she told me that yes I was because Reverend Turner knew what was right for me and he was such a nice man and she had already packed my bag. And right there I learned a little something about recruiting which I never forgot. If you want a boy badly enough and if you think he is right for

your school, then just you never mind about that boy. You go out and sell his momma and if you convince that fine lady, well, you aren't going to lose many prospects."

So Eddie Robinson piled his stuff into Reverend Turner's old Chevy and they set off on an 800-mile trip through cities and over dirt roads and past one-store towns like New Iberia, Delhi and Tallulah. In Eddie Robinson's words, "that old boy just kept selling Leland College to all those parents and little by little he was putting together a football team."

In between stops he preached to Eddie Robinson about the role of the pencil and the notebook in football, something which Negro college football, for the most part, had sadly neglected.

Then one day, on a muddy road near a small town named Jennings, Rubin Turner stopped the car, turned to Eddie Robinson and said:

"Son, up 'til now we've been living with the alumni and gettin' a little help from those good people. But we don't have any more money now and we don't have any alumni in this town and I am going to have to hold a little prayer meeting tonight. You," he said, "are going to lead the prayers."

At first, Robinson flatly refused but then at first (still sulking about the new school clothes this trip would cost him) he had also refused to address potential football candidates. "But after three days," Robinson remembers, "he had me makin' those damned stump speeches all by myself and I got so good I began to believe them." So Rubin Turner held his prayer meeting and he spoke about the good Christian upbringing at Leland College and the next thing he knew, Eddie Robinson was right up there in front leading the prayers.

Rubin Turner got his football team and with Eddie Robinson throwing the passes from his tailback position, Leland won its conference championship. The rest of 1940 was the best of possible years for Eddie Robinson and the glow carried on through the spring of '41. He married Doris Lamott, his childhood sweetheart. Then he graduated and all of a sudden he realized what year it was and where he was and that nobody in Louisiana was rushing out to hire Negro college graduates. He went to work in a Baton Rouge feed mill, loading 150-pound sacks. Reverend Turner's lessons on the value of the pencil in football didn't mean much to him then. The Robinsons did not have the price of too many pencils.

But Doris Lamott's aunt was a student at Grambling and when she learned that Doctor Jones was thinking of giving up his duties as football coach, she marched into his office and told him about her nephew.

"l knew the boy," Doctor Jones says. "He had shown great self-control when a boy named Riley Smith dropped a touchdown pass he had thrown against us the year before." ("The reason I didn't holler at Riley Smith," Eddie Robinson will tell you, "is because I was mad enough to kill him if I got started.")

Doctor Jones went down to Webb's Barbershop on 13th Street in Baton Rouge where Eddie Robinson used to spend his free hours. He asked a lot of questions about him and then he called Robinson and hired him.

Except for the Robinsons, who immediately began to eat better, the rest of the state took little note of the change. Robinson was eager and young and bursting to put Rubin Turner's theories to the test. The results were, to say the least, discouraging. Grambling did not win a single game that season and in the faculty dining room one noon, Eddie Robinson heard one of his co-teachers ask Doctor Jones:

"President Jones, when are you going to fire that man? No man can coach football with a pencil."

"I'm not going to fire him," Doctor Jones said. "He will be so good one of these days that he will probably be here longer than either of us."

The following year, Robinson won every game. (Ironically, this has been his only undefeated season despite the fact that his teams have won 162 games, lost only 63 and tied 11.) Then the war came along and Grambling dropped intercollegiate football. But Robinson had that pencil in the back of his mind and when the school put in a high-school unit, he had the boys playing intramural ball. (Many of them would ultimately move to the college varsity later.) He also had the girls playing touch football. And he spent long nights through those years, diagramming and refining and diagramming all over again.

His first postwar team was 5-5. Then Tank Younger became a back and Robinson was 9-1 the following year. Meanwhile Doctor Jones, scraping in every direction to get the funds Grambling required, still managed to find the money to send Robinson off to the major national coaching clinics.

"It was embarrassing," Eddie recalls. "We'd have to introduce ourselves and I'd say I was from Grambling and they'd all laugh and call it Gambling or Grumbling or something like that and I'd say to myself 'go ahead and laugh, damn you. Give me a couple of years and we'll see who's laughing.'"

At the University of Iowa in 1947, Eddie Robinson, who was finishing up some credits for his masters in the off-season, walked into a national coaching clinic where Frank Carideo, the old Notre Damer, was speaking about the Michigan single wing. After 10 minutes, Robinson raised his hand and said: "No, you don't do it that way."

"Who are you?" Eddie Anderson, who was then the Iowa football coach, asked.

"I'm, well, I coach Grambling College."

"Oh," Doctor Anderson said. "Really? Well, perhaps you would like to tell us how the formation is run."

Slowly at first and then with a great firmness as his embarrassment died, Eddie Robinson explained it step-by-step. Afterward Anderson approached him and asked him where Grambling was and what type of football they played. He asked for some films. With great trepidation, Eddie Robinson asked Doris to mail him some game films immediately.

"I had to show them to the coaches in that class," Robinson remembers, "and they were supposed to criticize them. I was a Negro coach and I felt they were waiting to tear me apart. I knew the quality of our films was poor alongside of what they were used to seeing. And then, as I was threading the projector, I said to myself 'maybe I'm in too deep. Maybe I talk too much. Maybe they are going to laugh.' And then I flipped the switch and there was good old Paul Younger running back a kick and the interference was chopping the other people down and Doctor Anderson yelled:

"Stop the film. Stop it right there. Gentlemen, you have just seen a classic demonstration of how a man is supposed to run with a football."

That was when Robinson realized that he must be doing a pretty good job. But not good enough. Rubin Turner's theories had paid off with Tank Younger and, while Grambling won and kept on winning, the pros were not signing up Grambling players. Something was lacking and the coach decided he had better find out what it was.

"College coaches won't like this," he says candidly, "but the pros do it all the best. That's what they're paid to do." So Robinson started trying to get some pros to help him out.

The first pro to join Grambling's corps of volunteer consultants was Dub Jones. He had been one of the best pass receivers in football history. Since Jones lived in nearby Ruston, Eddie Robinson had followed his career with great interest. Jones has a lumber business and one day in 1953, Robinson drove over to Ruston, and asked him if he would help with spring practice at Grambling.

Jones is white and a native Louisianan. He realized that Robinson's request was quite unusual. But he didn't hesitate. He was delighted to help coach the Negro team.

The big Browns end came over to practice and mostly he planned to work with the receivers. The results were immediate. More important, every time he showed a boy something, he would look up and there would be Eddie Robinson at his elbow saying, "When you get a minute, Dub, let's talk." By the time Jones left to rejoin the Browns, Robinson had absorbed most of the Cleveland system.

"Eddie Robinson," Dub Jones said in a New York hotel last year, "works harder than the average coach. First, he has to do more coaching. Most of the kids he gets do not have the grounding in fundamentals because Negro youngsters playing high-school ball in the South do not get the quality coaching the white kids do. But he gets them big. He gambles on their size. He works with them and he makes them go. Football is an emotional game. The boy with the most desire makes it. The Negro boy has that desire and he has the hunger. Given the chance, he'll make good.

"And Eddie... well, Eddie Robinson could coach anywhere... at any school... and with any kind of kid."

Dub Jones was the first but not the only pro to have his brain pumped by Eddie Robinson. Many of the others have been Grambling graduates. Their coach reminds them that they have a debt to pay and they are glad to pay it. Many pro players from Grambling finish up their degrees after their pro careers have already started, so they are on campus studying during spring practice.

Robinson gets them out on the field. There you can hear Junious Buchanan explaining, "On the rush, you know, you just don t blow the man over. You learn to read the play. What you do is sort of

immobilize him on the first blow and then you have time to hold up a second and see what's happening."

You can hear Willie Davis on the trap play: "If you don't feel pressure coming at you, it's a trap. So then you turn and trap the trapper and drive him back onto that hole and bust that play."

Of course, it's not all coaching. No matter how many pros Robinson had helping him, he still wouldn't turn out winning teams if he didn't have winning material. And to get winning material, you have to recruit. Eddie Robinson is a top recruiter. The lessons he learned from Rubin Turner stayed with him.

A good example is Ernie Ladd, a Grambling All-Pro now with the Houston Oilers. He was a young giant as a high-school senior in Orange, Texas. His uncle, Garland Boyette, was at Grambling. He and Ladd would play on Robinson's 1960 team, the showpiece of all Grambling football teams, a fantastic collection of talent which won nine of 10 games and which produced 11 professional football players. But when Boyette told Robinson about Ladd, every school in Grambling's Southwestern Athletic Conference was already after him.

Robinson sent Dr. C. D. Henry of the phys ed department down to bring Ladd in for a visit. Ladd was a growing boy and breakfast cost Doctor Henry $9.85. He called Robinson collect.

"Listen, I have never seen an eater like this kid in my life. I have 37 cents left and a tank full of gas. What do I do if he wants lunch?"

"Why, you just bring him on in," Eddie said, "even if you have to bring him in hungry." Then he skipped over to the school dining hall and had a little talk with the staff.

When Ernie Ladd arrived, Robinson took him in for lunch. As Ladd moved through the school cafeteria, his tray grew higher and higher. It was an Everest of mashed potatoes, an Eiffel Tower of meat. At the bread station, the girl behind the counter counted out five slices of bread. Then she looked at Robinson who was shaking his head behind Ladd. She hesitated, then put half-a-loaf into Ladd's free hand.

"Coach," Ernie Ladd smiled, "you sure feed good here." He spent four years knocking down other football players for Robinson.

One of Robinson's great victories in recruiting came in the spirited battle for a fullback from southern Louisiana. He had to outtalk and outmaneuver a Big Ten school and Southern U.

"I didn't worry too much about that old boy from the Big Ten," Robinson explains, "because he was living up at the hotel and driving that big car. The man from Southern was more difficult. I had to outwait him and get invited to supper.

"Well, finally it got to be suppertime and the boy's mother said she have didn't much and I'd have to take potluck but I said, 'Listen, that's country cooking if I ever smelled it and I am just really a country boy and you lead me to it.' Then she brought in the graham-cracker pie and I just had to tell her it was better than anything my wife makes but I hoped she'd keep that our little secret.

" 'Southern is a fine school,' I told her after dessert, 'and I'm sure that your boy will do all right even if he is in a big city while at Grambling he'd probably be bored because all there is to do is to study all week and go to church on Sunday.' "

Eddie Robinson got his fullback.

So it's recruiting and coaching and tough, hungry kids whose parents are very, very poor. For the most part, they are kids without big reputations. They come to Robinson with large hands and feet and "then we fill in the rest right there in our dining hall. I have never coached a rich boy. But if he's big and mean and poor, I want him." That's the essence of Robinson's coaching system and of Grambling's football success.

But there is only one way to find out what Grambling football is all about and why it has produced so many top pros. You have to go down there and see it and once you have seen it played, it is something you do not forget.

On this particular weekend, Grambling will play Bishop College in New Orleans' Sugar Cup Classic. On Thursday, Robinson sends his team through the final contact drill and the hitting is positively brutal. Robinson has three part-time assistants. ("An improvement," he explains. "My first year, the whole coaching staff was me and old Jess Applegate, the night watchman.") He is everywhere, racing furiously from one end of the practice field to the other, wearing sweat clothes and an old army field jacket. Several scouts have dropped by to watch practice and Doctor Jones, sitting in his car at the edge of the field, says:

"Some coaches get irritated by the scouts. That's ridiculous. This is a chance for these boys. Our job is to place them in life according to their skills and this is part of it. Pro sports are just another avenue of making a living. There are few enough of such avenues for some."

That night there will be a skull session in the big classroom underneath the stadium and in between practice and the evening's work, the visitor goes down to the town of Grambling to learn something about its association with the school.

Its Main Street is a two-block north-south drag, containing Mike's Cafe, Hawthorne's Novelty and Record Shop and Dan's Dairy Bar. In the evening, the men gather at Gallo's Barbershop to discuss the football team or the fall rains and what they will mean to the men who cut pulpwood in Hodge or Jonesboro.

Over at Calvin Wilkerson's College Shop, a clothing store with the accent on campus fashions, the proprietor explains why Grambling football has a special place for a lot of people.

"We take great pride in the college. When the boys go out and make a name for themselves we feel we're a part of it because it couldn't happen to us on our own. Some of our people are day laborers who cut pulpwood and when the rains come in the fall, their take-home pay could be as little as $15 a week. It costs $1.50 to see Grambling play and that can buy an awful lot when you only start with $15. But they go any way. This town is empty when Grambling plays—home or away."

That night the Grambling football team sprawls around the large classroom and listens to a scouting report. Midway through it, Robinson interrupts the scout. "Now you all have young minds so I know you are all going to remember this without writing it down. But I am old and tired so I am going to take this notebook and I am going to write down, 'red formation run . . . brown formation . . . pass.'" Around him 50 pencils have suddenly come to life.

"But, Elie," Robinson says to a player, "Elie, when they run all over you on Saturday because you didn't listen here and you are stretched out on the ground and the captain looks down at you and patiently asks what do they like to do from the red formation, then when you move your bloody lips, what will you answer?"

"Run," Elie says meekly.

"Well, dog, you hit it right on the nose. Maybe we can play this game after all."

The game is played at City Park Stadium in New Orleans and it has rained the entire night before. It will be a tough, dirty afternoon. Still, the game attracts a happy, partisan crowd. It begins to file in early... co-eds with traditional chrysanthemums flit from seat to seat to socialize while the 110-piece Grambling band marches down the sidelines in gold and black uniforms.

Bishop arrives first. It is not a small team and it moves briskly through its exercises. The visitor wonders if he may not have been deluded somewhat about the enormous size Grambling is supposed to have year after year.

Suddenly, the Grambling band breaks into "Hold that Tiger." It is not a Dixieland beat. It is a let's-all-go-out-to-the-Crusades stomp. The girls in the grandstand jump to their feet and wave black and gold pompons. The Grambling football team lines up quietly in the runway. Then it moves forward through the far goal posts. From tackle to tackle it averages 241 pounds. It spills onto the field and a popeyed visitor on the bench swears that the earth moves.

"It's muddy out here," Robinson says solicitously, "let me get you a pair of football shoes."

"Size nine," the visitor mumbles.

"I don't know," the coach says, "the last time I looked all we had left were a couple of pairs of 17 triple E and some 16's. Maybe I could dig up a 14 somewhere."

During the first half, Eddie Robinson does more person to person coaching in two periods than most head coaches at major colleges do in a decade. When a player fumbles, he takes him aside and shows him how to carry the ball. When a man blows a pass pattern, Robinson draws it for him in the mud. While he teaches, Grambling plays in spurts and runs up a 14–0 lead on sheer size. The players clatter down the runway to the locker room with heads down.

It is here that Eddie Robinson is at his absolute best. He speaks quietly with Fred Hobdy, the basketball coach, who mans the press-box telephone for him. Then he steps forward and looks around him. He wears a single-breasted gray suit and a soft-brim hat, which he pushes toward the back of his head.

"Now we do not have to score 100 points today," he begins. "We are not by nature greedy. But we must score enough to win and we haven't done this yet. Now, please... please... if you help me then maybe... just maybe... I can help you. But somebody is not doing his job. Somebody hasn't paid attention to the scouting reports. What are we doing wrong?"

It doesn't take long to find out. Suddenly everyone is rushing forward to confess for the Good of the Party. Tackles blame themselves for missed blocks. Linebackers repent for being lured away from screen passes. Quarterbacks are especially hard on themselves.

"What do we do," Robinson says, closing the confessional booth, "when their middle linebacker goes for the motion?"

"Run," the quarterbacks chorus.

"Good," Robinson says, "and what do we run?"

"We run the inside counter."

Then they go back out and the middle linebacker from Bishop College goes for the motion and they run the inside counter for 63 yards and six points and "Hold that Tiger." At the finish, they win, 43–13.

Late the following night a visitor packs his bags in the visitors' wing of Grambling's modern student union building while Eddie Robinson sits on the bed.

You do not get the clichés from him you will get at other more prominent schools. It is obvious that there is more to this for him than the job (which pays about $14,000) or the neat house he lives in hard by the campus. He will tell you that he and Doctor Jones have sat in on something like 100 salary discussions with the pros because "if it were a white boy from a big school, he'd have his lawyer. We owe it to these kids to get them the best deal we can."

"Well, sometimes," the visitor said, "you must wonder a little about yourself. I mean you started something down here and it spread to a lot of other schools just like this one but there must have been a time somewhere when you thought of what it might be like to coach in a major, integrated college."

"If you're human," Eddie Robinson said after a long pause, "you do wonder. There isn't a Negro coach in this country today who doesn't wonder. You get to asking yourself how you would react on a Saturday if there were 80,000 people up in those seats instead of 20,000. You

have to daydream a little. You look at Woody [Hayes] and Bear [Bryant] and you have to ask yourself 'what do you think?' And deep down you like to think, yes, you could have done it."

But sing no sad songs for Eddie Robinson who is doing what he wants to do and doing it exceptionally well. The scouts will be back this year to see Richie Lee, his 6-5, 275-pound tackle; and Bob Atkins, his 6-6, 215-pound safety and, most of all, a junior named James Harris, who at 6-2, 208 pounds, will be the first Negro quarterback to make it big in the pros, according to Robinson.

The thing has come full cycle now. At the Super Bowl, Doctor Jones and Collie J. Nicholson, the school's publicist, were saying they were extremely anxious to get some white athletes into Grambling.

"We have to get them," Collie Nicholson said emphatically.

"Have to?" a man asked.

"If we don't get them, we could lose some of our federal funds."

Now that, baby, that's a cycle.