

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



Celebration Bowl Trophy

CREAM WILL RISE!

THE PRIZE: This coveted trophy awaits the winner of Saturday's game between SWAC champion Florida A&M and MEAC champ Howard.

FAMU/HOWARD DO BATTLE FOR HBCU SUPREMACY; BERRY TO SC STATE, MEAC, DIV. II NAME TOP PLAYERS



FLORIDA A&M RATTLETS (11-1)

CHAMPION
SOUTHWESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE



Head Coach
WILLIE SIMMONS

TEAM RECORD
2023 Overall 11-1
2023 SWAC 8-0
2023 BCSP Ranking 1st
All-Time vs. Howard 4-3
Last Time vs. Howard 39-7 W, '19
Celebration Bowls 0-0, 1st time
Celebration Bowl titles None

COACH'S RECORD
Alma Mater: Clemson '02
Record vs. Howard: 1-1
Record at FAMU: 44-13, 771, 6th year
Career Record: 65-24, 730, 9 years

2023 RESULTS
11-1
28.....Florida A&M in Miami.....10 W
24.....@ South Florida.....38 L
31.....West Florida.....10 W
23.....Alabama State.....10 W
31.....@ Miss. Valley State.....7 W
26.....@ Southern.....19 W
31.....@ Texas Southern.....21 W
45.....Prairie View A&M.....7 W
42.....@ Alabama A&M.....28 W
28.....Lincoln (CA).....0 W
24.....Bethune-Cookman in Orlando...13 W
35.....Prairie View A&M.....10 W



HOWARD BISON (6-5)

CHAMPION
MID-EASTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE



Head Coach
LARRY SCOTT

2023 RESULTS
6-5
23.....@ Eastern Michigan.....33 L
65.....Morehouse.....19 W
34.....Hampton.....35 L
35.....@ Robert Morris.....10 W
20.....@ Northwestern.....23 L
7.....@ Harvard.....48 L
27.....Norfolk State.....23 W
17.....@ Delaware State.....10 W
24.....@ South Carolina State.....27 L
50.....North Carolina Central.....20 W
14.....Morgan State.....7 W

COACH'S RECORD
Alma Mater: South Florida '00
Record vs. Florida A&M: 0-0
Record at Howard: 14-19, 424, 3rd year
Career Record: Same

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2023 • ATLANTA, GA • MERCEDES BENZ STADIUM • 12 NOON ET • ABC

Bowl first-timers battle in Atlanta

LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) champion **Florida A&M** and Mid Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) champion **Howard** will square off Saturday (12 noon on ABC) in the **8th Cricket Celebration Bowl** at Atlanta's Mercedes Benz Stadium. It will be the first trip for either team to what has become in effect the black college national championship game.

No. 1 vs. No. 2

Fittingly, Florida A&M (11-1) comes in ranked first in the BCSP FCS Top Five with Howard (6-5), with a big win over defending MEAC and HBCU national champion **North Carolina Central**, second. They are inarguably the best two HBCU teams in 2023.

Each has deft senior quarterbacking in FAMU's SWAC Offensive MVP **Jeremy Moussa** and Howard's **Quinton Williams**, solid offensive line play and a bevy of playmakers in the running and passing games.

Defensively, each features conference players of the year in FAMU LB **Isaiah Major** and Howard DB **Kenny Gallop Jr.** and standout all-conference players up front, in the secondary and on special teams.

MEAC 6, SWAC 1?

Much of the intrigue regarding this year's game revolves around the lopsided edge the MEAC champions have had in the season-ending match ups with the SWAC champs.

The MEAC holds a 6-1 advantage including back-to-back wins in 2021 and 2022 by **South Carolina State** (31-10) and **North Carolina Central** (41-34 in overtime) respectively over what many considered the most dominant teams in black college football over that span – Head Coach **Deion "Coach Prime" Sanders' Tigers of Jackson State**.

Ironically, not long ago both FAMU and Howard were in the MEAC. FAMU won eight MEAC titles between 1986 to 2020 before making the jump to the SWAC in 2021. Howard, one of the founding members of the MEAC in 1970, won its fourth title this season and first since 1993.

The big question?

The big question in 2023 is can **Willie Simmons' Rattlers** reverse

the fortunes of all but one SWAC program – the 2016 **Grambling Tigers** who edged NC Central 10-9 – and knock off **Larry Scott's Howard Bison** of the MEAC?

On paper, it appears the Rattlers have an edge. They come in with only one loss, a relatively close 38-24 defeat at FBS member South Florida in the second week of the season. Since then, FAMU has won 10 straight games including sweeping nine games against SWAC opponents, all but one by double-digit margins.

On the other hand, Howard, at 6-5, has had more of an up-and-down, roller-coaster type season. The Bison were just 2-4 headed into their MEAC schedule. But those games included two impressive losses to FBS programs – 33-23 to Eastern Michigan to open the season and 23-20 to Big Ten member Northwestern four weeks later. In those other losses, they surrendered a 34-21 fourth-quarter lead in losing to **Hampton** 35-34 and in their only blowout loss, fell 48-7 at 8-2 Harvard of the Ivy League.

In MEAC play, their only hiccup was a 27-24 loss at **South Carolina State's** homecoming that put their title hopes in jeopardy. A week later, the Bison took apart NC Central 50-20 to put them in the driver's seat. They clinched the title with a 14-7 season-ending win over **Morgan State**. All Howard's MEAC wins were by single-digits except the blowout of NCCU.

Time to prepare

Much of the speculation around the MEAC's edge in the big game has centered around the time each conference champion has to prepare.

The MEAC champ has four weeks – a month – after its regular season ends in the third week of November to get ready for the big game. The SWAC plays its championship game in the first week of December and usually has half the time – just two weeks – to prepare.

Regardless of the difference in preparation time, five of the seven games have been decided by single digits. The exceptions are Celebration Bowl V when N. C. A&T quarterback **Khalil Carter** threw six touchdowns passes in a 64-44 rout of **Alcorn State** and the 2021 Celebration Bowl when **Buddy Pough's** SC State squad stunned Sanders' JSU Tigers, 31-10.

Look for a high-scoring, down-to-the-wire affair this time around.



CELEBRATION BOWL GAME YARDSTICK

FLORIDA A&M	TEAM STATS	HOWARD
30.7 ppg. (1st)	SCORING OFFENSE	23.4 ppg. (4th)
14.3 ppg. (1st)	SCORING DEFENSE	21.7 ppg. (2nd)
376.1 ypg. (2nd)	TOTAL OFFENSE	383.7 ypg. (1st)
267.3 ypg. (1st)	TOTAL DEFENSE	316.2 ypg. (2nd)
143.9 ypg. (6th)	RUSHING OFFENSE	180.9 ypg. (2nd)
96.6 ypg. (1st)	RUSHING DEFENSE	186.6 ypg. (4th)
232.2 ypg. (1st)	PASSING OFFENSE	202.8 ypg. (2nd)
170.7 ypg. (1st)	PASSING DEFENSE	129.5 ypg. (1st)

FLORIDA A&M	INDIVIDUAL STATS	HOWARD
TERRELL JENNINGS	RUSHING	EDEN JAMES
605 yds., 50.4 ypg., 6.0 ypc. 9 TDs		572 yds., 63.6 ypg., 5.8 ypc., 2 TDs
JEREMY MOUSSA	PASSING	QUINTON WILLIAMS
195-339-8, 57.5%, 2,604 yds., 19 TDs		178-298-4, 59.7%, 2,158 yds., 16 TDs
MARCUS RILEY	RECEIVING	KASEY HAWTHORNE
32 rec., 570 yds., 17.8 ypc. 5 TDs		35 rec., 504 yds., 14.4 ypc., 5 TDs
ISAIAH MAJOR	TACKLES	KENNY GALLOP JR.
100 tackles, 8.3 tpg.		52 tackles, 6.5 tpg.
ANTHONY DUNN JR.	SACKS	DARRIAN BROKENBURR
8.0, -49 yards		4.5, -21 yards
JAVAN MORGAN	INTERCEPTIONS	KENNY GALLOP JR.
3, 0 TDs		2, 0 TDs
CAMERON GILLIS	PLACEKICKING	DYLAN WEST
46-46 PATS, 10-13 FGs, 76 pts.		33-35 PATS, 0 FGs, 33 pts.



UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE LANDS BERRY:

Former **Benedict** head football coach **Chennis Berry** agreed last week to become the new head coach at **South Carolina State**.

Berry, a longtime HBCU assistant, led Benedict to back-to-back undefeated **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC)** titles in 2022 and 2033 in his three years leading the Tigers.

He posted 11-1 records in both 2022 and 2023 and was 27-7 (.843) overall at Benedict. SC State will make a formal announcement of Berry's hiring at a press conference this week.

He will take over the SC State program from retiring head coach **Oliver "Buddy" Pough** who stepped down after leading the Bulldogs for the last 22 seasons. Pough, who served as the school's interim athletics director during the selection process, retired as the program's all-time leader with 151 wins.

"His background as a coach has been phenomenal," SC State President **Alexander Conyers** said of Berry, who was an assistant at nine HBCUs before getting his first head coaching assignment at Benedict.

"His experience throughout the MEAC conference, which we play in, as well as the SWAC conference, the other HBCU conference, and obviously the winning records for the last two years, speaks for itself. So we're just excited to have a coach like Coach Berry follow in the footsteps of Coach Pough."

SC State finished 5-6 overall, 3-2 in the MEAC in Pough's final season. During his tenure, he won three outright MEAC titles and shared five others. Pough called his 31-10 win over a favored **Jackson State** team in the 2021 Celebration Bowl on ABC perhaps the biggest of his career.

The university also announced the hiring of former SC State football player **Dr. Nathan Cochran** as the school's new athletics director. Cochran comes from Walsh University in Canton, Ohio, where he served as the athletics director.

BCSP Notes

Richard, Gallop win MEAC POY awards

LAS VEGAS, Nev. – **North Carolina Central** quarterback **Davius Richard** and **Howard** defensive back **Kenny Gallop, Jr.** were named the 2023 **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC)** Offensive and Defensive Players of the Year. The honorees were announced during the 65th Annual National Football Foundation (NFF) Hall of Fame Press Conference, aired live on ESPN+.

Richard (QB, Sr., 6-3, 215, Belle Glade, Fla.), who also won the 2022 MEAC offensive player of the year award, helped the Eagles win nine games in 2023 for the second consecutive season and saw the Eagles reach new heights in the FCS rankings, climbing as high as No. 7 nationally. He finished the 2023 season with a conference-best 2,177 passing yards and 21 touchdown passes. He connected on 166 of 273 passes in 11 games and finished with a school-record completion percentage of 60.8 percent. He also led the Eagles in rushing touchdowns with 18, breaking the school's single-season record. Richard is only the second player in school history to amass more than 10,000 yards of total offense. He has accounted for 117 career touchdowns (73 passing, 44 rushing), breaking the school record.

Richard is a finalist for the **Stats Perform Walter Payton Award**, given annually to the best offensive player at the FCS level. The award is known in some circles as the "Heisman of FCS."

Gallop, Jr. (DB, Sr., 6-1, 214, Portsmouth, Va.) was selected as the 2023 MEAC Defensive Player of the Year after helping Howard win the MEAC regular season title and earn the league's berth in the **Celebration Bowl**. The Bison went 4-1 in conference play with a 50-20 marquis win over defending league champion and then-ranked No. 7 N.C. Central. He

MEC PLAYERS OF THE YEAR:

NC Central QB **Davius Richard** (l.) and Howard DB **Kenny Gallop Jr.**, (r.) appear with MEAC Commissioner **Sonja Stills** (c.) after the players were recognized at the NFF Hall of Fame event in Las Vegas.



produced 61 total tackles (40 solo) with six tackles for loss, three interceptions, two forced fumbles, and two quarterback hurries.

He is a finalist for the **Buck Buchanan Award**, given to the best defensive player in FCS. Gallop, Jr. has 244 total tackles as a Bison, with 155 solo stops. Gallop will compete in Saturday's Celebration Bowl.

Four named AFCA Div. II all-Americans

Virginia State graduate defensive back **Willie Drew** and **Tuskegee** sophomore defensive back **Mikael King** were named last week first team AFCA NCAA Div. II All-Americans while the **Benedict** pass rushing duo of senior **Loobert Denelus** and junior **Jayden Broughton** were picked to the second team.

Drew (6-0, 185), the CIAA defensive player of the year, led the conference and was sixth in the nation with six interceptions. He led the CIAA and was second nationally with 22 passes defended. King (5-10, 175) led the SIAC with six interceptions and was third with 14 passes defended.

Broughton posted 10.5 sacks and Denelus posted 10.0 sacks to lead the SIAC champion Tigers' defense. Broughton topped the SIAC with 24.0 tackles for loss while Denelus had 18.0.



dallascowboys.com Photo

BELL 'PEANUT PUNCH!'

Dallas starting safety **MARKQUESE BELL** (#14, **FLORIDA A&M**) makes the tackle and dislodges the ball from Philadelphia receiver **Devanta Smith** (#6) during Sunday night's 33-13 win by the Cowboys over the Eagles. Bell had four total tackles in the win and has 69 tackles, 44 solos, and two forced fumbles on the season.



BCSP NFL PLAYERS OF THE WEEK

For NFL games of December 7 - 11, 2023



DEFENSE

- #14 **MARKQUESE BELL**, S, Dallas (2nd season, **FLORIDA A&M**) - Bell started at safety in 33-13 win over Sunday night over Philadelphia and had four total tackles, three solos, with one forced fumble and one pass break-up. He was in on 47 (85%) of the defensive snaps and three (12%) of the special teams' snaps.

OFFENSE

- #12 **KHADAREL HODGE**, WR, Atlanta (8th season, **PRAIRIE VIEW A&M**) - In the Falcons' 29-25 loss to Tampa Bay, Hodge was targeted twice with one 18-yard reception. He also had one solo special teams' tackle while playing 23 (32%) of the offensive snaps and 20 (62%) of the snaps on special teams.

SPECIAL TEAMS

- #6 **JAMIE GILLAN**, P, New York Giants (5th season, **ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF**) - In Giants' last-second 24-22 win over Green Bay, Gillan punted four times for 164 yards (41.0-yard average) with three downed inside the 20 and a long punt of 50 yards. He was in on nine (33%) special teams' plays.