

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Cricket Celebration Bowl logo

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS

JACKSON STATE AND SC STATE PLAY FOR NATIONAL TITLE IN ATLANTA; FOUR MORE COACHES LET GO

THE ONE WE WANT TO SEE: SWAC champ Jackson State and MEAC champ South Carolina State meet in Atlanta in black college season-ender (12n, ABC).



JACKSON STATE TIGERS (11-2)

CHAMPION
SOUTHWESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE



Head Coach
T. C. TAYLOR

TEAM RECORD	2024 RESULTS
2024 Overall 11-2	JACKSON STATE 11-2
2024 SWAC East 9-0	14.....@ ULM.....30 L
2024 BCSP Ranking 1st	58.....Lane.....7 W
All-Time vs. SC State 1-1	33.....Southern.....15 W
Last Time vs. SC State 37-7, W '23	20.....@ Grambling State.....41 L
SWAC Championships 20 (Last '24)	43.....@ Texas Southern.....14 W
Celebration Bowls 2, 0-2 (Last '22)	45... Alabama A&M in Mobile...38 W
	35.....Florida A&M.....21 W
	37... @ Bethune-Cookman...17 W
	41.....Arkansas-Pine Bluff...3 W
	51.....Mississippi Valley State...14 W
	16.....@ Alabama State.....10 W
	48.....@ Alcorn State.....10 W
	41.....Southern.....13 W

COACH'S RECORD
Alma Mater: Jackson State '01
Record vs. SC State: 1-0
Record at JSU: 18-6, 750, 2nd year
Career Record: Same



SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BULLDOGS (9-2)

CHAMPION
MID EASTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE



Head Coach
CHENNIS BERRY

2024 RESULTS	TEAM RECORD
SC STATE 9-2	2024 Overall 9-2
18.....@ Florida A&M.....22 L	2024 MEAC 5-0
23.....@ The Citadel.....20 W	2024 BCSP Ranking 2nd
14.....@ Georgia Southern.....42 L	All-Time vs. Jackson State 1-1
45.....N. C. A&T.....25 W	Last Time vs. Jackson State 7-37, L '23
22.....@ Tennessee Tech.....20 W	MEAC Championships 19 (Last '24)
30.....Fort Valley State.....3 W	Celebration Bowls 1, 1-0 (21)
69.....Delaware State.....35 W	
24.....N. C. Central.....21 W	
38.....@ Howard.....14 W	
54.....@ Morgan State.....7 W	
53.....Norfolk State.....21 W	

COACH'S RECORD
Alma Mater: Savannah State '94
Record vs. Jackson State: 0-0
Record at SC State: 9-2, 818, 1st year
Career Record: 35-8, 813 (4 years)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2024 • ATLANTA, GA • MERCEDES BENZ STADIUM • 12 NOON ET • ABC

Championship match-up and intrigue in Atlanta

LUT WILLIAMS
BCSP Editor

ATLANTA, GA – The two best teams in black college football will meet here Saturday in the ninth-annual *Cricket Celebration Bowl*.

Mid Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) champion **South Carolina State** (9-2) with first-year head coach **Chennis Berry** and Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) champion **Jackson State** (11-2) under second-year head man **T. C. Taylor** will battle for black college Div. I supremacy at Mercedes Benz Stadium at 12 noon on ABC.

The game is intriguing and spicy on several levels. First, each has run the table in their respective FCS conference. JSU is No. 1 in the BCSP FCS Top Five and SC State is No. 2.

SC State went 5-0 and only was moderately challenged (a 24-21 win over **North Carolina Central** on Oct. 31) in the MEAC. The Bulldogs won the rest of their conference games by a wide 53-19 margin. The Bulldogs are on an eight-game win streak.

JSU was 9-0 in the SWAC including a 41-13 win over **Southern** in last week's league championship game. The Tigers' only stumble was a 41-20 designated non-conference loss to **Grambling State** early in the season (Sept. 21). Since then, the Tigers have won nine straight in league play with an average winning margin of 39-15.

So, there are no upset winners here. Each team has been dominant. Secondly, three years ago the same teams met in the season-ender here with a much different set of characters and players and with a stunning outcome.

Then, it was much ballyhooed second-year JSU head coach and NFL Hall of Famer **Deion "Coach Prime" Sanders** who brought his 11-1 SWAC champion Tigers into Atlanta to be christened black college national champions as they faced the 6-5 MEAC champion Bulldogs of SC State under the tutelage of venerable 20-year head coach **Oliver "Buddy" Pough**.

To the surprise of many (most), Pough's Bulldogs stifled and stunned Sanders' Tigers in a 31-10 blowout win. It included a SC State receiver (**Shaqun "Shaq" Davis**) imitating and mocking the touchdown skip-dance made popular by Sanders during his NFL career after getting the Bulldogs on the board with a second-quarter TD catch. Davis went on to catch two other touchdowns passes and win the MVP award in the blowout win.

JSU fans, and perhaps its players as well, have not forgotten the dance or the beatdown. JSU coaches and perhaps players will deny it, but Tiger fans want some revenge (get-back). JSU under Taylor won 37-7 in a MEAC-SWAC Challenge season-opener vs. Pough's SCSU in 2023.

Cricket Celebration Bowl IX Match-Up

Unlike their 2021 run-in, there is no clear favorite between the two in this year's game (see CELEBRATION BOWL YARDSTICK).

Both teams have high-powered offenses averaging over 35 points per game (JSU 37.1 ppg., and SCSU 35.5 ppg.) and over 400 yards per game (JSU 404.4 and SCSU 426.5). They both have stingy defenses with JSU giving up 17.9 ppg. and SCSU surrendering 20.9 ppg.

Each features their league's offensive player of the year. JSU senior running back **Irv Mulligan** won the SWAC award after rushing for a league-best 1,174 yards and 11 TDs. Mulligan averages 6.5 yards per carry and 106.7 yards per game and was the only SWAC rusher to top 1,000 yards.

SCSU quarterback **Eric Phoenix** won the MEAC's offensive award when it was unveiled Tuesday afternoon at the National Football Foundation (NFF) event in Las Vegas. Phoenix led the conference with 2,469 passing yards (224.5 ypg.) with 20 TDs and just seven interceptions. He completed 65.0% of his passes. He was the only MEAC passer to top 2,000 yards.

Syracuse junior transfer QB **Jacobian Morgan** (2,003 passing yards, 19 TDs, 7 ints., 63.0%) was selected second team all-SWAC. **Joanes Fortilien** leads Tiger receivers with 35 catches for 594 yards and tied for the league-high with nine TD receptions. Junior **D'Andre Townes-Blue** (1st team) and senior **Kirk Ford Jr.** (2nd team) are JSU's all-conference offensive linemen.

SCSU's wide receivers **Caden High** (58 receptions 892 yards, 7 TDs) and **Justin-Smith Brown** (49 rec., 729 yds., 4 TDs) were 1-2 in MEAC receiving stats and first-team all-MEAC selections. The Bulldogs had their tight end (**Keshawn Toney**, 27 rec., 287 yds., 3 TDs) and three offensive linemen (C **Eric Brown** and OTs **Cam Johnson** and **Nick Taiste**) named to the all-MEAC first team. **Deondra Duehart** is the rushing leader (467 yds., 7 TDs).

TOP PERFORMANCES

FROM HBCU GAMES OF DEC. 7, 2024
TOP NUMBERS IN BOLD>

PASSING	COMP-ATT-INT	Yds	TDs (YDS)
Czavian Teasett, SOU	11-21-1	127	0
R. J. Rosales, VUU	8-16-0	88	1 (5)
Zy McDonald, JSU	6-11-1	75	1 (13)

RUSHING	CAR	YDS	TDs (YDS)
Irv Mulligan, JSU	23	116	1 (2)
Jada Byers, VUU	22	109	1 (7)
Zy McDonald, JSU	8	95	1 (23)
Czavian Teasett, SOU	14	55	1 (1)

RECEIVING	REC	YDS	TDs
Jameel Gardner, JSU	4	71	0
Darren Morris, SOU	6	65	0
Keon Davis, VUU	1	42	0
Reginald Vick Jr., VUU	4	36	1 (5)

TACKLES	12	Shemar Graham, VUU
9	Vicent Page, SOU;	
8	Shemar Hawkins, JSU; Lamumba Howard, VUU	

SACKS	1.0	6

INTERCEPTIONS	2	Robert McDaniel, JSU
1	1	

CELEBRATION BOWL YARDSTICK

JACKSON STATE	TEAM STATS	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
JACKSON STATE 37.1 ppg. (1st) 17.9 ppg. (2nd) 404.4 ypg. (2nd) 280.5 ypg. (2nd) 218.5 ypg. (1st) 116.8 ypg. (1st) 185.9 ypg. (7th) 163.8 ypg. (3rd)	TEAM STATS SCORING OFFENSE SCORING DEFENSE TOTAL OFFENSE TOTAL DEFENSE RUSHING OFFENSE RUSHING DEFENSE PASSING OFFENSE PASSING DEFENSE INDIVIDUAL STATS RUSHING PASSING RECEIVING TACKLES SACKS INTERCEPTIONS KICK SCORING	SC STATE 35.5 ppg. (11st) 20.9 ppg. (2nd) 426.5 ypg. (1st) 295.0 ypg. (1st) 153.6 ypg. (3rd) 115.5 ypg. (1st) 272.8 ypg. (1st) 179.5 ypg. (4th) Deondra Duehart (6th) Eric Phoenix (1st) 2,469 yds, 20 TDs Caden High (1st) 71 tackles, 7.9 tpp. Ashaad Hall (DE - 1st) 11.0, -56 yds. Diego Addison (1st) 3, 1 TD Kyle Gallegos (3rd) 38-45 PATs, 9-14 FGs, 65 pts

JACKSON STATE	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Mulligan Irv Mulligan (1st) 1,174 yds., 106.7 ypg., 6.5 ypc., 11 TDs	Duehart Deondra Duehart (6th) 467 yds., 51.9 ypg., 4.1 ypc., 7 TDs
Morgan Jacobian Morgan (5th) 148-235-7, 63.0%, 2,003 yds., 19 TDs	Phoenix Eric Phoenix (1st) 2,469 yds, 20 TDs
Fortilien Joanes Fortilien (7th) 35 rec., 16.7 ypc., 584 yds., 9 TDs	High Caden High (1st) 58 rec., 15.4 ypc., 892 yds., 7 TDs
Nobles Joshua Nobles (DE - 4th) 8.0, -36 yds.	Smith Aaron Smith (LB - 2nd) 71 tackles, 7.9 tpp.
McDaniel Robert McDaniel (T9th) 3, 0 TD	Hall Ashaad Hall (DE - 1st) 11.0, -56 yds.
Pulliam Gerardo Baeza (1st) 54-55 PATs, 22-28 FGs, 120 pts.	Addison Diego Addison (1st) 3, 1 TD

Give JSU the edge on the ground and SCSU the edge in the air. SCSU grad linebacker **Aaron Smith's** 71 tackles (7.9 per game) is second-best in the MEAC. Sophomore LB **Reid Pulliam** leads JSU with 62 stops. SC State features the MEAC's leader in junior **Ashaad Hall** with 11 sacks. Senior **Jayden Broughton** is fourth with 8.5. They are both MEAC first-teamers as is senior DB **Jarod Washington**. Junior edge rusher **Joshua Nobles** is fourth in the SWAC with 10 sacks and is joined on the SWAC first team defense by senior defensive back **Ke'Vric Wiggins Jr.** JSU senior DB **Robert McDaniel** is considered one of the best prospects in black college football.

The defense match-up is a stalemate. JSU redshirt junior placekicker **Gerardo Baeza** has nailed 22 of 28 field goals and 54 of 55 PAT kicks for 120 points that is eighth in the nation. Fabulous freshman kick returner **Travis Terrell Jr.** averages 30.8 yards per kickoff return, fourth-best in the FCS. His two kickoff return TDs is tied for first in the nation. Senior **Matt Noll** (42.5 avg.) is the second team punter. SCSU redshirt freshman **Kyle Gallegos** has hit on just nine of 14 field goals and 38 of 45 PAT kicks for 65 points but is the MEAC's first-team placekicker. Senior **Dyson Roberts**, one of the heroes of the 2021 Celebration Bowl win as he averaged 49.2 yards on eight kicks, averaged 42.0 yards per kick this season to earn second team all-MEAC punter.

The special teams edge goes to Jackson State. It's hard to say which of the two coaches has done the better job. Both have performed remarkably well.

Taylor, with a high recommendation from the former coach, took over after Sanders bolted to Colorado after a second Celebration Bowl defeat. He has re-tooled the line-up, brought in a bevy of Div. I transfers and gotten JSU right back to the top of the SWAC. He was 7-4 overall in his first year, tied for second in the SWAC East at 5-3, before bringing home the title this year. Taylor was a JSU assistant on both Celebration Bowl losses under Sanders. He was also the offensive coordinator at NC Central when the Eagles lost Celebration Bowl II to Grambling.

Berry took over from Pough this season, with a hearty endorsement from the former coach, after winning back-to-back **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference** (SIAC) titles at **Benedict** in 2022 and 2023 during a three-year stint there. He brought with him six standout players from those Benedict teams that have blended in seamlessly with the holdovers from Pough's teams. Conference leaders Phoenix, High and Broughton all played for Berry at Benedict and have helped push SC State to the top of the MEAC race.

In the eight-year history of the Celebration Bowl only two games have been decided by double-digits. The MEAC leads the series, 6-2. This should be another close one.

BCSP NFL PLAYERS OF THE WEEK

For NFL games of December 5 - 9, 2024

DEFENSE
- #2 **JOSHUA WILLIAMS**, DB, Kansas City (3rd season, **FAYETTEVILLE STATE**) - In Kansas City's 19-17 win over the Los Angeles Chargers, Williams started at cornerback and had five total tackles, three solos. Williams played 38 defensive snaps (63%) and four on special teams (15%).

OFFENSE
- #31 **EMANUEL WILSON**, RB, Green Bay (#31, **FORT VALLEY STATE**) - In 34-31 loss to Detroit, Wilson had one carry for 7 yards while playing three snaps (6%) on offense.

SPECIAL TEAMS
- #6 **JAMIE GILLAN**, P, New York Giants (6th season, **ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF**) - In the Giants 14-11 loss to New Orleans, Gillan punted eight times for 299 yards (37.4-yard average) with a net average of 37.4 yards. He had a long punt of 47 yards and had four punts downed inside the 20. Gillan was in for 11 special teams' snaps (38%).

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

THREE AT 2-AND-21 AND DONE:

Three head football coaches who posted 2-21 records over the past two seasons were among four dismissed last week.

GREENSBORO, NC – N. C. A&T Director of Athletics **Earl Hilton** announced last Wednesday (Dec. 3) that head coach **Vincent Brown** had been relieved of his duties after going 2-21 and not winning a game (0-16) in the Coastal Athletic Association (CAA) over the past two seasons. Brown reportedly had three years remaining on his contract.

A&T wasted little time Friday in naming **Fort Valley State** head coach and former Aggies running backs coach **Shawn Gibbs** as Brown's replacement. Gibbs, 48, who spent 11 years at A&T coaching running backs and special teams, has led FVSU to a 22-9 record in three seasons.

NORFOLK, Va. – **Mississippi Valley State** announced last Wednesday it was moving on from head coach **Kendrick Wade** after the Delta Devils finished 2-21 over the past two seasons, 1-7 in the East Division in each of those seasons.

DOVER, DE - **Delaware State** head football coach **Lee Hull**, who had gone 2-21 overall and 0-10 in two years in the **Mid Eastern Athletic Conference** (MEAC) was relieved of his duties Tuesday.

Hull, 58, was a former head coach at **Morgan State** who led the Bears to a share of the MEAC title and a 1-AA playoff berth in 2014 while being named the conference's coach of the year. Hull left MSU after a two-year 12-12 record for a brief stint as an NFL assistant.

RALEIGH, NC - **Shaw** announced last Tuesday that the contract of eight-year head coach **Adrian Jones** would not be renewed. Jones had compiled a 35-45 overall record and a 29-28 record in the **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association** (CIAA), never finishing higher than second place.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME RECAPS

SWAC

Jackson State 41, Southern 13

JACKSON, MS | **Zy McDonald** came off the bench late in the first half, sparking a rally from **Jackson State** and leading the Tigers to a 41-13 victory over **Southern** in the **2024 Pepsi SWAC Championship Game** presented by GM at Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium on Saturday. It was JSU's second win over Southern this season.

The championship is the third in four years for Jackson State (11-2), winners of nine straight games, and the first for head coach **T.C. Taylor**.

McDonald was named the Offensive MVP after coming in late in the second quarter with Southern up 10-3 and leading a touchdown drive to tie the game late in the half. He orchestrated five second-half scoring drives and finished with 95 yards rushing on eight carries including a 23-yard third-quarter touchdown. He also threw for 75 yards on 6-of-11 passing with a 13-yard fourth-quarter touchdown to **Joanes Fortilien**. **Irv Mulligan** added 116 yards on 23 carries with a 2-yard touchdown, while **Travis Terrell Jr.** added 47 yards rushing and a 2-yard touchdown for the Tigers who finished with 275 yards on the ground.

Jameel Gardner Jr. had four receptions for 71 yards to lead Tiger receivers.

After its 10 first-quarter points, Southern (8-5) could only add a fourth-quarter 28-yard **Joshua Griffin** field goal. Jaguar QBs **Czavian Teasett** (11-21, 127 yards) and **Noah Bodden** (4-13, 53 yards) were both picked off once. The dynamic Southern RB duo of **Kobe Dillon** and **Kendric Rhymes** combined for 72 yards on 15 carries.

Defensively, **Robert McDaniel** intercepted two passes including one to put an exclamation on the game late, and was named Defensive MVP. **Shamar Hawkins** finished with eight tackles, a sack, and a tackle for loss; while **Ashton Taylor** finished with seven tackles and a sack. **Joshua Nobles** finished with five tackles with a sack and a forced fumble.

The SWAC title game win puts the Tigers in the season-ending *Cricket Celebration Bowl* in Atlanta's Mercedes Benz Stadium this Saturday, Dec. 14 vs. MEAC champion **South Carolina State** (9-2).

NCAA Div. II - Super Region II

No. 1 Valdosta State 49, No. 7 Virginia Union 14

VALDOSTA, GA – CIAA champion **Virginia Union** surrendered 560 total yards and four passing touchdowns at NCAA Div. II No. 1 Valdosta State in falling here in a Super Region II championship game Saturday, 49-14.

VSU senior QB **Sammy Edwards** completed an efficient 13 of 19 passes for 302 yards and four touchdowns, three to wideout **Rodney Bullard** (5 catches, 158 yards) enabling the Blazers (12-0) to pull away to the victory. Bullard had 38- and 42-yard second quarter scoring receptions as VSU built a 28-7 halftime lead. Edwards hit **Samuel Curry** on a 52-yard score early in the third quarter before Bullard hauled in a 47-yarder late in the period for 42-7 Blazers' lead.

VUU star running back **Jada Byers** ran for 109 yards on 22 carries to go over 2,000 rushing yards on the season. He scored the Panthers' (10-4) first TD on a 7-yard run with 4:57 left in the second quarter. But Byers also uncharacteristically lost two fumbles on back-to-back second quarter possessions. The last led to Edwards' first TD pass to Bullard and came with :03 seconds left and gave VSU the 28-7 halftime edge.

VSU added a fourth-quarter 41-yard TD run while VUU got its second TD on a 5-yard pass from QB **R. J. Rosales** (8-15-0, 88 yards) to wideout **Reginald Vick Jr.**, with midway thru the period.

VUU LB **Shemar Graham** led the VUU defense with 12 tackles, 10 solos but the team had just one sack and did not register an interception.