

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE

NEW, DIFFICULT DAYS FOR HBCUs

PORTAL, NIL PROMINENT IN HBCUs RETAINING TALENT; NEW COACHES FOR ALCORN (M), PV (W)



Creighton Sports Photo

BLAKE HARPER: MEAC rookie/ player of the year leaves Howard for Creighton.

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

HOWARD'S HARPER MOVES TO CREIGHTON:

OMAHA, NEB - **Blake Harper**, the reigning **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference** player and rookie of the year out of **Howard**, announced Sunday on social media his pledge to join the Creighton Blue Jays of the Big East.

**Harper** Harper, a 6-7 Washington, D. C. native who played locally at Gonzaga College High School, put up stellar numbers in his freshman season with the Bison, averaging a league-best 19.3 points per game on 40.4 percent shooting from three-point range. He earned 18 consecutive MEAC Rookie of the Week honors with 30 double-digit scoring efforts, five 30-point games and four scoring/rebounding double-doubles and one scoring/assists double-double. He had a season-high 35 points vs. **Hampton**.

In addition to leading the MEAC in scoring, Harper ranked second in rebounds (6.3), fourth in assists (3.5) and helped his team finish with a 12-20 overall mark, 7-7 in MEAC play.

Harper chose the Bluejays over LSU, Ohio State and a return to Howard.

BLACK COLLEGE WORLD SERIES FOUNDER PASSES:

MARGATE, Fla. – **Michael Coker**, 65, an **Edward Waters** graduate and founder and executive director of Black College Championships LLC and founder of the **Black College World Series** as well as lead reporter for the *Black College Nines* website, passed Tuesday, April 22, after a lengthy battle with pancreatic and prostate cancer.

His passion for the sport and for HBCU athletics led him to conceive the Black College Baseball World Series in 2011, providing a national stage for teams from NCAA Division II and NAIA institutions.

Five HBCU players drafted, just one finished at an HBCU

LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

Five players who starred in black college football, but only one who finished there, were drafted in last week's three-day NFL Draft.

Unfortunately, this may be the trend going forward in black college football as talent is gradually siphoned away in the pervasive era of the transfer portal and Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) money.

Carson Vinson

The lone draftee that finished his career at an HBCU was **Alabama A&M** offensive lineman **Carson Vinson** who was selected by Baltimore with the third pick in the fifth round, 141st overall.

Vinson, a four-year starter at A&M, was considered the top prospect among those who finished at an HBCU after being the only one with that profile invited to the Senior Bowl and NFL Combine.

The 6-7, 314-pounder who was first-team all-SWAC in 2024 performed well at both to solidify his forecast as a middle round selectee.

The four players who started at HBCUs but finished elsewhere were – former **Jackson State** defensive back/wide receiver **Travis Hunter** and quarterback **Shedeur Sanders** who transferred to Colorado, former **North Carolina A&T** running back **Bhayshul Tuten** who left the Aggies for Virginia Tech and former **Alabama State** running back **Jacory Croskey-Merritt** at **Alabama State** who finished a circuitous college route at Arizona.

Travis Hunter

Hunter is the former top-ranked high school player in the country who shook up the college football recruiting world by signing to play for **Deion "Coach Prime" Sanders** at JSU.

After one injury-plagued season at JSU, Hunter left with his head coach to Colorado

BLACK COLLEGE PLAYERS IN 2025 NFL DRAFT



JACKSONVILLE  
**Travis Hunter**  
6-2, 188, WR/DB  
**Jackson State** / Colorado  
1st Round - 2nd pick  
2nd overall



JACKSONVILLE  
**Bhayshul Tuten**  
5-9, 206, RB  
**NC A&T** / Virginia Tech  
4th Round - 2nd pick  
104th overall



BALTIMORE  
**Carson Vinson**  
6-7, 314, OL  
**Alabama A&M**  
5th Round - 3rd pick  
141st overall



CLEVELAND  
**Shedeur Sanders**  
6-2, 212, QB  
**Jackson State** / Colorado  
5th Round - 6th pick  
144th overall



WASHINGTON  
**Jacory Croskey-Merritt**  
5-11, 204, RB  
**Alabama State** / Arizona  
7th Round - 26th pick  
245th overall

where this season he parlayed his unique skills on offense (74 receptions, 911 yards, 9 TDs) and defense (23 tackles, 3 interceptions) into a Heisman Trophy-winning performance, logging an incredible 1,462 total snaps including 714 on offense and 748 on defense.

He was taken with the second overall pick in the draft by Jacksonville after being designated by most pundits as the top overall talent in the draft.

Bhayshul Tuten

Tuten rushed for 1,363 yards and 13 touchdowns in his second year at NC A&T before transferring to Virginia Tech. He set the ACC on fire with 1,159 rushing yards and 15 TDs this season and later did the same at the NFL Combine (4.32 seconds in the 40). He joins Hunter in Jacksonville after being taken by the Jaguars with the second pick in the fourth round, 104th overall.

Shedeur Sanders

Sanders followed up two outstanding years at JSU (6,963 passing yards, 70 TDs, 14 ints.) with two more scintillating seasons at Colorado (7,364 passing yards, 64 TDs, 13 ints.). Projected as the second-best quarterback in the draft, Sanders had a shockingly precipitous drop until finally being scooped up by Cleveland with the sixth pick in the fifth round, 144th overall. His fall was among the biggest stories of the three-day draft.

Jacory Croskey-Merritt

Croskey-Merritt was moderately successful in two seasons at ASU (1,164 rushing yards, 13 TDs), hit it big in one season at New Mexico (1,190 rushing yards, 17 TDs) and had short stints at Ole Miss and Arizona before a postseason Shrine Bowl MVP performance (97 rushing yards, 2 TDs). He was snapped up by Washington with the 26th pick in the seventh and last round, 245th overall.

BCSP Hoops News

Tennessee State, NBA star Dr. Dick Barnett passes at 88

**Dick Barnett**, who led legendary head coach **John McLendon's** **Tigers of Tennessee State** to three straight NAIA national championships in the late 1950s and was a critical part of the New York Knicks' 1970 and 1973 NBA championship teams, died Sunday at 88, six months after he was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

**BARNETT:** At Tenn. State (l.) and with NY Knicks (r.)

A native of Gary, Indiana, Barnett was recruited to Tennessee A&I – now known as Tennessee State – by McLendon and was a three-time NAIA all-American who won the *Chuck Taylor Most Valuable Player Award* in the 1958 and 1959 NAIA national tournament. The Tigers were the first HBCU team to win a national college basketball championship in an integrated tournament and the first college team to three-peat as champion.

Barnett graduated as TSU's all-time scorer with 3,209 points with a 23.6 points per game average in 136 games, while also recording 1,571 career rebounds (11.6 rpg.). In 1986, he was inducted into the NAIA Hall of Fame.

After college, Barnett played for the Syracuse Nationals of the NBA and the Cleveland Pipers of the ABL before catching on with the Los Angeles Lakers. He averaged 17 points per game in three seasons with the Lakers before being dealt to the Knicks before the 1965-66 season.

Barnett played the rest of his career with the Knicks as a veteran presence, guiding the team's nucleus—fellow HBCU legend **Willis Reed** of **Grambling**, Walt “Clyde” Frazier, and Bill Bradley—to great success. He averaged 18 points per game in the 1970 NBA Finals, in which the Knicks defeated the favored Lakers in seven games. He was also a part of the Knicks' 1973 title team, which beat Los Angeles.

In 14 NBA seasons, Barnett averaged 16 points, three rebounds, and three assists per game. Barnett finally received the Naismith Hall of Fame call in the spring of 2024, more than 50 years after his final NBA game.

Off the court, Dr. Barnett was just as impactful. He earned a master's degree from New York University and a doctorate in education from Fordham University. Passionate about education and mentorship, he taught sports management at St. John's University until his retirement in 2007 and founded *Fall Back Baby Productions*, using his platform to inspire future generations through writing, speaking, and advocacy.

Alcorn State names new men's hoops coach

LORMAN, MS – **Alcorn State University** is proud to announce the hiring of **Jake Morton** as the 15th head men's basketball coach in program history. Morton was officially introduced during a special Meet & Greet event held Wednesday, April 23, 2025, at The Watermark in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

A seasoned coach and former standout player, Morton brings more than two decades of coaching experience across all levels of collegiate basketball, including time in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Atlantic Sun, and American Athletic Conference. Most recently, he served on the coaching staff at Florida State University under Head Coach Leonard Hamilton.

"We are thrilled to welcome Coach Morton to the Alcorn family," said Director of Athletics **E. Dwayne Robinson**. "His leadership, championship-caliber mindset, and dedication to player development make him an ideal fit to lead our men's basketball program into a new era."

Before joining Florida State, Morton held assistant coaching positions at East Carolina and Jacksonville State.

Morton's coaching résumé also includes stops at Miami, Western Kentucky, **Coppin State**, James Madison, St. Francis (Pa.), and **Bowie State**. As a player, Morton starred at the University of Miami from 1989-1993 under Hamilton, scoring over 900 points and earning accolades as a tenacious defender and team leader. Following his collegiate career, he



Morton

played professionally in Israel for six years.

"I'm very excited to be named the Head Men's Basketball Coach at Alcorn State University. With the support of President Cook and A.D. Robinson, there is no doubt that we can take this program into the next stage of greatness," Morton said.

Diamond Johnson, NSU's MEAC POY, gets camp contract with Minnesota Lynx

MINNEAPOLIS, MN – **Norfolk State** guard **Diamond Johnson** has earned the chance to compete for a WNBA roster spot, signing a training camp contract with the Minnesota Lynx.



Johnson

The Lynx announced Johnson's addition through a social media post on Thursday afternoon. Johnson is set to report to camp on Sunday, April. 27, three weeks before Minnesota's first regular season game on May 16th.

Johnson left her mark on the Spartans' program, leading Norfolk State to back-to-back **MEAC** Tournament titles in 2024 and 2025. Averaging 18.9 points, 6.1 rebounds, and 4.1 assists per game this past season, she received MEAC Player of the Year, All-MEAC First Team, and MEAC All-Defensive Team recognitions.

Recording 3.6 steals per game during the 2024-25 campaign, Johnson ranked fifth nationally in the category. She also eclipsed 2,000 career points, achieving the feat against Big 10, ACC, and MEAC competition.

Johnson also received a spot on two prestigious post season award watchlists: The Dawn Staley Award and Becky Hammon Mid-Major Player of the Year.

After the conclusion of the 2024-25 season, Johnson earned an invitation to the Lilly Women's College All-Star Game to compete against the top seniors in the nation. She stepped up to the challenge, taking home Most Valuable Player honors after producing 21 points, four rebounds, and two steals – knocking down the game winning 3-pointer as well.

Tai Dillard named new women's hoops coach at Prairie View

PRAIRIE VIEW, TX – **Prairie View A&M** Director of Athletics, **Anton Goff**, is proud to announce **Tai Dillard** as the new head coach of the women's basketball program. Her start date is May 1, 2025.

A native Texan and seasoned coach with deep roots in both collegiate and professional basketball, Dillard brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of player development and program success.

Dillard joins the Lady Panthers following an impressive tenure at the University of Houston, where she served as associate head coach from 2022 to 2024 and recruiting coordinator from 2016 to 2022. During her time with the Cougars, Dillard helped guide the team to multiple postseason appearances, including the WNIT in 2017, 2018, and 2021.

Prior to her time at Houston, Dillard held coaching roles at Ole Miss (2013–2014), USC (2012–2013), and UTSA (2007–2012). She began her coaching career at Sam Houston High School in San Antonio, Texas, serving as head cross country coach and assistant coach for basketball and track and field.

Dillard was a four-year letter winner at Texas under legendary head coach Jody Conradt. She helped lead the Longhorns to four straight NCAA Tournament appearances, including a trip to the Final Four in her senior season (2003). A two-time Big 12 All-Academic honoree, Dillard started 34 games during that memorable campaign.

Following her collegiate career, Dillard played professionally for the WNBA's San Antonio Silver Stars (2003–2005), the Houston Stealth of the National Women's Basketball League, and internationally in Israel with Macabbi Tel Kabir. She holds a bachelor's degree in kinesiology from the University of Texas and a master's degree in Sports Leadership and Sports Studies from **Texas Southern University**.



Dillard

THE STAT CORNER

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

2025 NFL BLACK COLLEGE UNDRAFTED FREE AGENT SIGNEEs

BALTIMORE RAVENS

Kisean Johnson, WR, Alabama State / Western Kentucky

CLEVELAND BROWNS

Jason Ivey, OL, North Carolina A&T

DENVER BRONCOS

Kendall Bohler, DB, Florida A&M

Joaquin Davis, WR, North Carolina Central

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

Devontae Davis, DL, Jackson State / Florida Atlantic

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

Cam'Ron Silmon-Craig, Jackson State / Colorado

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

Torricelli Simpkins, NC Central / South Carolina

NEW YORK GIANTS

Da'Quan Felton, WR, Norfolk State / Virginia Tech

NEW YORK JETS

Aaron Smith, LB, South Carolina State

TAMPA BAY

Shilo Sanders, DB, Jackson State / Colorado

WASHINGTON

Robert McDaniel, DB, Jackson State

MINICAMP INVITEES

ATLANTA FALCONS

Seven McGee, WR, Jackson State / Albany

CLEVELAND BROWNS

Keshawn Toney, TE, South Carolina State

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS & KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

Robert Jones, III, CB, Howard

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Quantez Mansfield, DT, North Carolina Central

Elijah Williams, DE, Morgan State

NEW YORK GIANTS

Irv Mulligan, RB, Jackson State

Myles Crawley, QB, Grambling State

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

Travis Martin, DB, Langston

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

Xavier Robiou, DB, Howard

Jaden Sutton, RB, Delaware State