

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Alabama sports photo

CLEON JONES: Former NY Mets outfielder, Mobile Alabama native and SWAC product came up with idea for that city's Hall of Fame Walk that includes bronze statue of Jackson State's Robert Brazile.

SUMMER TIME NEWS

ALL FOOTBALL MEDIA DAYS SET; BLACK COLLEGE CHAMPS IN PRESEASON FCS AND DIV. II TOP 25s; TIM O'NEAL IN SENIOR OPEN

BCSP Notes

Jackson State, Tennessee State, SC State show up in preseason FCS national rankings

The three 2024 black college defending FCS football champions are predictably showing up in 2025 preseason national rankings.

The three are defending **Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC)** and *Celebration Bowl* champion **Jackson State**, **Tennessee State**, who finished in a tie for the Big South/Ohio Valley Conference title and **Mid Eastern Athletic Conference** champion **South Carolina State**.

Jackson State, led by head coach **T. C. Taylor**, is the team that appears first and in every preseason FCS Top 25.

The SWAC champion Tigers, who finished 12-2 overall and defeated MEAC champion S. C. State 28-7 in the season-ending Celebration Bowl, were ranked 15th in both the preseason American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) FCS Coaches Poll and the *Hero Sports Top 25 Media Poll*.

JSU is 18th in the *STATS Perform Top 25* and 22nd in *Craig Haley's Way Too Early Top 25*. JSU is the only black college program to appear in the Hero Sports and Haley top 25.

Tennessee State, who finished 9-4 overall and 6-2 in a tie with Tennessee Tech and UT-Martin for the combined Big South/OVC title a year ago under then head coach **Eddie George**, will play under new head coach **Reggie Barlow** in 2025. The former **Virginia State**, **Alabama State** and DC Defenders of the UFL head coach's team is 19th in both the FCS Coaches and the STATS Perform polls.

SC State, who ran to a 5-0 record in MEAC play and 9-3 overall mark in head coach **Chennis Berry's** first year at the helm, is 20th in the Coaches Poll and 24th in the STATS Perform ranking.

The only other team receiving honorable mention is **Trei Oliver's** Eagles of **North Carolina Central**. The Eagles, coming off an 8-3 campaign with its only MEAC loss to SC State (24-21), received votes in the Hero Sports and FCS Coaches polls.

Virginia Union, Miles in preseason NCAA Div. II football national rankings

The two 2024 NCAA Div. II black college conference champions are in preseason top 25 national rankings.

Both defending **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA)** champ **Virginia Union** and **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC)** titlist **Miles** got preseason top 25 designations but their positions almost flip-flopped.

VUU, under now eighth-year head coach **Dr. Alvin Parker**, finished 10-4 overall, 6-1 in CIAA play to win its second straight CIAA title in 2024. The Panthers then went on to notch their first-ever two wins in Div. II playoff history, defeating Wingate (34-31 in OT) and Lenoir-Rhyne (44-12) before falling to top-seeded Valdosta State (49-14) in the Div. II quarterfinals.

The Panthers are ranked 12th in the D2 Football preseason Top 25 and 20th in the *Way Too Early Div. II Football Rankings*.

Miles finished 10-3 overall and undefeated at 8-0 in winning the SIAC title under third-year head coach **Sam Shade**. The Golden Bears proceeded to also get their first Div. II playoff win in a 14-13 win over Carson-Newman before also falling to Valdosta State. Shade left for the head coaching job at **Alabama A&M** and the Bulldogs have brought in another University of Alabama product, **Chris Goode** as their new head coach.

The Golden Bears enter the season ranked 13th in the *Way Too Early* ranking and 19th in the D2 Football Top 25.

Virginia Union and Miles will clash on Sunday, August 31 at the *Black College Football Hall of Fame Classic* in Canton, Ohio's Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium at 4:00 p.m. It will be the first meeting between the Panthers and Golden Bears

Jackson State's Robert Brazile among honorees who got statues at Mobile's Hall of Fame Walk

MOBILE, Ala. | The city of Mobile honored some of its greatest sports legends including former **Jackson State** star and Pro Football Hall of Famer **Robert Brazile** on Tuesday, June 24 at the official ribbon cutting



Taylor

Barlow

Berry

Parker

Goode

ceremony for the Hall of Fame Walk.

The Hall of Fame Walk, located in front of the Mobile Convention Center on the Riverwalk, is a permanent installation honoring former Major League Baseball stars and Hall of Fame members Hank Aaron, Satchel Paige, Billy Williams, Ozzie Smith, and Willie McCovey along with Brazile. A total of six 9-foot tall statues of each will line the front of the Convention Center.

The Hall of Fame Walk was the idea of Mobile area native and former New York Mets World-Series winning outfielder **Cleon Jones** who starred in football at **Alabama A&M** and in baseball at **Grambling State**.

Brazile, at 6-4, 241 pounds, used his speed (4.6 in the 40) and hard-hitting ability to star for JSU at linebacker from 1971 to 1974. He was an all-SWAC selection in 1974 and participated in the Senior Bowl after that senior season.

He was drafted sixth overall in the first round of the 1975 NFL Draft by the Houston Oilers and went on to earn NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year honors. In his 10-year NFL career, all with Houston, he started 147 consecutive games, was elected to seven consecutive Pro Bowls and was named all-Pro five consecutive years.

The 1995 SWAC Hall of Famer was inducted into the **Black College Football Hall of Fame** in 2004 and to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2018.



ROBERT BRAZILE: (L. to r.) At his Pro Football Hall of Fame induction in 2018, at his Black College Football Hall of Fame induction in 2004 and the bronze statue that honors him at Mobile's Hall of Fame Walk that was unveiled Tuesday.

Golfer Tim O'Neal in good shape as he enters this week's U. S. Senior Open

Former **Jackson State** golfing standout **Tim O'Neal** will tee off at 3:33 p.m. Thursday in the first round of the U. S. Senior Open.

The major Senior event will run Thursday thru Sunday, June 26-29 at the Broadmoor Golf Club in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

O'Neal is coming off a tie for 46th at last week's Kaulig Companies Championship at the iconic Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio. O'Neal shot rounds of 75-67-73-72 to finish at +7 in the event.

In 14 events this season, he has had eight top Top 25 finishes. Six of those finishes have been inside the Top 20. His lone Top 10 finish was at the March 30 Galleri Classic where he shot 72-66-68 -10 to finish tied for 10th and had his biggest payday of the season at \$50,650. He has had two other 12th-place finishes.

He had his lone win in four years on the Senior Tour at last October's Dominion Energy Classic where he earned his biggest payday of \$350,000.

He has pocketed \$337,554 to sit at 34th on the tour's 2025 Money List.

The TV schedule for the Senior Open is as follows;

- Thursday, June 27 and Friday, June 28: Golf Channel from 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM MDT, Peacock from 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM MDT according to the USGA.
 - Saturday, June 29: Peacock from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. EDT, NBC from 12 p.m. - 3 p.m. EDT.
 - Sunday, June 30: NBC from 12:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. EDT, Golf Channel from 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. EDT.
- ESPN+ will also offer featured groups and featured holes coverage.

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

CIAA FOOTBALL MEDIA DAY SET FOR JULY 16 IN DURHAM, NC

CHARLOTTE, NC (June 23, 2025) – The **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA)** announced Monday that it will officially open the 2025 football season with its annual *Football Media Day* on Wednesday, July 16, in Durham, North Carolina, the new host city of the CIAA Football Championship.

This year's Media Day, presented in collaboration with the Durham Sports Commission, will feature all twelve CIAA head football coaches along with two returning student-athletes from each institution. Attendees will preview the upcoming season and share expectations for their programs.

The event will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Raleigh-Durham Airport at Research Triangle Park beginning at 9:00 a.m. The day will conclude with remarks from CIAA Commissioner **Jacqie McWilliams Parker**.

The event will also include the release of the preseason All-CIAA Football Team, the predicted order of finish, and the 2025 television broadcast schedule, followed by media Q&A sessions with coaches and players.

As part of the week's programming, the CIAA will also host a free youth football clinic for students in grades 3-8 on Tuesday, July 15, from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at Hillside High School in Durham. The clinic will be led by CIAA football coaches and student-athletes. Participants must register by Monday, July 7.

The 2025 CIAA Football Media Day will stream live on the CIAA Sports Network (<https://theciaasn.com>).

The CIAA Championship Game will be held on Saturday, November 15 hosted by the Durham County Sports Commission, with Durham County Memorial Stadium (DCMS) as the event's selected venue.

SWAC ANNOUNCES 2025 FOOTBALL MEDIA DAY ATTENDEES

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.- The **Southwestern Athletic Conference** has announced the student-athletes set to participate in the league's annual SWAC Football Media Day on Wednesday, July 16 at 10:00 am CST at the Sheraton-Birmingham.

All twelve SWAC head football coaches will also be in attendance to address media about the upcoming 2025 football season.

Here is complete listing of the student-athletes slated to be in attendance:

Alabama A&M
Cornelius Brown IV, QB
Dimitris Biambly, LB
Alabama State
Keane Lewis, Safety
Cameron Smith, OL
Alcorn State
JaCorian Sewell, RB
Gideon Spottsville, DL
Bethune-Cookman
AJ Hall, DL
Maleek Huggins, WR
Florida A&M
Ashton Grable, OL
Davion Westmoreland, DE
Grambling State
Nick Howard, WR
Blake Davis, DB

Jackson State
Jacobian Morgan, QB
Jeremiah Williams, DL
Mississippi Valley State
DePhabian Fant, RB
Kobe Byrd, DB
Prairie View A&M
Travon Jones, TE
Jamal Marshall, DL
Southern
Darren Morris, WR
Ckelby Givens, DE
Texas Southern
Kenneth Cooper Jr., QB
Damarcus Thompson, DL
Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Jeremiah Rodgers, OL
Trey Glymph, PK

BCSP Hoops News

Norfolk State's Diamond Johnson inks pro contract in China

HEFEI, China – **Norfolk State** women's basketball star **Diamond Johnson** has inked a professional contract, signing with Hefei of the Women's Chinese Basketball Association (WCBA).



Johnson

Established in 2002 as the women's counterpart to the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA), the WCBA is the top women's professional basketball league in China. Hefei competes in the league's "Group B" division, comprised of nine teams.

Located in Hefei, the capital of Anhui, China, the basketball club posted a 16-16 record last season. The squad featured several standout players, including former Stanford all-American Kianna Williams.

Johnson has continued to shine since the end of her senior season, earning Most Valuable Player honors at the Women's College All-Star Game with a 21-point performance. She received a training camp contract in April with the WNBA's Minnesota Lynx.

Bestowed the 2024-25 **MEAC** Player of the Year award, Johnson led the Spartans 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 earned a spot on two prestigious postseason award watchlists: The Dawn Staley Award and Becky Hammon Mid-Major Player of the Year.

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 across a decorated career against Big Ten, ACC, and MEAC competition.

Johnson led the Spartans to a 30-5 record last season, the winningest campaign of the program's Division I history, while producing a

perfect 16-0 mark in MEAC play. Norfolk State finished the season ranked No. 5 in the College Insider Mid-Major Top 25 poll.

Johnson was named to the MEAC All-Tournament team for both championship runs, earning MEAC Tournament Most Outstanding Player honors after winning the 2024 title.

Etching herself through the Norfolk State record books, Johnson scored the most points in a single season in the program's Division I history (663) in 2024-25, knocking down the most 3-pointers as well (70).

Whitney Bays takes helm of West Virginia State women's basketball

INSTITUTE, W.Va. — **West Virginia State University (WVSU)** announced on Monday **Whitney Bays** as its new head women's basketball coach.



Bays

Bays arrives with a proven track record of building winning programs, developing elite talent, and prioritizing academic excellence throughout her career. Bays most recently served as assistant coach at Memphis University (2023-Present), where she oversaw the development of both post players and guards, managed recruiting strategies, and collaborated with staff on in-game tactics. Her responsibilities included creating film breakdowns, directing individual workouts, and monitoring the academic progress of student-athletes.

Prior to Memphis, Bays was assistant coach at Gardner-Webb University (2022-2023). Before her collegiate roles, Bays spent three years as assistant coach at Huntington (W.V.) High School (2019-2022).

Bays was a two-time Gatorade West Virginia Player of the Year (2008-2009) at Huntington where she averaged 24.4 points and 11.1 rebounds

per game as a senior and led her team to three state finals appearances.

She began her college playing career at the University of Maryland before transferring to Purdue University where she play from 2012 to 2015. There she earned second team all-Big Ten honors and set school records for rebounds in a season (304) and consecutive double-doubles (nine).

As a senior, she averaged 15.1 points, 9.8 rebounds, and 2.1 steals per game, ranking among the Big Ten's elite in rebounding and scoring. She also played professionally across five countries, including Puerto Rico, where she won a league championship and was named League MVP.

Bays holds a degree in Sociology and Business from Purdue (2015) and has consistently emphasized balancing athletic excellence with academic growth throughout her career.

"Whitney Bays is a proven leader who has consistently elevated programs at every level, from high school state championships to NCAA Tournament success," said **Sean McAndrews**, Interim Athletic Director at WVSU. "Her ability to develop elite talent while maintaining a relentless focus on academic accountability, makes her the perfect fit for our mission. Whitney's championship mindset, both as a player and coach, combined with her deep ties to West Virginia basketball, will ignite our program and inspire our student-athletes to compete at the highest level in the Mountain East Conference."

"I'm incredibly honored and humbled to be named the head women's basketball coach at WV State University," Bays said. "This university has a strong historical foundation, and I'm excited to build on that tradition. My vision is to develop champions on the court, in the classroom, and in life. I look forward to connecting with our student-athletes, faculty and staff, alumni, and community. It's good to be home. Go State!"

THE STAT CORNER

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

2025 CONFERENCE FOOTBALL MEDIA DAYS

CENTRAL INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (CIAA)
Wednesday, July 16 • Double Tree by Hilton Hotel RDU Airport
Durham, NC

SOUTHERN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC CONFERENCE (SIAC)
Wednesday, July 16 • Tubman African American Museum
Macon, GA

SOUTHWESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE (SWAC)
Wed., July 16 • Sheraton-Birmingham
Birmingham, AL

BIG SOUTH-OHIO VALLEY CONFERENCE (OVC)
Thurs., July 17 • Virtual
ESPN+

MID-EASTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE (MEAC)
Tues., July 22 • M&T Bank Stadium
Baltimore, MD