

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Tennessee State sports photo

YOU NEED TO KNOW

MOVING ON: Tennessee State head men's basketball coach Brian "Penny" Collins has resigned reportedly to take a job in the NBA.

BLACK COLLEGE PLAYERS AS NBA TRAILBLAZERS; TOP RETURNING FCS PLAYERS, HBCU TRANSFERS TO FBS

Three black college basketball pioneers honored during 2025 NBA Draft

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BCSP Editor

Three black college legends who broke the color line in the NBA some 75 years ago were honored during the first day of last week's 2025 NBA Draft at the Barclay's Center in Brooklyn.

Those honored were the late Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton who played at Xavier of Louisiana during the 1942-43 season and had stints with the New York Rens (1945-47) and Harlem Globetrotters (1947-50), the late Chuck Cooper, who played the 1944-45 season at then Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) member West Virginia State before finishing his career at Duquesne (1946-50), and the late Earl Lloyd who starred at WVSU from 1946 to 1950.

All made their NBA debuts in 1950.

Cooper, after an all-American playing career at Duquesne, was drafted with the 13th pick of the first round of the 1950 draft by the Boston Celtics. He is the first African-American ever selected in the NBA Draft.

Lloyd was next, taken with the second pick of 1950's ninth round, 100th overall, by the Washington Capitals.

Clifton, after a three-year stint in the Army and short stints with the Rens and Globetrotters, signed with the New York Knicks in 1950 at age 27.

The three were posthumously celebrated for their courage and unwavering contributions to the integration and advancement of the NBA.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver was joined onstage for the honors by the children of Cooper, Lloyd, and Clifton, as well as Naismith Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson and four-time NBA champion Andre Iguodala (see photo in UNDER THE BANNER).

"Chuck Cooper, Earl Lloyd, Nat 'Sweetwater' Clifton, three NBA pioneers, the league's first black players who 75 years ago made history," said Silver during his remarks honoring the historic trio. "As we continue to welcome the next generation of players into the league tonight, we also celebrate the accomplishments of the legends who came before them."

Silver continued, "Your fathers hold a special place in the creation of the modern NBA. They were courageous, they showed resolve, and they represent a thread that continues today: the power of sports to bring people together. We are honored to recognize their lasting contributions to the game."

African-Americans now constitute approximately 70% of current NBA players.

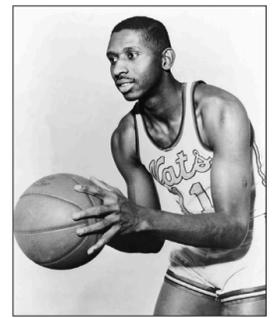
Lloyd has the distinction of being the first African-American to play in an NBA game debuting for the Capitals on Oct. 31, 1950. Cooper made his first appearance for the Celtics on November 1 while Clifton played his first



Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton



Chuck Cooper



Earl Lloyd

Knicks' game on November 4.

Cooper and Clifton have both been marked as the first African-Americans to ink an NBA contract.

Lloyd played nine seasons in the NBA, including stints with the Capitols, Syracuse Nationals and Detroit Pistons. He was a key player for the Nationals, contributing to their 1955 NBA championship win.

After his playing career, Lloyd became the first African American assistant coach in the NBA with the Detroit Pistons in 1968. He was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2003 as a contributor.

An All-American player at WVSU, Lloyd helped lead Yellow Jackets to an undefeated season in 1948.

He led WVSU to two CIAA regular season and tournament championships in 1948 and 1949. He was named All-CIAA three times (1948-50) and was All-American twice, as named by the *Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper (1949-50). As a senior, he averaged 14 points and 8 rebounds per game, while leading WVSU to a second-place finish in the CIAA regular season and tournament championship. In 1947-48, West Virginia State was the only undefeated team in the United States, with a 30-0 record. Lloyd graduated from WVSU with his B.S. degree in physical education in 1950.

Prior to being drafted in the 1950 Draft, Lloyd starred in the lineup of the Harlem Globetrotters. He led the team to two wins over the reigning NBA champion Minneapolis Lakers.

After playing just one semester at WVSU, Cooper was drafted to serve in the United States Navy in the final stages of World War II. He returned to his hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to play for the Duquesne Dukes.

During his time at Duquesne, the team had a 78-19 record and was invited to the then-prestigious National Invitation Tournament twice. He was a captain for the 1949-50 team, which was the first team from the university to be nationally ranked all season, finishing with a 23-6 record and ranked sixth nationally. He was

named a consensus second-team All-American in 1950. According to the November 18, 1950 issue of the *Afro-American* newspaper, he was the first Black "basketer" to be named an All-American college athlete.

Coming out of college in 1950, Cooper, like Lloyd and Clifton, signed with the Globetrotters. He was drafted by Celtics' owner Walter A. Brown, coached by the legendary Red Auerbach and a teammate of the great Bob Cousy, who was the fourth selection in the 1950 draft. When officials from other teams learned of Boston's interest in Cooper, they suggested he should not be drafted because he was black; however, Brown's famous quote was: "I don't give a damn if he's striped, plaid or polka dot. Boston takes Charles Cooper of Duquesne."

Cooper played four years with the Celtics then was traded to the Milwaukee Hawks before ending his career as a member of the Ft. Wayne Pistons. After that, he spent a year playing for the Harlem Magicians before injuring his back in a car crash and leaving basketball.

Cooper was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame on September 9, 2019.

After the war, Clifton joined the New York Rens, an all-black professional basketball team that toured throughout the United States. Noted for his large hands, which required a size 14 glove, he was invited to join the Harlem Globetrotters, for whom he played from the summer of 1948 to the spring of 1950.

During his eight seasons in the NBA, Clifton averaged 10 points and 9 rebounds per game. He was named to the 1957 NBA All-Star team, scoring 8 points in 23 minutes in the game. At age 34, he became the oldest player in NBA history to be named a first time All-Star.

In 1957, Clifton was part of a multi-player trade between the Knicks and the Fort Wayne Pistons, but after one season in Detroit he retired from basketball.

On February 14, 2014, Clifton was announced as a 2014 inductee by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. He formally entered the Hall as a contributor on August 8.

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



PIONEERS HONORED: NBA Commissioner Adam Silver (3rd from l.) is joined by (l. to r.) Naismith Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson, Chuck Cooper II, son of honoree Chuck Cooper, four-time NBA champion Andre Iguodala, Jatuan Robinson, daughter of honoree Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton and Kevin Lloyd, son of honoree Earl Lloyd at ceremonies at last week's NBA Draft honoring the three black college legends who broke the 'color barrier' in the NBA.

THE STAT CORNER

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

HBCU FCS TO FBS TRANSFERS

Sam Herder for *Hero Sports* has compiled a comprehensive list of FCS transfers to FBS programs. His HBCU FCS to FBS list is here. One proposal has FBS programs paying a \$200,000 'Development Fee' for each player they recruit off an FCS roster. In that scenario, **Tennessee State** would have garnered some \$2.8 million from this year's 14 transfers.

HBCU FCS TRANSFERS TO FBS PROGRAMS

NAME	POS	FCS TEAM	FBS TEAM
Cameron Williams (Sr)	OL	Alabama A&M	Kennesaw
Christian Anderson (So)	OL	Alabama A&M	Southern Miss
Dorian Wesley (Sr)	DL	Alabama A&M	Western Michigan
Sedrick Smith (So)	DL	Alabama A&M	Maryland
Marvin Smith (So)	DB	Alabama A&M	Western Michigan
Delvon Gullett (So)	CB	Alabama A&M	UAB
Jakeem Fletcher (Sr)	DT	Alabama State	WKU
Caleb Offord (Sr)	DB	Alabama State	Kennesaw State
Malachi Bailey (Sr)	DL	Alcorn State	Arizona
Anas Lugman (Sr)	DE	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	Ohio
Javonnie Gibson (Sr)	WR	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	Oklahoma
Rio Hay (So)	LS	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	UTEP
Aramoni Rhone (Sr)	WR	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	UTEP
Anthony Frederique (Sr)	P	Bethune-Cookman	Missouri State
Dennis Palmer (So)	RB	Bethune-Cookman	Troy
Marcus Velez (Sr)	TE	Bethune-Cookman	Buffalo
Thomas Nance (Sr)	TE	Bethune-Cookman	Temple
Ebubedike Nnabugwu (So)	OL	Delaware State	Missouri State
Kristian Tate (Sr)	WR	Delaware State	Troy
F'Janik Oguniade (Sr)	OL	Florida A&M	New Mexico State
James Ash (Sr)	DL	Florida A&M	Auburn
Koby Gross (Sr)	TE	Florida A&M	Ball State
Quan Lee (Sr)	WR	Florida A&M	Arkansas State
Javon Robinson (Sr)	WR	Grambling	Georgia State
Andrew Jones (Sr)	LB	Grambling	Ole Miss
Michael Garner (Sr)	DE	Grambling	Wisconsin
Jaden Hardy (Sr)	DL	Grambling	WKU
Brennan Ridley (So)	WR	Hampton	Bowling Green
Omar Ibrahim (Sr)	DB	Hampton	Temple
Jahzari Priestner (Sr)	DL	Hampton	Virginia Tech
Saint Farris (So)	DL	Hampton	App State
Richard Kramer (So)	DL	Hampton	Georgia State
Joshua Nobles (Sr)	DE	Jackson State	UMass
Isaiah Spencer (Sr)	WR	Jackson State	Virginia Tech
STrent Sims (So)	LS	Mississippi Valley State	FIU
AJ Richardson (Sr)	LB	Norfolk State	NC State
Eric Etienne (So)	DL	Norfolk State	WKU
Spencer Webb (So)	OL	North Carolina A&T	Eastern Michigan
Brock Stokes (Sr)	OL	North Carolina A&T	NC State
RJ Adams (Sr)	OL	North Carolina A&T	New Mexico
Kenji Christian (Sr)	RB	North Carolina A&T	Toledo
Karon Prunty (Sr)	DB	North Carolina A&T	Wake Forest
Jaylen Bowden (Sr)	DB	North Carolina Central	Minnesota
J'Mari Taylor (Sr)	RB	North Carolina Central	Virginia
William Boone (Sr)	OL	Prairie View A&M	North Carolina
Ayden Jones (So)	LB	Prairie View A&M	Texas State
Tray Franklin (Sr)	OL	South Carolina State	Coastal Carolina
Caden High (Sr)	WR	South Carolina State	Stanford
Ashaad Hall (Sr)	DE	South Carolina State	UTEP
Rodney Johnson (Sr)	DB	Southern	Louisville
Jelani Davis (Sr)	DT	Southern	Kent State
Tyler Kirkwood (Sr)	WR	Southern	Baylor
Jaden McGill (Sr)	(RB)	Tennessee State	WKU
Jordan Gant (Sr)	RB	Tennessee State	Akron
Hadine Diaby (Sr)	OL	Tennessee State	Nevada
Sanders Ellis (So)	LB	Tennessee State	Purdue
Tyler Jones (Sr)	DB	Tennessee State	UTEP
Gerard Bullock (Sr)	TE	Tennessee State	Kennesaw State
Boogie Trotter (Sr)	DB	Tennessee State	Marshall
Jordan Buchanan (Sr)	DB	Tennessee State	UNLV
Alexis Sanchez (Sr)	OL	Tennessee State	Bowling Green
Connor Meadows (Sr)	OL	Tennessee State	UCF
Karate Brenson (Sr)	WR	Tennessee State	Wake Forest
Eriq George (Sr)	DL	Tennessee State	Bowling Green
Jalen Bell (Sr)	DL	Tennessee State	Memphis
Cameron Blylock (Sr)	DT	Tennessee State	UTSA
Stephon Wright (Sr)	DL	Texas Southern	UConn
Keelan Cox (Sr)	DL	Texas Southern	Sam Houston
Jyrin Johnson (Sr)	TE	Texas Southern	Bowling Green

BCSP Notes

FCS preview chronicles top HBCU players, transfers

Sam Herder's *Preseason FCS Preview Central* for *Hero Sports* has chronicled conference realignment in the FCS, a Top 25 Preview, and identified his rankings for the best returning players in 2025 (online at <https://herosports.com/fcs-football-2025-preseason-preview-bzbz/>).

The highest rated black college player on the list is **Morgan State** senior linebacker **Erick Hunter** who missed most of last season with an undisclosed injury. Hunter is ranked the second best returning FCS linebacker behind FCS all-American A. J. Pena of Rhode Island.

In addition to being the anchor of the Bears' defensive attack, Hunter was a 2024 preseason FCS Football Central first team All-American and a second team *Phil Steele's FCS Preseason All-American*. He was on the *STATS PERFORM FCS Buck Buchanan Award* Preseason Watch List as well as a preseason MEAC first-teamer and on the HBCU and FCS Player of the Year Watch List.

Herder also has a comprehensive list of FCS transfers to FBS programs. The voluminous list of HBCU transfers is in **THE STAT CORNER**.

Below is his list of the top HBCU returning players.

BEST RETURNING FCS QUARTERBACKS

- Jacobian Morgan, Jackson State**
Senior, 6-4, 227
2024: 14 games, 163-256-8, 63.7%, 2,236 yds. (3rd), 21 TDs (2nd), 159.7 pygp. (5th)
2nd team all-SWAC, led JSU to SWAC & Celebration Bowl titles
- Walker Harris, North Carolina Central**
Senior, 6-1, 185, Redshirt Junior
2024: 10 games, 139-227-6, 61.2%, 1,882 yds. (2nd), 188.2 ypg. (2nd), 18 TDs (2nd)

BEST RETURNING FCS RUNNING BACKS

- Kevon King, Norfolk State**
Senior, 5-11, 200
2024: 11 games, 161 carries, 944 yds. (3rd in MEAC), 5.9 ypc. (.), 85.8 ypg. (3rd), 10 TDs (3rd), 4 100-yard games, 2nd team all-MEAC
2023: 9 games, 90 carries, 429 yds., 4.0 ypc., 47.6 ypg., 5 TDs
2022: 10 games, 48 carries, 261 yards, 5.1 ypc., 26.1 ypg., 1 TD
- Reggie Davis, Alcorn State** (transfer from Chattanooga)
Junior, 6-0, 200
2024: 12 games, 207 carries, 850 yds., 70.8 ypg., 4.1 ypc., 5 TDs
2023: 5 games, 40 carries, 165 yards, 33.0 ypg., 4.1 ypc., 1 TD

BEST RETURNING FCS LINEBACKERS

- Erick Hunter, Morgan State**
Senior, 6-4, 210 pounds
2024: 2 games, 8 tackles, 1 TFL

- 2023: 10 games, 75 tackles, 9.5 TFLs, 3 sacks, 2 forced fumbles, 2 INT, 7 QB hurries
2023 All-MEAC 1st Team - 2023 FCS Football Central 3rd Team All-American
2022: 11 games, 77 tackles, 6.5 TFLs, 1.5 sacks, 5 QB hurries, 4 pass breakups
17. **Stemarion Edwards, Norfolk State** (transfer from Alcorn State)
Senior, 6-0, 220
2024: 12 games, 95 tackles, 7.9 tpg. (3rd in SWAC), 2.5 sacks, 13.5 TFL (5th), 2nd team all-SWAC
2023: 11 games, 67 tackles, 6.1 tpg. (17th), 2.5 sacks

BEST RETURNING OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

- Ashton Grable, Florida A&M**
Redshirt Junior, 6-4, 315
2024: 1st team all-SWAC; 2023: 2nd team all-SWAC
- D'Andre Townes-Blue, Jackson State**
Senior, 6-5, 315
2024: 1st team all-SWAC
- Trevon Humphrey, North Carolina Central**
Redshirt Sophomore, 6-5, 255
2024: 1st team all-MEAC; 2023: 1st team all-MEAC
- Charles Davis, Florida A&M**
Redshirt, 6-5, 300
2024: 1st team all-SWAC
- Vincent Byrd Jr., Norfolk State**
Senior, 6-3, 305
2024: 2nd team all-MEAC

BEST RETURNING FCS TIGHT ENDS

- Dupree Fuller, Southern**
Senior, 6-3, 225
2024: 13 games, 30 rec., 411 yds., 3 TDs, 2.3 cpg., 12.3 ypc., 28.4 ypg.

"Penny" Collins leaves Tennessee State

NASHVILLE — **Tennessee State University** head men's basketball coach **Brian "Penny" Collins** has stepped down, effective immediately, to accept a coaching position in the NBA. There has been no official word on where in the NBA Collins will be working.

Assistant coach **Erik Buggs** will serve as interim head coach during the transition.

Collins' departure marks the end of a seven-year tenure that helped rebuild, reshape, and restore the tradition of excellence in TSU men's basketball. Under his leadership, the Tigers made consistent strides, culminating in a semifinal appearance in last season's Ohio Valley Conference Tournament and finishing with a 17-16 overall record, 12-8 conference mark. His record at TSU was 98-120 with at least 17 wins over four seasons and winning records in each of the last three seasons.

"On behalf of Tennessee State University, I wish Coach Collins and his family the very best as they begin this exciting new chapter," said Director of Athletics **Dr. Mikki Allen**.

Buggs joined TSU last season after spending three years at UT Martin, where he was instrumental in the Skyhawks' 24-win campaign and Ohio Valley Conference regular season title in 2022-23.