

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



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IAN WHEELER: Chicago Bears RB out of Howard scores two TDs, leading black college players in NFL preseason games.

WE'RE LIVE IN 2025

2025 SEASON KICKS OFF IN ATLANTA SATURDAY; FIRST TAKE TO AIR LIVE AT FOUR HBCU SITES

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



ESPN FIRST TAKE HOSTS

Molly Qerim (l.) and Stephen A. Smith (r.)

ESPN'S FIRST TAKE TO AIR LIVE BEFORE FOUR HBCU GAMES IN 2025:

ESPN's signature morning debate show *First Take* with featured commentator and executive producer **Stephen A. Smith** and host **Molly Qerim** announced Monday four live shows on-site at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) this fall. This marks the show's largest HBCU fall tour to date.

First Take has a history of visiting HBCUs or in support of HBCU week since 2019. The show has traveled to **Winston-Salem State University** (2023) and home to alum, **Stephen A. Smith**; and to **Florida A&M** in 2021 with comedian **Kevin Hart** and movie producer **Will Packer**, a Florida A&M alum. The show also celebrated *HBCU Week* at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in 2022 and at 76ers Fieldhouse in Wilmington, Del. in 2019.

Last year, the show visited three HBCUs: **Howard University**, **Tennessee State University** and **Clark Atlanta**.

ESPN's *First Take* airs weekdays from 10 a.m. – Noon ET on ESPN.

Here are the HBCUs and dates for the live fall shows. Subject to change.

SITE & GAME **2025 DATE**
Norfolk State University **Thurs., Aug. 28**
 Norfolk State vs. Virginia State
Labor Day Classic **Sat., Aug. 30**

Legion Field, Birmingham, AL **Fri., Oct. 24**
 Alabama State vs. Alabama A&M
Amazon Magic City Classic **Sat., Oct. 25**

Delaware State University **Wed., Oct. 29**
 Delaware State vs. Norfolk State
Thurs., Oct. 30
 at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field

Bethune-Cookman University **Thurs., Nov. 20**
 Bethune-Cookman vs. Florida A&M **Sat., Nov. 22**
Florida Blue Florida Classic at Orlando's Camping World Stadium

– Aug. 28 at Norfolk State University (Norfolk, Va.)

A public HBCU established in 1935 and originally part of Virginia State University, Norfolk State opens its football season against Towson University on Aug. 28, where former NFL quarterback **Michael Vick** will make his Norfolk State head coaching debut. Earlier this year, **Vick** was named a 2025 College Football Hall of Fame inductee.

– Oct. 24 at Amazon Magic City Classic presented by Coca-Cola; Legion Field (Birmingham, Ala.)

The *Amazon Magic City Classic* presented by Coca-Cola is the largest HBCU football game held annually in the country. It features **Alabama A&M** versus **Alabama State** and is played at Legion Field in Birmingham, Ala.

– Oct. 29 at Delaware State University (Dover, Del.)

One of the nation's oldest HBCUs, established in 1891, **Delaware State** is a public historically black land-grant research university serving as a flagship HBCU in Delaware. Delaware State takes on **Norfolk State** on Oct. 30 at Lincoln Financial Field.

– Nov. 20 at Bethune-Cookman University (Daytona, Fla.)

Founded in 1904 by **Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune**, Bethune-Cookman is a private HBCU. *First Take* will be on-site prior to **Bethune-Cookman and Florida A&M's** football matchup on Nov. 22.

It's Time!! Contenders meet in Challenge in Atlanta

LUT WILLIAMS
 BCSP Editor

All eyes will be on Atlanta this Saturday as the 2025 black college football season kicks off with the *Cricknet MEAC/SWAC Challenge*.

The Week Zero game, to be held at Center Parc Stadium in the ATL (7:30 p.m. on ABC), will pit a couple of runners-up from the 2024 season, **North Carolina Central** of the MEAC vs. **Southern** of the SWAC.

The NCCU Eagles, in their seventh season under head coach **Trei Oliver**, are coming off an 8-3 overall mark in 2024, finishing behind league champ **South Carolina State** at 4-1 in the MEAC. NCCU's only conference loss was a 24-21 decision at SCSU.

The Southern Jaguars finished 8-5 under first-year head coach **Terrence Graves** last season, 7-1 to win the SWAC West. The Jags fell to eventual league champ **Jackson State** 41-13 in the SWAC title game after losing to JSU 33-15 in the regular season.

Both teams will be looking to take the next step and emerge as conference champions in 2025. If so, it would bring them back to Atlanta at Mercedes Benz Stadium on December 14 for the season-ending *Cricknet Celebration Bowl*.

The MEAC leads the series 11-7 over the SWAC. **Florida A&M** of the SWAC narrowly edged the MEAC's **Norfolk State Spartans** 24-23 in last year's game.

The 2025 Match Up

NC Central and Southern could not be more different in terms of the player at the controls of their offenses.

The Eagles return veteran redshirt senior **Walker Harris** at quarterback who sat two years behind former MEAC two-time Player of the Year **Davius Richard** before assuming the reins of the Eagles' offense a year ago.

Harris was solid if not spectacular in 2024. The left-hander completed 61.2% of his passes for 1,882 yards and 18 TDs with six interceptions. He rushed for another two TDs. Harris also now has **Richard** as his quarterbacks coach.

NCCU lost key cogs of its 2024 offense. MEAC and team rushing leader **J'Mari Taylor** (1,146 yards, 15 TDs) transferred to Virginia while top receiver **Markell Quick** (26 receptions, 527 yds., 5 TDs) bolted to Tennessee. **Joaquin Davis** who had 31 receptions and 4 TDs in 2024 is in the Denver Broncos NFL camp.

The Eagles return five starters led by sophomore standout **Trevon Humphrey** on the offensive line. Redshirt sophomore **Chance Peterson** (21 rec., 277 yds. 2 TDs) and senior **Chauncey Spikes** are key returnees at wide receiver. The defense is led by preseason all-



NC Central Sports Photo



Southern Sports Photo

OPPOSING FORCES: NC Central veteran senior QB **Walker Harris** (l.) will have to contend with Southern all-American senior defensive lineman **Kelby Givens** (r.) when their teams meet Saturday in Atlanta's SWAC/MEAC Challenge to kick off the 2025 black college football season live on ABC (7:30 p.m.).

American defensive back, senior **Malcolm Reed** (60 tackles, 9 pass break-ups), redshirt senior linebacker **Max URen** (56 tackles, 6.0 TFL) and redshirt junior defensive lineman **Thomas Johnson**.

By contrast, Southern rode the play of redshirt freshman QB **Czavian "Zae" Teasett** and junior **Noah Bodden** to last year's SWAC title game. Both have transferred. Teasett signed on at Southern's big in-state rival **Grambling State**. The BCSP could not identify a transfer landing for **Bodden**, who left Grambling to join Southern in 2022.

It leaves Graves with just one quarterback with SWAC experience on his roster, 6-1, 200-pound sophomore **Jalen Woods** who played in six games in '24 completing 38 of 66 passes (57.5%) for 541 yards, 4 TDs with 3 interceptions.

Woods is considered to be ahead and

Lincoln (Pa.) loses championship hoops coach

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, PA. – The **Lincoln University (PA)** athletics department announced Friday that Head Women's Basketball Coach **Janice Washington** will be moving on after four impactful seasons at the helm of the Lions program for a new opportunity to coach professionally.

During her tenure, Washington compiled an overall record of 64-50, highlighted by the historic 2021-22 season when she led the Lions to a CIAA Championship with a 22-8 record, defeating **Elizabeth City State** 67-52 in the title game. Under her leadership, the Lions also secured back-to-back CIAA Northern Division titles in 2022 and 2023.

Washington was named CIAA Coach of the Year in 2023 and developed standout talent, including the CIAA Player of the

GAMES THIS WEEK

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23

MEAC / SWAC Challenge

Norfolk Carolina Central vs. Southern in Atlanta, GA - ABC 7:30p

likely to start Saturday ahead of **Jackson State** transfer **Cam'Ron McCoy**, true freshman **Dillon Compton** and junior college transfer **Ashton Strother**, a recent addition.

The Jags lost 2024 rushing leaders **Kobe Dillon** (801 yards, 1 TD) and **Kendric Rhymes** (662 yds., 7 TDs) and top pass catcher **Chandler Whitfield** (23 rec., 411 yds., 4 TDs) to graduation. They plucked running backs **Zaccheus Cooper** (5-10, 210) and **Christian Smith** (5-9, 195) from SWAC West rival **Alcorn State** and former Mr. Louisiana **Trey Holly** (5-7, 192) from LSU, **Mike Franklin** (6-2, 225) from Jacksonville State and **Princeton Cahee** (5-10, 190) from Louisiana Tech to shore up the rushing attack.

Grad senior tight end **Dupree Fuller** (30 rec., 370 yds., 2 TDs) is one of the top receivers at his position in black college football. **Darren Morris** and junior college standout **Malachi Jackson** are expected to be prime contributors in the passing game.

Four of the five starters return on the offensive line.

Southern will feature preseason defensive all-American lineman and preseason SWAC Defensive Player of the Year, senior **Kelby Givens**, who was among the FCS leaders in sacks (12.0, 6th) and tackles for loss (27.5, 2nd) in 2024. Linebacker **Vincent Page Jr.**, who led the team with 84 stops, returns for his senior season as does grad senior **Horacio Johnson** (74 tackles) in the secondary.



Washington

Year and CIAA Tournament Most Valuable Player, **Bryanna Brown**.

Former star guard **Kania Pollock** transitioned into a coaching role and became a member of her staff last season. Her teams posted one of the highest GPAs with an impressive 3.4 cumulative GPA during her tenure and an over 80% Graduation Rate.

"This is a bittersweet moment for the university, said Lincoln University VP of Advancement and Athletic Director, **Harry Stinson III**. "We are losing a dynamic leader, an outstanding coach and someone who truly continued laying the foundation for our program to thrive and succeed."



chicagobears.com Photo

PRAYERS ANSWERED!! Chicago running back **IAN WHEELER** (#33, HOWARD), whose first season with the Bears was cut short by a devastating knee injury in the 2024 preseason, looks skyward in thanks after scoring his second touchdown Sunday on a 10-yard fourth-quarter run. Wheeler scored earlier from one yard out and finished the day with 19 carries for 80 yards.



jaguars.com Photo

TUTEN EMERGES!! Jacksonville rookie running back **BHAYSHUL TUTEN** (#33, NORTH CAROLINA A&T/Virginia Tech) emerges from a pile to score on a 3-yard run for the Jaguars in Sunday's 17-17 tie with New Orleans. It was the rookie's second TD in as many games. He finished with 35 rushing yards on 10 carries (3.5 yards per carry).



TOO LATE!!:

Washington rookie running back **JACORY CROSKY-MERRITT** (#32, ALABAMA STATE/Arizona) is hit by a Cincinnati defender after he crosses the goal line completing a 27-yard first-quarter TD run. Croskey-Merritt finished the 31-17 loss to the Bengals with 46 rushing yards on 11 carries (4.2 yards per carry).

BCSP NFL PLAYERS OF THE WEEK

For preseason games of August 15 - 18, 2025



in for 41 plays on offense (48%).

OFFENSE (2)

– #33 **IAN WHEELER**, RB, Chicago (2nd season, HOWARD) - In Sunday's 38-0 win over Buffalo Sunday, Wheeler had 19 carries for 80 yards (4.2 yards per carry) with a long carry of 12 yards and scoring runs of 1 and 10 yards. He was



in for 47 offensive snaps (70%) and six on special teams (20%).

– #19 **CHRIS BLAIR**, WR, Atlanta (2nd season, ALCORN STATE) - Started at wide receiver in the Falcons' 23-20 loss to Tennessee Friday and had three receptions in five targets for 78 yards (26.0 yards per catch) with a long reception of 52 yards that went for a third-quarter touchdown. It was his second TD reception in two preseason games and second from back-up QB **Easton Stick**. Blair was in for 47



in for 11 on special teams (42%).

DEFENSE

– #37 **BOBBY PRICE**, CB, Washington (6th season, NORFOLK STATE) - In the Commanders' 31-17 loss vs. Cincinnati Monday, Price finished with six solo tackles. He played 40 defensive snaps (52%) and 11 on special teams (42%).

SPECIAL TEAMS

– #29 **BRANDON CODRINGTON**, CB/KR, NY Jets (2nd season, NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL) - In 38-0 win over Chicago Sunday, Codrington started at cornerback and had four solo tackles and one hit on a quarterback. He also returned one punt for 13 yards and two kickoffs for 55 yards (27.5 yards per return) with a long return of 28 yards. Codrington was in for 53 plays on defense (62%) and eight on special teams (35%).



he took in for a first-quarter touchdown. He also had 2 catches for 0 yards. He was in for 19 offensive plays (37%) and one on special teams (4%).

ROOKIES ON OFFENSE (2)

– #32 **JACORY CROSKY-MERRITT**, RB, Washington (Rookie, ALABAMA STATE/Arizona) - In Commanders' 31-17 loss to Cincinnati Monday, JCM had a team-high 11 carries for 46 yards (4.2 yards per carry) with a long run of 27 yards that he took in for a first-quarter touchdown. He also had 2 catches for 0 yards. He was in for 19 offensive plays (37%) and one on special teams (4%).



His longest run was for 7 yards. He also had one reception for six yards in his only target. He was in on 14 offensive snaps (22%) and five on special teams (23%).

– #33 **BHAYSHUL TUTEN**, RB, Jacksonville (Rookie, NORTH CAROLINA A&T/Virginia Tech) - In Sunday's 17-17 tie with New Orleans, Tuten had 10 carries for 35 yards (3.5 yards per carry) with a 3-yard, second-quarter TD run, his second rushing touchdown in two games.



in for 40 defensive snaps (56%).

ROOKIES ON DEFENSE

– #99 **ELIJAH WILLIAMS**, DE, Minnesota (Rookie, MORGAN STATE) - In New England's 20-12 win over Minnesota Saturday, Williams had five total tackles, three solos while playing 40 defensive snaps (56%).