

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Maryland-Eastern Shore Sports Photo

SURVIVE AND ADVANCE!

ONLY TWO OUT OF 20 PLAYING; TOURNEY RESULTS BELOW; NFL PLAYERS ON THE MOVE

STILL STANDING: The Howard and Prairie View men, and Southern women got early wins but only the Lady Hawks of UMES under Malikah Willis (above) and the Langston men are still playing.

Two black college teams still standing

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BCSP Editor

After all the hoopla, hype and Madness of postseason basketball, only two black college teams out of the 20 that entered play – the women of **Maryland-Eastern Shore** in the WNIT and the men of **Langston** in the NAIA – are left standing (see POSTSEASON TOURNAMENT RECAPS) and were playing as of Tuesday.

Maryland-Eastern Shore women

The UMES women, led by second-year head coach **Malikah Willis**, stepped up this season and were part of unseating three-time champion **Norfolk State** in the **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference**.

Willis's troops tied NSU for second in the MEAC regular season behind eventual champion **Howard**, splitting two games with Norfolk State

in the regular season before losing a close game to the Spartans in the MEAC Tournament.

Granted a bid to the Women's National Invitational Tournament by virtue of its 19-14 record and conference finish, the Lady Hawks went into ACC territory and came away with a win as they downed Wake Forest on its home floor Friday, 59-48. It was a the first postseason win for the UMES program and its first win against a power conference opponent.

The Lady Hawks were in action in a second round WNIT game Tuesday (6:30 p.m.) at Youngstown State (24-9).

Langston men

The **Langston** Lions (29-7) under the direction of third-year head coach **Chris Wright** were in the NAIA Championship game Tuesday for the second time in three years. In the title game, they



Willis



Wright

faced the same program, Freed-Hardeman of Tennessee (34-1), that the Lions fell to in the 2024 NAIA title game, 71-64. In that game, Langston led for most of the game before falling apart in the final two minutes.

Wright, whose name has been mentioned for several black college coaching vacancies, guided **Tougaloo College** to the NAIA finals before moving to Langston.

2026 POSTSEASON TOURNAMENT RECAPS

NAIA MEN

Langston 72, Ave Maria 69, OT

After opening round wins over Bethel (73-65) and Eastern Oregon (86-59), the Lions squeaked by Oklahoma Wesleyan 56-55 Friday, defeated Rocky Mountain (Mont.) 60-55 Saturday and came back to take down Ave Maria 72-69 in overtime Monday to reach the NAIA national championship game It is the Lions second trip to the national title game in three years.

Orlando Thomas led Langston with 17 points. **Trey Clarke** had 12 points and nine rebounds, **Antonio Lewis** finished with 11, and **Omar Henry** tossed in 10 points and five rebounds for the Lions (29-7) in the win.

NCAA MEN

FIRST FOUR - MIDWEST REGION

Howard 86, UMBC 83

DAYTON, OH – **MEAC** champion and 16th-seeded **Howard** got great contributions from a bevy of players and held on down the stretch to squeak by America East champion UMBC 86-83 for its first-ever NCAA Tournament win at the Midwest Region First Four here Tuesday evening.

The Bison (24-10), under head coach **Kenny Blakeney**, led 49-41 at the break and were up 83-72 with 2:23 to play before the Retrievers pulled within two twice in the final minute.

Six-five senior forward **Ose Okojie** led the team with a career-high 23 points. Six-four grad guard **Bryce Harris** had 19 points and a game-and season-high 14 rebounds. **Cedric Taylor**, a 6-7 junior forward transfer from **Morehouse**, had 16 points and 6 rebounds. Junior point guard **Sam Gillis** had 8 points and handed out 7 assists. Junior 6-4 forward **Alex Cotton** had 8 points and sophomore forward **Travelle Bryson** 11 points off the bench.

Howard advanced to meet Midwest Region top seed Michigan (31-3) in Thursday's second round in Buffalo, NY.

FIRST FOUR - SOUTH REGION

Prairie View A&M 67, Lehigh 55

DAYTON, OH – The same trio of grad guard **Dontae Horne**, senior forward **Cory Wells** and senior point guard **Lance Williams** that led **Prairie View A&M** to four wins in five days to take the **SWAC** Tournament championship a week earlier, led the Panthers (19-17) to a historic win, a 67-55 victory over Patriot League champion Lehigh in the NCAA Tournament South Region First Four Wednesday evening, the first NCAA Tourney win in program history.

Horne, the SWAC tournament MVP, had a team-high 23 points with 7 rebounds and 4 steals. Wells had 19 points and a team-high 11 rebounds, 3 steals and 3 blocks. Williams had 10 points while directing the offense. The trio accounted for 52 of the Panthers' 67 total points. Six-eight junior forward **Hassane Diallo** came off the bench to score 8 points, grab eight rebounds, block three shots and get his hands on several balls that he tipped to his teammates.

The 16th-ranked Panthers advanced to face No.1 South Region seed Florida (26-7) on Friday, March 20 at 9:25 p.m. in Tampa, Fla.

FIRST ROUND - MIDWEST REGION

Michigan 101, **Howard** 80

BUFFALO, NY - **MEAC** champion **Howard** hung with Midwest Region top seed Michigan for a half, only trailing 50-46 at the break, before the Wolverines slowly pulled away to a 101-80 win in a first round NCAA Tournament matchup.

Michigan (32-3) shot 65.3% (17-of-26) in the first half and 65.8% (20-of-29) in the second half to grow the lead to as much as 31 points in the final minutes.

Cam Gillis and **Bryce Harris** both had 21 points and **Cedric Taylor III** 19 to lead the 16th-seeded Bison (24-11).

FIRST ROUND - MIDWEST REGION

Iowa State 108, **Tennessee** State 74

ST. LOUIS, MO - Powered by a 23-0 first-half run, region 2nd-seed Iowa State ran out to a 55-29 halftime lead and cruised to a 108-74 win over 15th-seed OVC champion **Tennessee State** in a first round Midwest Region match up.

The ISU (28-7) lead never dipped below that halftime margin though TSU (23-10) scored 45 second-half points. The Tigers were led by 6-6 senior guard **Aaron Nkrumah's** 21 points and 6-8 junior forward **Antoine Lorick III's** 20.

FIRST ROUND - SOUTH REGION

Florida 114, **Prairie View A&M** 55

TAMPA, FL - South Region top seed Florida used its size and depth to overwhelm **SWAC** champion **Prairie View A&M** 114-65 in Friday's first round game.

The Gators (27-7) built an insurmountable 60-21 lead at the half on 75.0% shooting (24 of 32). They ended up shooting 64.3% (45 of 70) for the game with seven players scoring in double digits. Prairie View (19-18), seeded 16th in the region, got 16 from **Tai'Reon Joseph** and 12 from **Dontae Horne**.

NCAA WOMEN

FIRST FOUR - SACRAMENTO 4 REGIONAL

Southern 65, Samford 53

COLUMBIA, SC – **SWAC** champion **Southern** got its second consecutive First Four win Thursday as they pulled away in the fourth quarter from Southern Conference champion Samford for a 65-53 win.

The teams were tied at 44 thru three quarters but the Lady Jaguars (20-13) crafted a 21-9 advantage in the final period fueled by 6-1 sophomore forward **DeMaya Porter's** effort. Porter had ten of her 15 points and eight of her 12 rebounds in the second half. Grad guard

2026 FINAL BCSP MEN'S DIV. I BASKETBALL TOP FIVE

- HOWARD** (24-11) - **Kenny Blakeney's** Bison won **MEAC** regular season (11-3) and tournament titles and prevailed over America East champion UMBC in NCAA First Four for their first-ever NCAA win. Lost to No. 1 region seed Michigan in first round. Led by dynamic duo of league player of the year **Bryce Harris** and **Morehouse** transfer **Cedric Taylor III** who led MEAC in scoring (17.2 ppg.) and rebounding (6.9 and 6.7 rpg.).
- Tennessee State** (23-10) - In his first year, **Nolan Smith** led the historic Tiger program to share of OVC regular season title (15-5) and OVC Tourney title and to first NCAA berth since 1994, falling as a 15-seed to 2-seed Iowa State. All-OVC trio of Player of the year **Aaron Nkrumah** (17.7 ppg.), **Travis Harper II** (17.1), **Dante Harris** (11.7) led the way.
- Prairie View A&M** (19-18) - Despite finishing eighth in SWAC regular season, **Byron Smith's** troops got four wins in five days to take SWAC Tournament title, knocking off regular season champ **Bethune-Cookman** in the process. Went on to post first-ever NCAA win in First Four over Patriot League champ Lehigh before falling to No. 1 seed Florida. Trio of **Dontae Horne** (20.1 ppg.), **Cory Wells** (13.2) and **Lance Williams** (10.1) sparked postseason run.
- Bethune-Cookman** (17-15) - Head coach **Reggie Theus** led Wildcats to first-ever **SWAC** regular season title (14-4) before losing to Prairie View in tournament quarterfinals. **Jakobi Heady** (18.2 ppg.), **Daniel Rouzan** (11.8) were Wildcat leaders.
- Morgan State** (14-16) - Second-place finish (10-4) in **MEAC** earned head coach **Kevin Broadus** the league's coach of the year award. Bears upset in tournament quarterfinals by **Delaware State**. **Alfred Worrell's** 17.1 ppg. and **Elijah Davis** (13.8) led MSU.

2026 FINAL BCSP MEN'S DIV. II/NAIA BASKETBALL TOP FIVE

- MOREHOUSE** (22-10) - In his first season, mercurial head coach **Larry Dixon** guided the dominant Maroon Tigers to the **SIAC** regular season (19-5) and tournament title over **Tuskegee**, earning Div. II playoff berth where they fell to defending national champion and overall top seed Nova Southeastern. Quintet of double-figure scorers led by **Sincere Moore's** 13.9 ppg.
- FAYETTEVILLE STATE** (23-7) - In Broncos first season under **Devin Hoehn**, went undefeated (10-0) to take **CIAA** Southern Div. title before sweeping to tournament crown. As 5th-seed, lost to Cal (PA) in D2 playoffs. **Larry Howell's** 20.6 ppg. led quintet of double-digit scorers. Prevailed at Morehouse in two overtimes in regular season.
- Virginia Union** (24-5) - After posting best overall record (23-5), **Jay Butler's** squad stunned by **JC Smith** in **CIAA** quarterfinals. Went on as 7-seed in Div. II playoffs to knock off high-scoring 2-seed West Liberty before losing in OT to 6th-seed Indiana (PA). **Bobby Gardner** (11.6 ppg.) and **Malachi Dark** (11.1) led balanced scoring attack.
- Tuskegee** (22-8) - **Benji Taylor** guided Golden Tigers to top of **SIAC** West (19-5) and to tournament finals loss to **Morehouse**. **SIAC** POY **Kusamae Draper** (16.1 ppg., 7.5 rpg.), **Khalil Genwright** (14.5p., 4.5r.), **RJ Walker** (12.7) were the catalysts.
- Langston** (29-7) - **Chris Wright's** Lions are in the NAIA national championship game (Tues.) for the second time in three years after posting five NAIA Tournament wins. The wins come after losing in overtime in the Sooner Conference championship to Oklahoma City. They met Freed-Hardeman in Tuesday's NAIA title game, the same team that defeated the Lions in the 2024 championship game. **Orlando Thomas** (15.7 ppg.) and **Antonio Lewis** (11.9) are top Lions scorers.

2026 FINAL BCSP WOMEN'S DIV. I BASKETBALL TOP FIVE

- HOWARD** (26-8) - **Ty Grace's** Lady Bison rolled to **MEAC** regular season title (13-1) and the league's tournament title and received the program's highest NAAC seed (14th) before falling to 3rd-seed Ohio State. **Zennia Thomas** led MEAC scoring (15.2) and rebounding (7.9) stats en route to winning player of the year and Tournament MVP awards.
- Alabama A&M** (22-11) - Head coach **Dawn Thornton** led Lady Bulldogs to first-ever **SWAC** regular season title (17-1) but were knocked off by eventual champion **Southern** in SWAC Tournament semis. Received WBIT bid but lost to top seed Brigham Young in first round. A&M featured SWAC Player of the Year **Kalia Walker** (14.5 ppg.).
- Southern** (20-14) - **Carlos Fuchess** worked **SWAC** Tourney magic for third time in four years, coming from 5th-seed to defeat **Alabama State** for title and then knock off SoCon champ Samford for second straight NCAA First Four win. Lost to top seed South Carolina in NCAA first round. **Jocelyn Tate** was SWAC Tourney MVP, **DeMya Porter** second team all-SWAC.
- Maryland-Eastern Shore** (20-14) - Under the tutelage of second-year head coach **Malikah Willis**, UMES tied **Norfolk State** for second in MEAC (11-3) and as 2nd-seed lost to NSU in semis. Beat ACC member Wake Forest in WNIT first round for first-ever postseason win and power conference takedown. **Ashanti Lynch** (12.1 ppg.) and **Brianna Barnes** (10.0) star.
- Norfolk State** (18-15) - New coach **Jermaine Woods** leads Lady Spartans to second-place tie with UMES in **MEAC** and to tourney finals vs. **Howard**. Bow out in first round of WNIT. **Da'Brya Clark** (13.9 ppg.), **Jasha Clinton** (13.1) all-MEAC selectees.

2026 FINAL BCSP WOMEN'S DIV. II/NAIA BASKETBALL TOP FIVE

- WINSTON-SALEM STATE** (28-4) - First-year head coach **Tierra Terry** led Lady Rams to 16-game win streak, **CIAA** S. Div. and tourney titles and two wins to reach D2 Atlantic Regional finals before falling to homestanding Indiana (PA) one game short of Elite Eight. Terry was CIAA Coach of the Year. **Maia Charles** (12.9 ppg., 9.2 rpg.), **Naveah Farmer** (10.0) and **Makayla Waleed** (11.0) all-CIAA.
- Miles** (25-6) - Under **Pete Asmond**, Lady Golden Bears ran to **SIAC** West title (20-4) and handled **Lane** in **SIAC** Tourney finals for third consecutive title. Lost to Nova Southeastern in D2 South Regional. Five-three freshman point guard **Samaritan Franklin** (12.4 ppg., league-best 5.3 apg.) drove offense and was all-SIAC first team and tournament's outstanding player.
- Fayetteville State** (21-6) - Finished behind WSSU in **CIAA** South and in tournament finals. Battled for two OTs before losing in Atlantic Regional to Seton Hill. **Talia Trotter** (11.1 ppg.) and **Ka'Nyah O'Neal** (10.0) all-CIAA.
- Edward Waters** (23-6) - **SIAC** Coach of the Year, **Eric Jackson Jr.**, led Tigers to top of SIAC East (21-3) before being blitzed by **Albany State** in **SIAC** quarterfinals. Earned NCAA trip where they fell to top seed Alabama-Huntsville in South Regional. Newcomer of the Year **Imani Harris** (10.9 ppg.), **Tan Brown** (14.6) and **Shcera Fowles** (league-best 10.0 rpg.) starred.
- Bowie State** (19-8) - Won **CIAA** North Division title (8-1, 11-5 CIAA) but lost close game to **Fayetteville State** in **CIAA** Tournament semifinals. **Mia Smith** (10.4 ppg.) was Bulldogs' top scorer.

BCSP Notes

Black college NFL players finding new homes

Some of the most unheralded but outstanding black college players in the NFL have found new homes.

Former **South Carolina State** standout defensive back **Cobie Durant**, **Emanuel Wilson** who starred as a running back at **Fort Valley State** and **Johnson C. Smith**, former **Fayetteville State** defensive back **Joshua Williams** and former **Howard** and Cincinnati safety **Bryan Cook** have all found new digs after establishing themselves in the NFL.

Durant was picked in the fourth round of the 2022 NFL Draft by the LA Rams and spent four years working his way into a starting cornerback position. As a rookie in 2022, he led the team with three interceptions and led the league with 151 interception return yards including one pick he returned for a touchdown. He added four picks in 2024 and another last season, again bringng that theft back for a TD.

Durant has been signed to a one-year \$5.5 million contract by the Dallas Cowboys.

Wilson was signed as a free agent by Green Bay in 2023 after being waived by Denver. He had an outstanding preseason and made the Packers roster as a reserve running back to begin that season. He



Durant



Wilson



Cook



Williams

was used sparingly in 2023 but broke out in 2024 and became the primary back-up RB averaging 4.9 yards per carry and rushing for 502 yards and four touchdowns. In 2025, he totalled 496 rushing yards and had three TDs.

The hard-running, rugged 230-pounder was signed to a one-year deal by Seattle as a potential replacement after losing Super Bowl MVP Kenneth Walker III to Kansas City.

Both Cook and Williams were selected by Kansas City in the second and fourth rounds respectively of the 2022 NFL Draft and both were on Chiefs' Super Bowl winning teams in 2022 and 2023.

Cook started 47 of 62 games at safety in his four years with the Chiefs and had 238 tackles and four interceptions. He also had one postseason interception.

Cook has signed a three-year deal worth a reported \$40.25 million with \$14 million guaranteed to next man the safety position for the Cincinnati Bengals. He is now among the top-12 highest paid safeties in the NFL.

Williams once played regularly and had some starts at cornerback for the Chiefs during his first two seasons but has primarily been used on special teams in the last two seasons. He played in a minimum of 15 games in each of his four years with KC and posted 97 total tackles and one interception in his rookie season.

He has signed a two-year contract with the Tennessee Titans.

Jayla Reed led Southern with 16 points while SWAC Tourney MVP **Jocelyn Tate** had 10.

FIRST ROUND - FORT WORTH I REGIONAL

Ohio State 75, **Howard** 54

COLUMBUS, OH – **MEAC** women's champion, 14th-seeded **Howard**, came out strong but was on the short end of a 23-4 second quarter that proved to be its undoing as the Bison fell, 75-54, to 3rd-seeded Ohio State in the first round of the Fort Worth I Regional.

Howard (26-8) got 15 points and 6 rebounds from 6-2 senior forward **Zennia Thomas**, the MEAC Tourney MVP, 14 and a team-high 10 rebounds from freshman point guard **Ariella Henigan** and 12 points from redshirt junior **Zoe Stewart**.

FIRST ROUND - SACRAMENTO 4 REGIONAL

South Carolina 103, **Southern** 34

COLUMBIA, SC – Region top seed South Carolina limited **SWAC** champion and 16th-seed **Southern** to just two third-quarter points allowing the Gamecocks (32-3) to pull away from a 44-19 halftime edge and post a 103-34 win.

The Lady Jaguars (20-14) managed just 12 field goals in the game and shot a combined 12 of 65 (18.4%) for the game. SWAC Tournament MVP **Jocelyn Tate** was the only Southern player to score in double figures with 10 points.

WNIT WOMEN

Maryland-Eastern Shore 59, Wake Forest 48

WINSTON-SALEM, NC - **Maryland Eastern Shore** produced a 14-0 scoring burst in the final four-and-a-half minutes of the game to wipe out a late 48-45 deficit and knock off the ACC's Wake Forest 59-48 in a first round WNIT game on the road Friday.

The win gives the Lady Hawks (20-14) their first-ever postseason win, in its second year under head coach **Malikah Willis**, and first-ever win against a power conference opponent.

A pair of freshmen led the Hawks as **Desi Taylor** scored 19 points with five three-pointers and **Kaliya Perry** recorded a double-double with 16 points and 12 rebounds while adding four steals, three rebounds and a block. **Dakieran Turner** led the Hawks on the boards with 16 rebounds while adding four points, a block and a steal. **Kalise Hill** dished out 11 assists while scoring a pair of points and grabbing three rebounds and two steals.

The Lady Hawks advanced to the WNIT second round where they will be on the road at Youngstown State (24-9) Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Loyola Chicago 58, **Norfolk State** 54

NORFOLK, VA - Loyola Chicago converted four free throws in the game's final second – one at the line on a common foul and three on technical fouls assessed against **Norfolk State** – to grab a bizarre 58-54 first round WNIT road win Saturday.

The teams were tied at 54 with one second remaining when the oddities occurred. Prior to the wild ending, the teams entered the final period knotted at 40. **Da'Brya Clark's** 19 points led NSU (18-15).

South Alabama 73, **Alcorn State** 65

LORMAN, MS - **SWAC** regular season runners-up **Alcorn State** got 17 points from senior **Kiarra Henderson** and 16 points and 14 rebounds from grad senior **Nakia Cheatham** but it was not enough as the Braves fell at home Saturday to South Alabama, 73-65.

WBIT WOMEN

Brigham Young 72, **Alabama A&M** 47

PROVO, UT - WBIT top seed Brigham Young outscored **SWAC** regular season champion **Alabama A&M** by at least seven points in the first three quarters en route to a 72-47 first round win Thursday.

SWAC Player of the Year, guard **Kalia Walker's** 20 points led A&M (22-11) with 6-5 grad student **Moses Davenport** scoring 10 points and pulling down 10 rebounds.