

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



WSSU Athletics Photo

WINS AND OUTS

WSSU'S TERRY WINS GAINES AWARD; AD HILTON OUT AT NC A&T, JOHNNY JONES LEAVES TEXAS SOUTHERN

TIERRA TERRY: First-year WSSU women's basketball head coach wins national award after leading Lady Rams to CAA tourney title and NCAA Div. II Regional final

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

NC A&T AD EARL HILTON STEPPING DOWN:

The administrator who has led North Carolina A&T athletics to incredible highs and controversial changes over the last 15 years, Athletics Director **Earl M. Hilton III**, is moving on.

The university's leadership announced Tuesday that Hilton will step down this summer when his current contract ends.

A national search for a new athletics director will begin immediately with Hilton continuing in the role until a successor is identified and seated.

"It has been my singular privilege to have worked with so many wonderful and talented student-athletes and the dedicated coaches and staff who support them," Hilton said in the press release from the university.

"I have been blessed to be part of a remarkable community of boosters and fans who have sustained us with unflinching resolve. I am honored to have witnessed historic academic and athletic achievement and look forward to our continued success under the leadership of (current) Chancellor (**James R.**) Martin (II) and the next athletics administration."

Referencing "our" continued success in his statement is notable as Hilton has embraced his role leading the athletics department with passion, dedication and a steely determination to look out for A&T's student athletes and its programs in an ever-changing and challenging athletics environment. The highs, lows, challenges, controversies and critiques come with navigating this current landscape. These realities are captured in this statement from Chancellor Martin.

"North Carolina A&T is tremendously grateful for the outstanding leadership Earl has provided for our student athletes over the past 15 years," said Martin. "He created an environment in which more than 300 student athletes each year never lose sight of the fact that they are students first and that success in the classroom comes before competition on the playing field."

"We have especially appreciated his steady hand in a time of unprecedented change throughout the NCAA."

Hilton came to A&T in 1999 to work under former AD **Alphonso Scandrett** and moved over to the university's auxiliary services department when Scandrett was fired in 2002. A lawyer by training, Hilton assumed the AD position on an interim basis in late 2010 before being named A&T's permanent athletics leader in February 2011.

He inherited a struggling program in "academic and organizational chaos," as one media outlet described it, and one facing legal scrutiny after the death of an athlete in a training exercise. Hilton's legal background was reportedly key to his ascension.

Working with other university administrators, Hilton set about bringing new order and discipline to the program under the banner of "excellence without apology" and recruited outstanding coaches, gifted student athletes and dedicated administrative professionals. A&T student athlete graduation rates increased by more than 51%, annual giving to athletics grew by more than 15-fold and the department earned more than 70 individual, team, conference, national and Olympic championships.

He has also been at the helm as A&T stunned its supporters and many in black college communities in 2020 as it left the cozy confines of 50 years competing in an HBCU conference, the **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference**, to join the predominantly non-HBCU Big South Conference and eventually moved to the predominantly non-HBCU Coastal Athletic Conference (CAA) where it now resides.

Those two conference-related moves have perhaps generated the greatest amount of criticism and polarization about his leadership as the Aggies have struggled to gain traction or produce standout programs since the moves. The moves were seen as an attempt to help A&T better align with other doctoral research universities while also delivering wider exposure for A&T sports teams and student athletes. The latter part of that assertion is certainly in question.

From 2015 to 2019, Aggie football teams won four Celebration Bowls, also known as the black college football national championship. In 2021, track and field athletes took home three medals — two of them gold — from the Summer Olympics in Tokyo. The following year, the men's track and field team took second place at the 2022 NCAA Indoor Championships, trailing only Texas. It was the highest indoor finish ever for any Division I HBCU. A&T also started two new varsity programs under Hilton — men's and women's golf.

Hilton's leadership was nationally recognized in 2019, when he was named an Under Armour Athletics Director of the Year for NCAA Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) institutions.



2026 women's "Baad Team" ballers

LUT WILLIAMS
BCSP Editor

The 2026 edition of the **BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE** "Baad Team" of women's black college basketball all-stars is being unveiled this week.

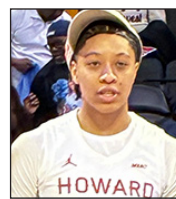
Leading the pack of Div. I stars is **Howard's** 6-2, senior forward **Zennia Thomas**, who like her counterpart on the men's "Baad Team," Howard grad senior guard/forward **Bryce Harris**, led the **Mid Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC)** in both scoring (15.2 ppg.) and rebounding (7.9 rpg.) while leading her team to regular season and tournament titles and an automatic bid to the NCAA Div. I Tournament.

Like Harris, Thomas was also the regular season and tournament most valuable player that cements her status as the 2025-26 Div. I "Baad Team" player of the year.

Among those joining Thomas on the Div. I first team are 5-5, grad guard and **Southwestern Athletic Conference Player of the Year** **Kalia Walker** of **Alabama A&M** who finished second in the league in scoring at 14.5 points per game and was the offensive engine to the Lady Bulldogs first-ever regular season SWAC title with a 17-1 conference record.

Also on the first team is 6-foot, guard/forward **Nakia Cheatham** of **Alcorn State**, named the SWAC's defensive player of the year, who was among the SWAC leaders in scoring (12.8 ppg., 6th), blocks (1.2 bpg., 5th) and steals (2.2, 1st) while helping propel the Lady Braves to a second-place (14-4) finish. **Norfolk State** junior guard **Da'Brya Clark** was an all-MEAC first teamer who averaged 13.9 points per game while leading the Lady Spartans to a second-place tie (11-3) in the conference standings.

North Carolina A&T redshirt senior, 6-4 center **Chaniya Clark**, in the final piece and lady in the middle after earning a first-team all-CAA designation averaging 12.7 points and 7.5 rebounds per game.



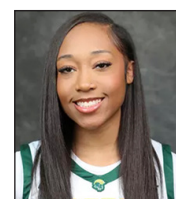
Thomas



Walker



Cheatham



D. Clark



C. Clark



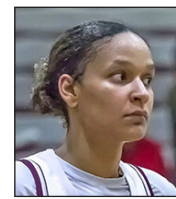
Franklin



Garner



Charles



Martinez



Harris

Div. I - FIRST TEAM

Zennia Thomas, 6-2, Sr., F, Howard; **Nakia Cheatham**, 6-0, Gr., G/F, Alcorn State; **Chaniya Clark**, 6-4, R-Sr., C, North Carolina A&T; **Kalia Walker**, 5-5, Gr., G, Alabama A&M; **Da'Brya Clark**, 5-7, Jr., G, Norfolk State;
DIV I - SECOND TEAM
Indiya Bowen, 5-8, Jr., G, Arkansas-Pine Bluff; **Jasha Clinton**, 5-8, Gr., G, Norfolk State; **Ashanti Lynch**, 5-9, Sr., G, Maryland-Eastern Shore; **Taliyah Longwood**, 5-10, So., G/FTexas Southern; **Khila Morris**, 5-11, Sr., G, Coppin State

The "Baad Team" from the NCAA Div. II/NAIA ranks is led by a diminutive freshman who guided **Miles** to its third straight **SIAC** tournament title.

Five-three dynamo point guard **Samarian Franklin** averaged 12.4 points per game, led the league in assists (5.3 apg.) and was third in steals (1.1 spg.) and dominated postseason play as the Lady Golden Bears three-peated.

She is joined on the first team by **SIAC** Player of the Year, 5-10 junior G/F **Atreonia Garner** of **Clark Atlanta** (17.9 ppg., 1st, 8.1 rpg.,

4th), **Winston-Salem State** standout forward **Maia Charles** (12.9 ppg., 9.2 rpg.), the centerpiece of the Lady Rams' run to the **CIAA** tournament title and to the finals of the **NCAA Div. II Atlantic Regional**.

CIAA Player of the Year **Bruni Martinez** of **Virginia Union** whose 14.2 points and 9.2 rebounds per game kept the Lady Panthers in **CIAA** contention and **Edward Waters** junior point guard **Imani Harris** (10.9 ppg., 5.1 rpg.) who led the Lady Tigers to the best record (23-6, 21-3) in the **SIAC** round out the team.

Div. II / NAIA

FIRST TEAM:
Samarian Franklin, 5-3, Fr., PG, Miles; **Atreonia Garner**, 5-10, G/F, Clark Atlanta; **Maia Charles**, 6-3, So., F/C, Winston-Salem State; **Bruni Martinez**, 6-0, Sr., F, Virginia Union; **Imani Harris**, 5-5, Jr., PG, Edward Waters
SECOND TEAM:
Dyani Bernstine, 5-10, Fr., F, Lane; **Breasia Coit**, 6-2, So., C, Livingstone; **Kendahl Spearman**, 5-6, Jr., G, Virginia State; **Jasmine Jenkins**, 5-8, Sr., G/F, Bluefield State; **Alysia Nash** 5-6, Jr., G, Benedict

BCSP Notes



Winston-Salem State Head Women's Basketball Coach

TIERRA TERRY

WSSU's Tierra Terry wins Gaines Coach of the Year award

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (April 6, 2026) — **Winston-Salem State University** Head Women's Basketball Coach **Tierra Terry** has been named the **Clarence "Big House" Gaines College Basketball Coach of the Year** by the National Sports Media Association.

"This honor is incredibly meaningful, especially given Coach Gaines' legacy and what he represents to the game and to Winston-Salem State University," Terry said. "I'm grateful for our student-athletes, our staff and the support of Ram Nation. This recognition reflects the hard work and commitment of our entire program."

Terry will be honored at the NSMA's 66th awards banquet June 29, 2026, at Grandover Resort & Spa — a Wyndham Grand Hotel — in Greensboro, N. C.

The **Clarence "Big House" Gaines College Basketball Coach of the Year** award is presented to head coaches in NCAA Divisions I and II who may not receive recognition from mainstream outlets. The awards are voted on by an NSMA committee at the conclusion of the NCAA men's and women's tournaments.

Previous winners include Dawn Staley, who has won three DI national championships as head coach of the women's team at the University of South Carolina. Joining Terry as a Gaines Award recipient this year is Jai Lucas, head men's basketball coach at the University of Miami. The Hurricanes went 26-9 on the year.

The Lady Rams had a stellar season, embracing excellence both on and off the hardwood. They finished the year 28-4, going a perfect 13-0 at home and 14-2 in conference play earning **Co-Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA)** Southern Division Champion honors before winning the first CIAA Tournament Championship in program history.

In their NCAA DII Tournament debut, the Lady Rams won their first two games in wire-to-wire fashion by 17 and 19 points, respectively, before losing in the Atlantic Regional Sweet 16 final round.

Terry was named CIAA Coach of the Year, and **Breonna Roaf** was named CIAA Rookie of the Year. Under Terry's leadership, 13 Lady Rams earned a spot on the CIAA Commissioner's Honor Roll, which required a minimum 3.0 GPA, and the student-athletes performed community service by passing out water at the annual Mistletoe Run sponsored by the YMCA of Northwest North Carolina and reading to Ward Elementary students.

The Lady Rams' success inspired the Winston-Salem community while garnering regional, statewide and national acclaim for the institution.

"The Clarence "Big House" Gaines Coach of the Year award is highly prestigious, particularly

because of the legend after whom it's named," said Winston-Salem State University Interim Athletic Director **Eric Burns**.

"I'm sure Coach Terry will treasure this much-deserved accolade and use it as inspiration to push her student-athletes to continue their winning ways on and off the court in the upcoming 2026-27 basketball season and beyond. Because of Coach Terry, I am confident WSSU Women's Basketball will keep rising."

Clarence "Big House" Gaines coached basketball at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) for 47 years, from 1946 to 1993, compiling an 828-447 record.

He led the Rams to 18 20-win seasons, eight CIAA titles, and in 1967 led WSSU to a Division II NCAA Championship, making the Rams the first basketball program from a historically black college or university to capture a NCAA national championship.

Johnny Jones leaving Texas Southern to return to LSU

From **HBCU Legends**

Kyle Mosley, editor at online site **HBCU Legends**, received direct confirmation from **Texas Southern** Head Men's Basketball coach **Johnny Jones** on Tuesday that he is departing the TSU program to join Will Wade's staff at LSU as an assistant coach, ending weeks of speculation and bringing a significant chapter of HBCU basketball to a close.

The move ends an eight-year run for Jones in Houston, where he built Texas Southern into one of the most consistent programs in the SWAC. Under his leadership, the Tigers made four NCAA Tournament appearances, won nine consecutive postseason berths, and claimed the program's second-ever NCAA Tournament victory in 2021. Jones finishes his TSU tenure with a 133-125 record in conference play and a 90-49 mark in SWAC action.

Jones had previously pushed back on reports of his departure. When HBCU Legends first reached him in late March, he called early resignation reports "bogus" and "disappointing," confirming only that he was "in discussions" with LSU but that "nothing is concrete." Tuesday's confirmation from Jones directly to **HBCU Legends** closes that chapter definitively.

The move is a homecoming in the truest sense. Jones is a Louisiana native who played at LSU from 1980 to 1984, appearing on the Tigers' 1981 Final Four squad as a freshman. He later spent 12 seasons on Dale Brown's LSU staff as an assistant, helping guide the program to another Final Four in 1986. He returned as LSU's head coach from 2012 to 2017, going 90-72 and coaching 2016 No. 1 NBA Draft pick Ben Simmons — the most wins by any LSU head coach in their first five seasons. Wade succeeded Jones at LSU in 2017.

The announcement comes on the heels of **Alabama State** head coach **Tony Madlock's** departure to join Penny Hardaway's staff at Memphis and **Mo Williams's** decision to leave as head coach at **Jackson State** to join his son Mason at Kentucky, making Jones the third prominent HBCU head coach to step down for a Power conference assistant role in recent weeks.

Jones brings more than three decades of

Division I coaching experience to Baton Rouge — 34 years in total, including 18 as a head coach. His SWAC recruiting network, Louisiana roots, and HBCU credibility give Wade's staff direct access to a talent pipeline few assistants can offer. He also carries name recognition from his time coaching NBA talent including Simmons, Ben Simmons, Tim Quarterman, Jordan Mickey, and Jarrell Martin during his LSU tenure.

Texas Southern, who finished 17-18 overall and 10-8 in the 2025-26 SWAC regular season before bowing to **Alabama A&M** in the SWAC Tournament quarterfinals, now faces a significant rebuilding moment in its coaching staff. HBCU Legends reached out to leadership at TSU without a response.

Jones had signed a three-year contract extension in 2024 that would have kept him in Houston through the 2029 season.

Fifth HBCU All-Star game caps exciting week of activities in college basketball's final weekend in Indianapolis

Team Sam Jones defeated **Team Bob Dandridge** 96-89 Sunday at the fifth-annual **HBCU All-Star Game** at the Corvea Coliseum in Indianapolis before the NCAA Div. I national championship game on Monday.

Senior guard **Larry Howell** of **CIAA** champion **Fayetteville State** was named the game's Most Valuable Player after tallying a game-high 23 points for Team Jones. Howell was 9 of 12 from the field and 3 of 4 from the 3-point line.

He added six rebounds and three assists. Joining him in double-digit scoring for Team Jones were four others including **Kentavious Dozier** of **Alabama A&M** with 15 points, **SWAC** champion **Prairie View A&M's** **Dontae Horne** with 12, **Corey Wells** of **Prairie View** with 11 points and 7 rebounds, and **Tyler Shirley** of **Florida A&M** with 10. Team Jones had players from the SWAC, CIAA and one player from **Hampton**.

The leading scorer for **Team Dandridge** was **Aaron Nkrumah** of **Tennessee State** with 19 points. Nkrumah was 12 of 12 from the free throw line. Also scoring double figures for **Team Dandridge** were **Bryce Harris** of **Howard** with 17, **Xavier Long** of **Hampton** with 15 and **Anthony McComb III** of **Norfolk State** with 12.

"The game was very competitive and very efficient offensively," said legendary coach **Cy Alexander**, part of the scouting committee that chose the team. Alexander also did color commentary for the game that aired on **Wish TV** but will be re-aired on **BET** at a date to be determined.

Both teams shot over 40% from the field with **Team Jones** shooting 54.7% from the field and 89% from the line.

The game capped a full week of "Black Excellence" said Alexander, that included a social justice forum, a career fair and awards ceremony. "It's all a God-driven vision by HBCU All-Star Founder and CEO **Travis Williams** and his wife, **Kya**."

