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## THE NEXT CHALLENGE AWAITS

THREE BLACK COLLEGE VETS IN NFL DRAFT; TEN IN TOTAL GETTING SHOTS; JOHNSON IN AT JACKSON STATE

**KARUN PRUNTY:** Goes from Kansas to NC A&T to Wake Forest and is first black college product taken in 2026 NFL Draft.

## UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

### FORMER STANDOUT TREY JOHNSON TO LEAD JACKSON STATE BASKETBALL:

JACKSON, Miss. | **Jackson State University** Division of Athletics Vice President/Director of Athletics **Ashley Robinson** removed the interim tag from **Trey Johnson**, formally announcing on April 15 the former standout Tiger hoopster as the new head men's basketball coach at his alma mater.

"There are not many chances you get to have one of your own lead program, and we have that with Trey Johnson," Robinson said. "He brings a championship pedigree as a player here at Jackson State and has won at every level as a player and a coach. We are excited about the opportunity of having a former Tiger lead our men's basketball program."

Johnson has served as the associate head coach at JSU under **Mo Williams** over the past four seasons and has been instrumental in developing top talent and mentoring a slew of all-SWAC performers. He takes over after Williams left to become an assistant at Kentucky.

"I am deeply honored and humbled to be chosen to lead the men's basketball program here at my alma mater," Johnson said. "This university is more than just a place to me, it is part of my foundation, my character, the fabric of who I am. As a former student-athlete and champion here, I understand firsthand the pride, passion, and tradition that define this program and this community. My family's rich history with Jackson State has shaped my life's journey. This opportunity is personal. It's about pouring back into the same institution and city that poured so much into me, while honoring those who came before me and building something that future Tigers will be proud to carry forward."

Johnson is widely regarded as one of the most decorated players in program history. During his standout collegiate career, he earned back-to-back first team all-SWAC honors (2005-06, 2006-07) and was named the 2006-07 SWAC Player of the Year after a dominant senior campaign in which he averaged over 27 points per game, ranking among the nation's top scorers. He also garnered preseason player of the year honors, was named SWAC Tournament MVP, and led the Tigers to the 2007 SWAC Tournament Championship and an NCAA Tournament appearance.

His legacy at Jackson State is cemented in the record books. He remains the program's single-season all-time leader in scoring (points per game and total points), free throws made, and free throws attempted, while also joining the prestigious 1,000-point club in just two seasons. In recognition of his historic impact, Johnson was inducted into the Jackson State Sports Hall of Fame in 2020.

Johnson's connection to Jackson State runs deep. His father, brother, wife, and several extended family members also attended the university. His wife, **Dana Johnson** (Yoshimura), is a former SWAC champion and defensive player of the year in volleyball.

After a pro career that saw have short stints with ten NBA teams, three NBA D-League teams and seven teams overseas, Johnson began his collegiate coaching career at **Alabama State** in 2020, coaching under Williams where he served as associate head coach for two seasons before joining Williams when he moved to JSU.

# Troubling pattern emerging for HBCU NFL draftees

## LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

What do 2026 HBCU NFL Draftees **Karon Prunty**, **Kevin Coleman** and **Andre Fuller** have in common with 2025 HBCU draftees **Travis Hunter**, **Bhayshul Tuten**, **Shedeur Sanders** and **Jacory Croskey-Merritt**?

ANSWER: The three 2026 picks are like four of the five former HBCU players drafted in 2025 that played at but didn't finish their college careers on HBCU rosters.

That was the case in 2025 for Hunter and Sanders (**Jackson State** to Colorado), Tuten (**North Carolina A&T** to Virginia Tech) and Jacory Croskey-Merritt (**Alabama State** to New Mexico to Arizona).

It's also the case for this year's selections of Prunty (Kansas to North Carolina A&T to Wake Forest), Coleman (Jackson State to Louisville to Mississippi State to Missouri) and Fuller (**Arkansas-Pine Bluff** to Toledo). The only 2025 draftee to finish his career at an HBCU was **Alabama A&M** offensive lineman **Carson Vinson**.

It appears that in this current era, dominated by the transfer portal and NIL, the HBCU to PWI to NFL Draft route is becoming the norm rather than the exception.

That's especially true when one considers that the most productive players that finished their 2025 careers at HBCUs – **Virginia Union** running back **Curtis Allen** and **Morgan State** linebacker **Erick Hunter** – were not taken in last week's draft.

### Karon Prunty

Prunty (6-2, 192), 24, a Portsmouth, Va. native, began his career at Kansas and came to NC A&T after earning honorable mention all-Big 12 honors in his only year with the Jayhawks.

In three seasons with the Aggies, he was a defensive backbone earning first team all-Big South designation in 2022 and third-team all-CAA honors in 2023 and 2024. He then transferred to Wake Forest where he earned third team all-ACC honors with the Demon Deacons in the 2025 season.

He was the first player with black college experience off the draft boards going to New England with the 31st pick of the fifth round, 171st overall.

Prunty's, long, angular stature and 4.45-second 40 speed he showed in workouts has led to team-best numbers in pass break-ups in all three of his stops. For his college career, he totalled 151 tackles and six interceptions. At WFU, he was considered the top cornerback on the ACC's top passing defense.

### Kevin Coleman Jr.

Coleman (5-11, 180), 22, out of St. Louis, Mo., was a consensus Top 100 prospect and Missouri's top ranked player out of high school

## BLACK COLLEGE PLAYERS IN 2026 NFL DRAFT



NEW ENGLAND  
**Karon Prunty**  
6-2, 192, DB  
NC A&T / Wake Forest  
5th Round - 31st pick  
171st overall



MIAMI  
**Kevin Coleman Jr.**  
5-11, 180, WR  
Jackson State / Missouri  
5th Round - 37th pick  
177th overall



SEATTLE  
**Andre Fuller**  
6-1, 200, DB  
Arkansas-Pine Bluff / Toledo  
7th Round - 20th pick  
236th overall

that decided to take his talents to Jackson State in 2022 to play for much-ballyhooed head coach **Deion "Coach Prime" Sanders**.

He proved his mettle as a true freshman with 32 receptions for 475 yards and three touchdowns earning **Southwestern Athletic Conference** (SWAC) freshman of the year honors. He was also JSU's leading receiver in its 41-34 loss to MEAC champion **North Carolina Central** in the 2022 **Celebration Bowl**, gaining 137 yards and one touchdown on seven receptions.

He left JSU as Sanders did, transferring to Louisville where he started but finished with just 26 receptions for 362 yards and two touchdowns. A year later he was at Mississippi State where he had a breakout season with 74 catches for 932 yards and six touchdowns, more than doubling the production of any other Bulldog wideout and earning All-SEC Third Team recognition.

Coleman's fourth and final stop came at Missouri for the 2025 season, where he returned home to play in front of family and friends. Once again he established himself immediately, leading the Tigers with 66 receptions for 732 yards despite inconsistent quarterback play, and his 78.8 percent catch rate ranked sixth nationally.

Consistent production at all four stops intrigued scouts and led to his selection by Miami as the 37th pick of the fifth round, 177th overall.

### Andre Fuller

Fuller (6-1, 200), 24, from Palm Beach,

Fla., is a former walk-on at Arkansas-Pine Bluff who spent two years playing for the Golden Lions. In the COVID-19 shortened 2020 season he played in just six games. In 2021, he led the SWAC with 17 passes defended (14 pass break-ups and three interceptions).

In 2022, Fuller transferred to Toledo where he played for three seasons, missing the entire 2024 season with a sports hernia injury.

His breakout year was in 2025 where he started all 13 games at cornerback for the Rockets totalling 49 tackles, 11 passes defended including an interception while being named first-team All-Mid-American Conference (MAC) and a Group of Five All-American. At the conclusion of his collegiate career, Fuller was invited to the 2026 *East-West Shrine Bowl* and to the NFL Scouting Combine.

The Super Bowl-champion Seattle Seahawks plucked him off the draft boards with the 20th pick of the seventh and final round, 236th overall.

Fuller brings versatility and playmaking to the Seahawks defense, having played cornerback, nickel corner and safety during his time at Toledo in addition to playing multiple roles on special teams.

### Curtis Allen

Running roughshod thru NCAA Div. II defenses to the tune of 2,400 rushing yards and 30 touchdowns and becoming the first HBCU recipient of the *Harlon Hill Trophy* as D2 offensive player of the year did not earn Petersburg, Va. native Allen (6-2, 215) a draft spot or a free agent contract. The CIAA player of the year has reportedly gotten rookie minicamp invites from both Seattle and Atlanta (see STAT CORNER).

### Erick Hunter

Hunter (6-4, 220), 23, out of Capital Heights, Md., was a prolific performer during his time at Morgan State finishing his career as the second leading tackler in Bears' history with 296 tackles. He led the MEAC with 102 stops in 2025. He also showed his sideline-to-sideline skills in postseason workouts. He signed a free agent contract with the Detroit Lions.

### J'Mari Taylor

Taylor (5-10, 199), 24, out of Charlotte, N. C., followed a similar path as Tuten, leaving a successful (four-year) stint in the MEAC at N. C. Central to earn first-team all-ACC honors at Virginia.

Taylor finished third in ACC rushing stats with 1,062 yards and 14 rushing scores, second-best in the conference.

Unlike Tuten, taken in the fourth round of the 2025 draft by Jacksonville, Taylor was not drafted but will join Tuten and the Jaguars on a rookie free agent contract.

# BCSP Notes

## Shaw captures eighth straight title at CIAA Women's Tennis championship

ETTRICK, Va. (Apr. 25, 2026) – **Shaw** closed out a dominant run at the **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association** (CIAA®) Women's Tennis Championship, securing its eighth consecutive title with a 4-2 victory over **Bluefield State** on Saturday at **Virginia State**.

The championship match opened with Shaw taking control in doubles play. Wins at the No. 1 and No. 3 positions secured the early 1-0 advantage, while the No. 2 match went unfinished.

Bluefield State responded in singles competition, earning victories at the No. 3 and No. 5 positions to even the match at 2-2. Shaw answered at the top of the lineup, delivering wins at No. 2 and No. 1 singles to clinch the match and the championship. Remaining matches were halted once the deciding point was secured.

The title caps a strong two-day performance for Shaw, which opened the championship with a 4-0 quarterfinal win over **Virginia Union**. The Lady Bears set the tone early with a sweep of doubles play and continued their dominance in singles, not conceding a game in completed matches.

Shaw advanced to the final with another 4-0 victory in the semifinal round over Virginia State. The Lady Bears secured the doubles point with wins at the No. 1 and No. 3 positions before adding straight set victories at No. 2, No. 3, and No. 5 singles to complete the sweep.

On the opposite side of the bracket, Bluefield State reached the championship match with a 4-0 quarterfinal win over **Livingstone**. After claiming the doubles point, Bluefield State maintained control throughout singles play to secure the result.

In the semifinal round, Bluefield State earned a 4-1 victory over **Johnson C. Smith**. The Big Blue secured the doubles point with a win at No. 1 and a default at No. 3, then added singles victories at No. 1 and No. 3 to advance.

Johnson C. Smith opened the championship with a 4-0 quarterfinal win over **Elizabeth City State**, while Virginia State advanced past **Winston-Salem State** with a 4-0 decision to round out the semifinal field.

With the victory, Shaw extends its championship streak to eight and continues its run as the standard in CIAA women's tennis.

## Tuskegee captures SIAC Men's and Women's Tennis titles following historic wins

PEACHTREE CITY, Ga. — **Tuskegee** delivered on both sides of the bracket, claiming conference titles at the 2026 **SIAC** Men's and Women's Tennis Tournament presented by Toyota on Saturday at the Peachtree Tennis Center.

The women's program completed a historic three-peat, while the men captured their first championship since 2006.



**SIAC TENNIS CHAMPS:** Tuskegee men and women pose with their trophies.

### WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

The top-seeded Tuskegee women's team defeated No. 2 **Spring Hill** 4-0 in the championship round to secure its third consecutive conference title.

The Golden Tigers established control in doubles play, earning wins at No. 1 and No. 3 to claim the opening point. The pairing of **Ayawawi Vania Dotse** and **Leiloni Payton** posted a 6-3 victory at the top position, while **Asia McRae** and **Dayna Jackson** added a 6-1 win at No. 3.

In singles, Tuskegee closed the match with three decisive victories. Payton delivered a 6-3, 6-3 win at No. 2, while Jackson followed with a 6-2, 6-1 victory at No. 4. **Taylor Ford** added a 6-1, 6-3 win at No. 5 to secure the championship point.

Vania Dotse held a 7-6 (7-4), 1-0 lead at No. 1, while McRae was in progress at No. 3 before play was halted. **Adjowa-Sika Serena Pascaline** also held a 6-4, 3-1 advantage at No. 6 at the time of the clinch.

### MEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

The No. 2 Tuskegee men's team upset No. 1 **Spring Hill** with a 4-2 win in the championship match.

After dropping the doubles point, Tuskegee responded with a strong showing in singles, winning four courts to secure the title. **Thompson Thomu** delivered a three-set win at No. 1 (3-6, 6-3, 6-2), while **Shane Tapera** added a 6-3, 6-4 victory at No. 2.

**Miles Wilson** secured a 6-3, 3-6, 6-4 victory at No. 5, and **Emmanuel Wetley** contributed with a 6-2, 6-3 win at No. 6 to round out the scoring effort.

### UP NEXT

With the titles secured, Tuskegee's men's and women's teams await seeding for the 2026 NCAA Division II Tennis Championships. Both programs will receive the conference's automatic bids to compete in the South Region.

# THE STAT CORNER

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

## NFL UNDRAFTED FREE AGENT SIGNINGS

### CLEVELAND BROWNS

Ja'Naylon Dupree, WR, Jackson State

### DETROIT LIONS

Erick Hunter LB, Morgan State

### JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

J'Mari Taylor RB, NC Central/Virginia

## ROOKIE MINICAMP INVITES

### ATLANTA FALCONS

Jaylon Shelton CB, Prairie View A&M

### MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Jeremiah Williams DL, Jackson State

### TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Quincy Ivory, DL, Jackson State

### SEATTLE SEAHAWKS / ATLANTA FALCONS

Curtis Allen, RB, Virginia Union