

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE™



Tennessee State Athletics Photo

AARON NKRUMAH: OVC Player of the Year, 6-7 guard/forward out of Tennessee State most likely black college player in this week's NBA Draft.

NEW DAY DAWNING

HBCUs IN NBA DRAFT HISTORY; KENDRICK PERKINS TO JACKSON STATE; TOYOTA INCREASES HBCU SPONSORSHIPS

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

ROSTERS FINALIZED FOR 4TH ANNUAL HBCU SWINGMAN CLASSIC

Major League Baseball announced last Thursday the 50-man roster and coaching staff for the fourth annual **HBCU Swingman Classic** presented by USA Baseball, which is scheduled for Friday, July 10, at 7:00 p.m. ET at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, PA. The rosters comprise 50 of the top players from Historically Black Colleges and Universities from across the nation.

Led by 2007 National League MVP and Philadelphia Phillies Wall of Famer Jimmy Rollins and **Southern University** HBCU legend and 14-year MLB veteran **Rickie Weeks**, the Swingman Classic roster will be broken up into two teams: National League (Rollins) and American League (Weeks).

Rollins will be joined on staff by Wes Chamberlain, Wayne Gomes, Jason Maxwell, Milt Thompson and Lenny Webster. Weeks' staff will feature Marlon Anderson, Courtney Duncan, Derrick Lewis, Jemile Weeks and Corey Wimberly. For the fourth consecutive year, MLB Network will exclusively broadcast the game with Dave Sims (play-by-play) and Harold Reynolds (analyst) on the call. Ken Griffey Jr. and Emily Haydel, granddaughter of Hank Aaron, will also contribute to the broadcast.

The event will also include the following three honorary VIPs: **Florida A&M** product **Andre Dawson**, **Grambling** product **Ralph Garr Sr.** and Ken Griffey Sr. Dawson and Garr are two of the most decorated players in the history of HBCU baseball, and Griffey Sr. spent 19 seasons playing in the Major Leagues.

Players were selected by a committee that includes Griffey Jr., representatives from Major League Baseball and professional scouts and evaluators. In total, 22 athletes on the roster have previously participated in Major League Baseball's elite-development events (MLB Develops). **Trey Callaway**, **Thomas Ealey**, **Aaron Grant**, **Tervell Johnson**, **Chris Marcellus**, **Solomon McKinney**, **Eric Williams** and **Bruce Wyche** are all products of Nike Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) programs. Nine players on the roster have previously participated in the Hank Aaron Invitational, six played at the DREAM Series and four are alumni of the Breakthrough Series. Eleven athletes will return to the Swingman Classic after previously playing in the event, including two-time participants **Justin Journette**, **Robert Tate Jr.** and **KJ White**. Additionally, Philadelphia native **Santino Harwood** and **Lincoln University's** **Solomon McKinney** were both named to the Swingman Classic roster.

The HBCU Swingman Classic presented by USA Baseball will feature special pregame activities designed to honor and celebrate HBCU culture. Pregame festivities, which will be announced at a later date, are set to feature an in-ballpark DJ, an in-game "Divine Nine" recognition and much more.

Tickets for the HBCU Swingman Classic presented by USA Baseball are on sale NOW at AllStarGame.com.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

LHP Derek Arrocha, Jackson State
RHP Ethan Blakeney, Norfolk State
INF William Brown IV, Florida A&M
1B Pierre Cabral, Jackson State
C Trey Callaway, Alabama State
3B/RHP Kanious Davis, Alcorn State
RHP Talmadge Davis, Jackson State
LHP Myles Dismute, Southern
3B/C Ryland Duson, Prairie View A&M
RHP Caleb Granger, Florida A&M
INF Aaron Grant, Arkansas-Pine Bluff
OF Brycen Hammonds, Alabama A&M
OF Cameron Hill, Grambling
OF Ryan Hunter, Southern
OF Nigel Jenkins, Alabama State
OF Justin Journette, Norfolk State
C *Chris Marcellus, Grambling
RHP Anthony Mateo, Alabama A&M
LHP Solomon McKinney, Lincoln
OF T'ree Reed, Jackson State
1B Byron Robinson Jr., Texas Southern
OF Michael Rodriguez, B-Cookman
INF Robert Tate Jr., Jackson State
INF JT Taylor, North Carolina A&T
3B/DH Eric Williams, Miss. Valley State
LHP Jean Carlo Zambrano, B-Cookman

Manager Jimmy Rollins
Pitching Coach Wayne Gomes
Coach Wes Chamberlain
Coach Jason Maxwell
Coach Milt Thompson
Bullpen Coach Lenny Webster

AMERICAN LEAGUE

3B Jay Campbell, Florida A&M
OF Thomas Ealey, Norfolk State
RHP Kenny Fabian, Ark. Pine Bluff
C/1B Jose Fernandez, B-Cookman
C* Jonathan Gonzalez Perez, Md. E. Shore
INF Santino Harwood, Delaware State
OF Donovan Hill, Southern NO
C Armando Hurtado Jr., Coppin State
INF Jaydan Israel, Norfolk State
INF/OF Tervell Johnson, Alabama A&M
LHP Jorhan LaBoy, Alabama State
C Maikol Lucena, Bethune-Cookman
1B Jaylon Luckey, Southern
3B Andrey Martinez, B-Cookman
RHP Justin Mays, Texas Southern
RHP Jackson McKenzie, Florida A&M
OF Miguel Oropeza, Alabama State
RHP James Peterson, Alabama State
RHP Jalen Porter, Arkansas Pine Bluff
OF Jacoby Radcliffe, Southern
RHP Alvaro Yasseel Samboy Diaz, Norfolk State
RHP Bobby Spencer, Southern
RHP Pablo Torres, Bethune-Cookman
INF Jonathan Trejo, Texas Southern
INF KJ White Jr., Southern
OF Bruce Wyche, North Carolina A&T

Manager Rickie Weeks
Pitching Coach Derrick Lewis
Coach Marlon Anderson
Coach Jemile Weeks
Coach Corey Wimberly
Bullpen Coach Courtney Duncan

Perkins new hoops GM at Jackson State

LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

The march of former pro players into the black college ranks continued last week as retired NBA veteran and current ESPN broadcaster **Kendrick Perkins** agreed to become the men's basketball general manager at **Jackson State University**.

ESPN insider Shams Charania reported the development last Friday adding that Perkins will also have a connection to JSU's broadcast and journalism program.

According to Charania, Perkins worked closely with new Jackson State Head Coach and former hoops star **Trey Johnson** and Athletics Director **Ashley Robinson** to finalize the role.

"It's a volunteer role, but he's going to come in to fundraise," Robinson told *HBCU Legends*.

"I'm thankful for this opportunity to impact young lives and pour back into my community," Perkins said.

A Beaumont, Texas native who entered the NBA in 2003 out of high school, Perkins played 14 seasons in the league, primarily as a staunch defender, rebounder and rim protector, and won the 2007-08 title with the Boston Celtics. He also had stints with the Oklahoma City Thunder, Cleveland Cavaliers and New Orleans Pelicans.

Though the 6-10, 270-pounder was considered a role player during his NBA career, he has gained notoriety and visibility as one of the lead analysts on ESPN's NBA coverage since 2019, noted for his often forthright and controversial opinions. He reportedly will

continue in the position.

Perkins is following in the footsteps of a host of other pro stars who have taken positions at HBCUs in a variety of administrative roles.

Among them, retired NBA veteran and former NBA top pick **John Wall** took a similar position at **Howard** in April. Current NBA star **Steph Curry** made a six-year commitment to support the Howard golf program in 2019.

Other NBA vets have taken similar positions at their alma maters with Curry becoming assistant GM at Davidson, Trae Young taking on assistant GM duties at Oklahoma and Damian Lillard becoming the GM at Weber State.

Black college football has seen NFL veterans **Michael Vick** at **Norfolk State**, **DeSean Jackson** at **Delaware State** and Pro Football Hall of Famer **Marshall Faulk** at **Southern** among others take head coaching jobs over the past two seasons.

Robinson bringing in **Deion Sanders** as JSU's head football coach in 2020 is considered the kickoff of the trend.

Jackson State has to be hoping that Perkins can give a similar boost to the basketball fortunes as Sanders did to JSU football. JSU finished 12-21 overall and 10-8 in the **Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC)** in the fifth year under head coach **Mo Williams** who left to become an assistant at Kentucky.

"His presence gives the Tigers a recognizable voice in player development, recruiting conversations and athlete branding," said HBCUGameDay founder **Stephen J.**



JSU Sports Photo

KENDRICK PERKINS: Retired NBA veteran and current ESPN NBA analyst bringing his knowledge, experience and perspective to Jackson State basketball.

Gaither in a story on its website.

"It also gives Jackson State another way to connect basketball with media training at a time when college athletics is driven by exposure.

"JSU has already shown how powerful a recognizable name can be when paired with institutional momentum. Deion Sanders' football tenure brought national attention to the school. Now, Perkins gives the men's basketball program a chance to make its own splash.

"The Tigers are not just adding a former NBA player. They are adding a media personality, a championship voice and someone who understands the modern basketball ecosystem.

"Now the question is how quickly that name turns into recruiting momentum for Jackson State men's basketball."

BCSP Notes

Toyota connects as presenting and title sponsor to major ESPN black college football events

Toyota is expanding its partnership with HBCU football and culture through a new three-year agreement with ESPN Events, connecting the brand with some of the biggest celebrations in Black college sports.

The partnership includes the **Cricket MEAC/SWAC Challenge Kick-Off** and the **Cricket Celebration Bowl**, with Toyota serving as the presenting sponsor of both events. Toyota will also become the title sponsor of the halftime shows for both games, highlighting the music, tradition and pageantry that are central to the HBCU football experience.

The agreement also includes sponsorship roles for **Red Lobster Band of the Year** and **Champion's Circle** presented by Toyota, which recognizes leadership and championship excellence within HBCU athletics.

The partnership will follow the HBCU football season from the opening Week Zero matchup in the Cricket MEAC/SWAC Challenge Kick-Off presented by Toyota to the Cricket Celebration Bowl presented by Toyota, where the HBCU Football National Champion is crowned.

"Toyota's investment in these properties represents more than a sponsorship — it is an investment in the institutions, traditions and communities that make HBCU athletics so powerful," said **John Grant**, Executive Director of all three events. "Through this three-year collaboration, Toyota will have a meaningful presence from kickoff weekend to championship weekend, including the halftime shows, and band championships, that celebrate one of the most important parts of the HBCU consumer experience."

Toyota said the partnership will also help showcase HBCU marching bands, school pride and the cultural impact surrounding Black college football.

"Toyota is honored to join ESPN Events in support of these beloved HBCU events and the communities they celebrate," said Andrew George,



Senior Analyst of Community Based Marketing at Toyota. "This three-year agreement allows us to build a meaningful presence across the HBCU football season, from the Cricket MEAC/SWAC Challenge Kick-Off to the Cricket Celebration Bowl, while recognizing the culture, leadership and excellence that define Black college sports. Together with Burrell Communications Group, we are proud to help bring this partnership to life and look forward to seeing it on the field."

The 2026 Cricket MEAC/SWAC Challenge Kick-Off will feature the **Alabama A&M** Bulldogs of the **Southwestern Athletic Conference** and the **Howard** Bison of the **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference**. The game is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 29, at 6:30 p.m. CT at Center-Parc Stadium in Atlanta.

The 2026 Cricket Celebration Bowl will pit the champions of the SWAC and MEAC on Saturday, December 12, 2026, at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia.

NBA Draft and HBCUs; Five quick facts

STEVEN J. GAITHER

HBCUGameday.com, Special to the BCSP

The NBA Draft has a deep connection to HBCUs, even if recent history has made that connection easier to overlook.

As the 2026 NBA Draft arrives – Tuesday, June 23 and Wednesday, June 24 – HBCU basketball fans once again have reason to watch closely. **Tennessee State** standout **Aaron Nkrumah** is one of the names connected to this year's draft cycle. If selected, he would end a long drought for HBCUs.

That possibility makes this a good time to revisit the history. HBCUs have produced NBA champions, Hall of Famers, first-round picks and barrier breakers. The draft record shows that Black college basketball once had a major place in the NBA pipeline.

Here are five facts to know about HBCUs and the NBA Draft.

1. Earl Lloyd was the first HBCU player drafted

West Virginia State's **Earl Lloyd** became the first HBCU player selected in the NBA Draft in 1950. He was taken by the Washington Capitols in the ninth round.

Lloyd's story goes beyond draft history. Later that year, he became the first African-American player to appear in an NBA game. That made an HBCU product one of the most important figures in the integration of professional basketball.

2. Earl Monroe remains the highest HBCU draft pick ever

Winston-Salem State legend Earl "**The Pearl**" **Monroe** still owns the top spot among HBCU NBA Draft picks.

Monroe was selected No. 2 overall by the Baltimore Bullets in 1967. No HBCU player has gone higher since.

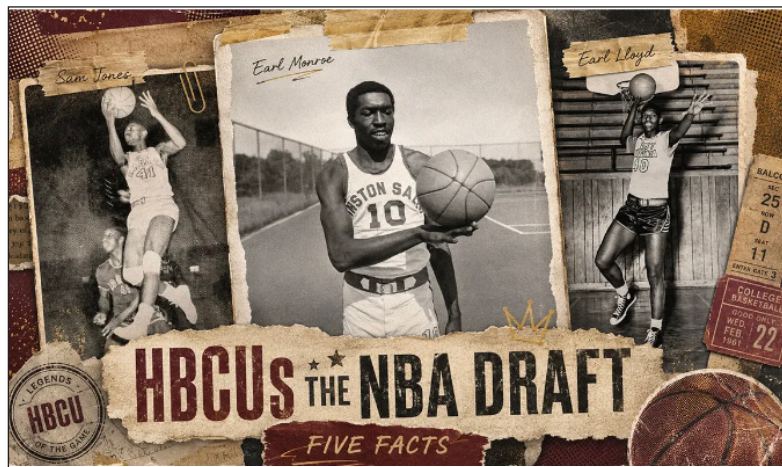
That pick came after Monroe became a college basketball icon at **Winston-Salem State**. He averaged 41.5 points per game as a senior and led the Rams to the 1967 NCAA College Division national championship.



3. Only 21 HBCU players have gone in the first round

The NBA Draft has included hundreds of HBCU players, but only 21 have been first-round picks.

The list includes major names such as **Sam Jones**, **Dick Barnett**, **Zelmo Beatty** (**Prairie View A&M**), **Purvis Short** (**Jackson State**), **Charles Oakley** (**Virginia Union**), **Lindsey Hunter** (**Jackson State**) and **Carlos Rogers** (**Tennessee State**).



North Carolina Central's **Sam Jones** was the first HBCU first-round pick. He was selected No. 8 overall by the Boston Celtics in 1957. Tennessee State's Carlos Rogers is the most recent HBCU first-rounder. He went No. 11 overall to the Seattle SuperSonics in 1994.

4. Tennessee State and Jackson State lead the way

Tennessee State and Jackson State sit at the top of the HBCU NBA Draft list.

Both programs have produced 23 draft picks, according to NCAA records. Grambling State is close behind with 22 selections.

That history says a lot about the strength of HBCU basketball in past generations. Schools such as **North Carolina A&T**, **Winston-Salem State**, **Southern**, **Norfolk State**, **Alabama State**, **Kentucky State** and **Alcorn State** also produced long draft histories.

5. The modern drought is real

Norfolk State's **Kyle O'Quinn** is the most recent HBCU player selected in the NBA Draft. The Orlando Magic picked him in the second round in 2012.

That means more than a decade has passed without an HBCU player hearing his name called on draft night.

The draft has also changed. Since it moved to two rounds in 1989, fewer HBCU players have had room to be selected. Many now have to chase the NBA through Summer League, training camp deals, two-way contracts, the G League or overseas opportunities.

That is why the 2026 NBA Draft matters for HBCUs. It is not just about one player. It is about whether the next chapter of HBCU basketball history begins on draft night.