

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE™

NEW HEIGHTS, NEW HIRES

TWO ON PAYTON AND BUCHANAN WATCH LISTS;
NBA VET MONTA ELLIS NEW GM AT ALCORN STATE



PGA Tour Champions Photo

TIM O'NEAL: Former Jackson State golfer had his best finish and biggest paday of the year on Senior's Tour.

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

ONES TO WATCH FOR HBCU POY:

The list below is of the initial 20 players chosen for the *Stats Perform HBCU Player of the Year* award recognizing the most outstanding player from the 21 FCS HBCUs. Other players can and likely will be added as the season unfolds.

The *Black College Football Hall of Fame* (BCFHOF) initial 2026 Watch List for their 11th *Black College Football Player of the Year Award* presented annually to the most outstanding black college football player will be unveiled over the next couple of weeks before the Aug. 29 start of the season. The award includes players from NCAA Div. II and NAIA black college programs.



2026 HBCU National Player of the Year Award Watch List

– **Omari Allen**, 6-4, 300, Sr., OL, **Hampton** - Anchors Hampton's offensive line once again after a 2025 season that finished with him earning second-team All-CAA recognition. The dominant offensive lineman now enters the 2026 campaign as a first-team preseason selection.

– **Elijah Baker**, 6-4, 323, R-Sr., OL - **Alabama State** - Baker sets the standard up front for Alabama State, which had the SWAC's top offense last season. A proven powerhouse in the trenches, he was a first-team All-SWAC selection, adding the same honor in the preseason this year.

– **Andrew Body**, 6-0, 205, R-Sr., QB, **Alabama State** - As one of the more dynamic playmakers at the position in the FCS, Body leads the Alabama State offense. The 2025 Stats Perform HBCU Player of the Year and recipient of the SWAC's top offensive honor accounted for 2,288 offensive yards and 24 total touchdowns with just one interception in eight games.

– **Herman Brister III**, 6-2, 205, R-Jr., DB, **Southern** - Long and athletic, Brister has been one of the best tacklers among SWAC defensive backs for two seasons, totaling 62 stops in 2024 and following it up with 76 more last season. He also had 1.5 TFLs, five passes defended and a forced fumble while making the All-SWAC first team, and he's back there this season.

– **Cornelius Brown IV**, 6-5, 220, Grad, QB, **Alabama A&M** - Brown was named SWAC offensive player of the week twice last year before he suffered a season-ending lower leg injury (he had a strong 152.9 pass efficiency rating in four games). Named to the Shriners Children's East-West Bowl 1,000 Watch List, he has 5,593 passing yards across three schools.

– **Ka'Von Chisolm**, 6-5, 260, R-So., DL, **South Carolina State** - Chisolm exploded on the scene as a redshirt freshman while helping the Bulldogs ascend to a Celebration Bowl victory. The 2025 Stats Perform Freshman All-American finished with 31 tackles, 11.5 TFLs and 4.5 sacks. He was named to the MEAC preseason first team.

– **Quaveon Davis**, 6-8, 330, Sr., OL, **Jackson State** - Davis is a mountain on the O-line, helping Jackson State's offense to consistently be one of the best in the SWAC. He enters the 2026 season as the conference's preseason first team and the Stats Perform Preseason All-America third team.

– **Wayne Favors III**, 5-11, 182, R-Sr., DB, **Delaware State** - Favors has been a regular standout for the last two seasons, but particularly during the Hornets' 2025 turnaround (8-4 from 1-11 in 2024) with 38 tackles, nine passes defended and one interception for a 91-yard touchdown. He was named to the MEAC preseason first team.

– **Jordan Franklin**, 6-2, 205, R-Jr., LB, **South Carolina State** - The Bulldogs linebacker was all over the field during SCSU's 2025 MEAC- and Celebration Bowl-championship season, finishing with 62 tackles, 12 TFLs, two sacks and two interceptions and making the All-MEAC first team. His 2026 preseason honors: MEAC Defensive Player of the Year, Stats Perform All-America third team and Buck Buchanan Award Watch List.

– **Kedrick Green**, 6-2, 215, Grad, DB, **Howard** - The runner-up in voting for MEAC preseason defensive player of the year, Green is coming off a breakout 2025 season. The all-conference first-team safety totaled 60 tackles, including 44 solos, 3.5 TFLs, two interceptions and one blocked kick.

– **Danarius Hilliard**, 5-11, 210, Sr., LB, **Arkansas-Pine Bluff** - Hilliard racked up 90 tackles and 8.5 TFLs in 11 games, with his 8.2 per-game average the highest in the SWAC. He made the all-conference first team, and is back this year with the same preseason honor.

– **Eden James**, 5-9, 195, Grad, RB, **Howard** - The three-time MEAC preseason first-team selection has 1,488 rushing yards and eight touchdowns in his career, and that's even after his 2025 season was cut short by a Week 2 injury. Back in 2023, he had 213 scrimmage yards and a TD against the Big Ten's Northwestern.

– **Jaylen Jennings**, 5-10, 195, Jr., RB, **Arkansas-Pine Bluff** - The All-SWAC first-teamer was a workhorse while leading the conference in carries (182) and finishing second in rushing yards (936) and rushing touchdowns (11). He enters the 2026 season back on the SWAC preseason first team.

– **RJ Johnson III**, 6-2, 210, R-Jr., QB, **Grambling State** - Johnson made a transfer to Grambling this year after starting in the SWAC at Florida A&M last season. His 2,597 passing yards ranked second in the conference, but he was first in passing yards per game (236.1) and completions (215). He also was third in touchdown passes (18).

– **Elijah Kennedy**, 5-11, 180, R-Sr., WR/RS, **North Carolina A&T** - After averaging 16.3 yards on 18 punt returns with two going for touchdowns, Kennedy was named to the 2025 Stats Perform All-America second team. He also broke out as a receiver with 25 catches. This preseason, he's back on the CAA first team and All-America second team.

– **Calvin McMillan**, 6-5, 328, Grad, OL, **Prairie View A&M** - The massive offensive lineman's play up front was one of the reasons PVAMU averaged 435.1 yards and 31.6 points while winning 2025 SWAC title. He was named to the all-conference first team and is back there this preseason.

– **AC McMoore**, 6-2, 311, ??, OL, **North Carolina Central** - McMoore has shown incredible durability over the past three seasons, starting 30 of his 32 games and helping the Eagles to a No. 1 offensive ranking in the MEAC each time. He earned all-conference second-team honors last season and moved up to the first team this preseason.

– **Chance Peterson**, 5-8, 154, R-Jr., WR, **North Carolina Central** - Peterson had a breakout 2025 season with 48 receptions for 720 yards and a touchdown while earning All-MEAC second-team honors. This year, he's eyed as the engine that drives that NCCU offense, earning MEAC preseason offensive player of the year and a spot on the Walter Payton Award Watch List.

– **Kam Sallis**, 6-1, 222, R-Jr., DB, **Jackson State** - Sallis was one of the anchors of a JSU defense that allowed under 19 points a game in 2025. He was in on 53 tackles with two interceptions and two forced fumbles, garnering All-SWAC second-team honors. But in 2026, the dynamic defensive back has earned SWAC preseason defensive player of the year.

– **Ta'Shaun Sims**, 6-0, 188, Jr., DB, **Alabama State** - Sims was a first-team All-SWAC performer in 2025 after starting for the conference high with five interceptions, including one returned for a touchdown, and he added in a fumble recovery. This preseason, he's back on the SWAC preseason first team plus the Buck Buchanan Award Watch List.

O'Neal has big PGA Tour Champions finish

LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

Former **Jackson State** golfing great **Tim O'Neal** shot 68-66-69 to finish at 203, -13 for solo fourth place at the 2026 Portugal Invitational on the PGA Tour Champions that concluded on August 2.

It is the Savannah, Georgia native's best finish of the year and his \$180,000 payday tops his fifth-place finish and \$90,933 payday at the Dick's Open in late June. The performance came just one week after he shot 79-76 and missed the cut, his only missed cut of the season, at the ISPS HANDA Senior Open in Scotland.

O'Neal carded five birdies and one bogey in first round, six birdies without a bogey in the second round. He opened his third round with three straight birdies but carded two birdies and two bogeys to finish with 69 and solo fourth.

For the year O'Neal, 54, has six top 25 finishes and three top 10s in 17 events. He has won \$541,966 so far this season. He has career earnings of \$2,538,252 including one win.

He is currently 29th on the Charles Schwab Cup Money Standings. He's 36th in the point

standings with 715,824 points. Stewart Cink, with over \$3 million in earnings leads the money list and the points list with over 3.9 million points. The top 72 golfers advance to the playoffs.

There are eight tournaments left before the start of the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs on the PGA TOUR Champions. The first playoff event is the Stifel Charity Classic beginning on October 23, 2026.

Zach Johnson topped the PGA Tour Champions leaderboard with a major win at The Els Club Vilamoura in Portugal. This was Johnson's latest win of the season, taking the first-year event hosted by Ernie Els with a two-shot win over Cink on 19-under 197.

Johnson won the \$450,000 winner's share of the \$3,000,000 purse. Johnson shot 64-68-65. Pdraig Harrington finished in third place, four shots behind Johnson.

The 2026 PGA Tour Champions schedule continues this week (Aug. 14-16) with the Boeing Classic in Washington at The Club at Snoqualmie Ridge in Snoqualmie, Wa. O'Neal is in the field.



O'NEAL: Former Jackson State standout scores third top ten finish and biggest payday of the year at Senior Tour event in Portugal. O'Neal has one PGA Tour Champions win at the Dominion Energy Charity Classic in 2024.

The first round will air at 10 p.m. (EDT) on Friday and again at 4:30 a.m. Saturday on the Golf Channel. The Golf Channel will have the second round beginning at 6 p.m. on Saturday, repeated at 1:30 a.m. Sunday. The final round will be on at 5 p.m. Sunday with the last round on again at 6:00 a.m. on Monday.

BCSP Notes

Two black college players on 2026 Buchanan, Payton Watch Lists

The 2026 Watch Lists for *Stats Perform* FCS postseason awards honoring black college football legends **Junius "Buck" Buchanan** of **Grambling** and **Walter Payton** of **Jackson State** are again notably short on current black college players.

The *Buck Buchanan Award*, presented annually to the national defensive player of the year in Div. I FCS college football, has just two black college players among its 30 athletes – **South Carolina State** redshirt junior linebacker **Jordan Franklin** and **Alabama State** junior defensive back **Ta'Shaun Sims**. Franklin is the MEAC's preseason defensive player of the year.

The 30-player preseason watch list for the 2026 *Walter Payton Award*, presented annually to the national offensive player of the year in Division I FCS college football, also has just two black college players on the list – **Alabama State** graduate senior quarterback **Andrew Body** and **North Carolina Central** redshirt junior wide receiver **Chance Peterson**. Body and Peterson are the SWAC and MEAC preseason offensive players of the year respectively. Three black college players each were on last year's Watch Lists.

All four on the Watch List are also on the *STATS Perform HBCU Player of the Year Watch List* (see **STAT CORNER**).

Franklin (6-2, 205), picked as the **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference** (MEAC) preseason defensive player of the year, totalled 62 total tackles a year ago (42 solos), 14th best in the MEAC, but is one of the returning tackles leaders in the conference. He also had 12 tackles for -52 yards in losses including two sacks. He also excelled as a pass defender with six break-ups and two interceptions.

Sims (6-0, 188) was credited with nine passes defended in 12 games in 2025 and tied for the SWAC lead with five interceptions, tied for fifth in the FCS. He had 36 tackles and one sack.

Body (6-2, 205), winner of the 2025 STATS Perform HBCU Player of the Year Award, returns for his redshirt senior year after putting up big numbers in just eight games. Body led the SWAC in both rushing (708 yards, 88.5 ypg., 4 TDs) and passing (2,112 yards, 202.9 ypg., 24 TDs, 1 int.).

Peterson (5-9, 154) had 48 receptions for 720 yards and one score for the Eagles in 2025.

The Buchanan Award enters its 32nd season in 2026 after beginning in 1995. The Payton Award, first presented in 1987, is in its 40th season.

Six black college players have taken home the Buchanan Award with **Tennessee State** defensive end **Terrell Allen** the most recent. He won the award in 2023. Other winners are **Florida A&M** linebacker **Isaiah**



Franklin



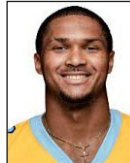
Sims



Body



Peterson



Brister

Land (2021), **Southern** defensive end **Jordan Lewis** (2020), **Norfolk State** linebacker **Deon King** (2015), **Bethune-Cookman** defensive back **Rashean Mathis** (2002) and **North Carolina A&T** edge rusher **Chris McNeil** (1997).

Grambling running back **Walter Dean** (1990) and **Alcorn State** quarterback **Steve McNair** (1994) are the only black college winners of the Payton Award.

Stats Perform also gives out several other awards named for black college legends – the ***Jerry Rice Award*** (for FCS Freshman Player of the Year), the ***Eddie Robinson Award*** (for FCS Coach of the Year), the ***HBCU National Player of the Year*** and the ***Doris Robinson Scholar-Athlete of the Year***. The first Jerry Rice Award Watch List is released during the season by STATS FCS. The FCS coach of the year award is unveiled incrementally with mid-season/finalist updates and a recipient announcement after the regular season.

Each award will be handed out at the Stats Perform FCS National Awards Presentation.

FCS Football Central not yet announced 2026 Aeneas Williams Award Preseason Watch List

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame (OSHO) has not released the 5th Annual ***Aeneas Williams Award*** Preseason Watch List presented annually to the top Division I HBCU defensive back by the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame and the Chickasaw Nation.

Named after **Southern University** product and Pro Football Hall of Famer **Aeneas Williams**, the list includes 15 of the nation's best defensive backs in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Division I college football. Southern redshirt junior **Herman Brister III** was on last season's Watch List.

South Carolina State grad cornerback **Jarod Washington** won the 2025 Aeneas Williams Award. After going undrafted and having tryouts with Kansas City and Tampa Bay, Washington was added to the Minnesota Vikings' preseason camp last week. **James Burgess Jr.** from **Alabama State** won the Aeneas Award in 2024.

The preseason watch list is selected by a screening committee in partnership with DraftHBCUPlayers and the Paycom Jim Thorpe Award. This list is not final, and players who have outstanding seasons may be added to the semifinalists and finalists lists as the season progresses.



Washington

Alcorn State hires NBA vet as Men's Basketball GM

LORMAN, Miss. – **Alcorn State** men's basketball announced on Friday, August 7, the hiring of former NBA guard **Monta Ellis** as the new general manager of the Braves' program, effective immediately.

Ellis, a Jackson, Mississippi native, brings 12 years of NBA experience to the Braves' coaching staff after a standout professional career that began when the Golden State Warriors selected him in the second round (40th overall) of the 2005 NBA Draft straight out of high school.

Over parts of 12 NBA seasons with the Warriors, Milwaukee Bucks, Dallas Mavericks and Indiana Pacers, respectively, the Lanier High product established himself as one of the league's most dynamic scorers, finishing his career with 14,858 points (17.8 per game), 3,856 assists and 2,874 rebounds.

"Today marks the beginning of an incredible new chapter, and I'm truly honored and excited to be named the General Manager for Men's Basketball at Alcorn State University," said Ellis on Friday morning. "Alcorn isn't just a university. It's a place built on history, tradition, excellence, and a legacy that has impacted generations."

"As someone who believes in developing people on and off the court, I'm excited to help build a championship culture for our student-athletes to succeed in basketball, in the classroom, and – more importantly, in life," added Ellis. "Thank you to everyone who has believed in me throughout my journey."

"I'm ready to get to work, embrace the challenge, and represent Braves Nation with pride."

In landing Ellis, Alcorn State is following the lead of **Howard** who brought in former No. 1 NBA Draft pick **John Wall** in a similar position and **Jackson State** who has announced that **Kendrick Perkins** would fill an almost

identical position.

Ellis joins an Alcorn men's basketball program looking to build on last season that saw the Braves finish 9-23 overall and 7-11 in **Southwestern Athletic Conference** (SWAC) play under first-year head coach **Jake Morton**. The Braves advanced to the second round of the SWAC Tournament with a 77-65 win over No. 10 seed **Alabama State**.

"Monta Ellis brings a championship pedigree and a wealth of basketball knowledge to our program, and we're thrilled to welcome him to the Alcorn State family," said **E. D'Wayne Robinson**, athletics director at Alcorn. "His experience at the highest level of the game, combined with his passion for developing young talent, makes him the perfect addition to our basketball leadership."

No stranger to the "Magnolia State", Ellis won a pair of MHSAA 4-A state titles with Lanier High in Jackson, Mississippi, compiling a 68-7 record from 2002 to 2005 on the way to the championships.

He also led the Bulldogs to a state runner-up finish as a junior. In all, Ellis amassed 4,167 points in his prep career, averaging 38.4 points per game en route to be named EA Sports National Player of the Year.

Ellis' responsibilities as general manager will include assisting with roster construction, player evaluation, recruiting strategy, transfer portal decisions, NIL opportunities, alumni and donor relationships, as well as the overall development of student-athletes. He will also serve as a mentor and resource for players as they prepare for success both on and off the court.

"I am extremely excited to welcome Monta to the Alcorn State men's basketball staff as our general manager," said Morton. "He brings a wealth of basketball knowledge, professional experience, and a strong connection to the



state of Mississippi. His addition is a major step forward for our program, and will have a tremendous impact on our student-athletes, Alcorn as a university, the Jackson-Lorman-Vicksburg-Natchez areas, and communities throughout the state."

Beyond that, Alcorn officials expect Ellis' name recognition and NBA pedigree to raise the program's profile on the national recruiting trail.

A Mississippi native with more than a decade of NBA experience, Ellis is expected to leverage his relationships across the basketball world – from AAU and high school circuits to NBA and collegiate networks, in order to help the Braves attract higher-caliber talent to Lorman.

His hire is also expected to bring increased media attention and exposure to Alcorn men's basketball – both regionally and nationally, further establishing the program's brand within the SWAC and HBCU basketball landscape.

"Monta's name alone opens doors for our program, from the recruiting trail to the national stage," continued Robinson.

"He understands what it takes to compete and win at the highest level, and that perspective will be invaluable as we continue building a roster capable of competing for SWAC championships here in Lorman."