

**BLACK COLLEGE
SPORTS**



Hampton Sports Photo

LOOKING FOR GREENER PASTURES

SUDDEN DEPARTURE: MEAC Tourney MVP Deron Powers leaves Hampton hoops.

MEAC HOOPS DEPARTURES CONTINUE; THREE WIN U. S. OUTDOOR TRACK TITLES

BCSP Notes



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FOURTH TIME A CHARM: Former Howard hurdler David Oliver (c.) crosses the finish line to win the 110-meter hurdlers at the U. S. A. Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Eugene, Oregon Sunday. Oliver, who won his fourth U. S. title, and others advance to the August 22-30 World Championships in Beijing, China.

Black college products take home three titles, one second at U. S. Track and Field nationals

Two former black college hurdlers and one jumper took home first place finishes at the U. S. A. Track and Field Outdoor Championships last week at historic Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon and earned spots on the U. S. Team for the upcoming World Championships in Beijing, China.

On Friday, **Coppin State** product **Christina Epps** soared to a career best 14.09 meters (46 feet, 2.75 inches) to win the women's triple jump.

Epps, who competes for the adidas Garden State Track Club, hit her 46-2 3/4 inches (14.09m) mark on her first attempt but fouled on her final two attempts. But the first jump stood up as the best performance of the competition. April Sinkler was second with a best leap of 45-4 1/2.

"It actually hasn't sunk in yet," Epps said. "It feels so unreal. I was going through my victory lap yesterday like I can't believe this is happening right now. I am extremely humbled and honored."

With her victory, Epps moved one step closer to earning a sacred spot on the 2015 IAAF World Championships team set for August 22-30 in Beijing, China. She needs to clear 14.20 meters in order to officially earn a trip to China. Fortunately for Epps, her performance on Friday earned her another opportunity to reach that destination.

Epps will compete in the 2015 Pan-American games in Toronto next month. The triple jump will be held on Tuesday, July 21 at 6:00 p.m. according to the schedule. For Epps, this was the ultimate triumph in an amazing and excellent career.

"I am blessed to have another opportunity to hit the mark I need for world championships," Epps said. "This will be my first international competition, so I am excited about that."

Earlier this year, Epps won the triple jump at the Penn Relays and the Morgan State Legacy Meet. She jumped her previous career best of 13.83 meters at the Legacy Meet. Epps credited the energy and enthusiasm of the large crowd for providing the necessary fuel for the best performance of her life.

Epps was named the **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) Woman of the Year** and one of the 30 finalists for the 2014 NCAA Woman of the Year Award after last season. During her star-studded career, Epps was an 12-time All-MEAC student-athlete in track and field and a six-time triple jump champion in the conference. She is the current Coppin State triple jump record holder. Her school standard is 13.40 meters (43 feet, 11.75 inches).

Saint Augustine's University graduate **Bershawn "Batman" Jackson** stayed close to the pack and produced a winning kick to win the men's 400 meters hurdles title Saturday in 49.06 seconds.

Capturing his fifth U.S. 400 hurdles crown, Jackson advanced to the World Championships 10 years after claiming the 2005 world championship in the event. Jackson finished ahead of training partner Johnny Dutch with a winning time of 48.29 seconds. Dutch, who also qualified for the World Championships, placed second in 48.43 seconds.

Both Jackson and Dutch are trained by St. Augustine's legendary Track & Field Head Coach **George Williams**.

"I just wanted to execute my race, stay close to everyone and use my kick in the last 100," said Jackson. "I executed it great."

Jackson, a 13-year veteran who stands 5'7" and takes a non-traditional 15 steps between hurdles, talked about his winning technique.

"Throughout my career, this has been my strategy. I always was a fast finisher. I won the world championship doing it. And over the years I tried to switch up my strategy. I ran 47.3 three times in my career, so I wanted to try something new to actually see can I could go out harder. But when

"BATMAN" IS BACK, WINS U.S. HURDLES TITLE, AGAIN

Former Saint Augustine's and CIAA star Bershawn "Batman" Jackson shows his form in taking the 400 meter hurdles crown at the U. S. A. Track & Field Championships in Eugene, Oregon Saturday. Jackson came from behind after clearing the final hurdle to surge past Johnny Dutch and take his fifth U. S. title.



USATF Photo

I go out harder I don't finish as well. So, I'm just going back to my old strategy I used to do when I was world champion and was number one in the world.

"It's good to have doubters. That's why I'm a hurdler. Because I'm 5-7, people doubted I could do it because I'm so short. They said a short guy could never do 15 steps and be a world champion. I love the doubters. I'm a competitor, I love a challenge and it's a blessing to be in my position right now."

Howard product **David Oliver** led all qualifiers for the 110-meter hurdles semifinals in the event, winning his heat in 13.28 seconds and went on to take the title in 13.04 seconds – a season best. He finished just ahead of **Ronnie Ash** formerly of **Bethune-Cookman** who took second in 13.13 seconds.

Oliver set the Hayward Field record when he finished the event in 12.90 seconds in 2010.

Oliver did not get out as fast as others, but he made up ground quickly – cleanly making it over all hurdles but fifth and ninth. He might have dipped under 13 seconds with a cleaner race.

Oliver, now a four-time U.S. outdoor champion, was the world champion in 2013.

This win comes after he recently fired his coach, 81-year-old legend Brooks Johnson, who didn't approve of Oliver attending his best friend's wedding a week before the Prefontaine Classic, an important meet in early June. Johnson let the media know how he felt, and Oliver responded with an e-mail to Johnson that eventually went public.

"It was time for a change. He sent a nasty text message out to the media, and I just had enough. He didn't want to talk about it face to face, so I had to e-mail him my feelings on things and how this just wasn't going to work anymore."

Hampton product **Francena McCorory** and **Livingstone** standout **Quanera Hayes** finished fourth and fifth in the women's 400 meter dash won by Allyson Felix in 50.19 seconds. Only the top three finishers are assured of a spot on the USA roster for the IAAF World Championships, however if Felix decides to only compete in the 200-meter dash, McCorory and Hayes could be selected as relay team participants.

Savannah State's Cameron Hall just missed qualifying for the semifinals in the men's 110 meter hurdles by .01 seconds. He finished fifth in his heat (13.80) and had the 18th fastest time overall.

Athletes earned spots on the 2015 IAAF World Championships team set for August 22-30 in Beijing, China, as well as on the Pan Am Games, Thorpe Cup, Pan Am Juniors and NACAC Championships teams.

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

B-CU MOURNS LOSS OF FORMER PLAYER:

Damion Cook, who provided the defensive foundation for the renaissance of **Bethune-Cookman** football died Friday. He was 36.



Cook

Cook, who would go on to play in the National Football League, Canadian Football League and United Football League, suffered a heart attack as he was moving into his new home in Baltimore, where he was Head Football Coach at Atholton High School.

"Damion Cook was a giant man with a gentle spirit," said B-CU Athletic Director **Lynn Thompson**. "As a young Wildcat, he was a brilliant student-athlete from a tremendous family who supported him and our university for many years."

Along with **Adul Yates** and **Rod Smith**, Cook anchored a defensive line for the 1998 Wildcats who improved from a 4-7 mark the previous season to an 8-3 finish – the program's first winning season since 1985 as well as the highest win total since 1977. That season ended with a berth in the *Heritage Bowl* against **Southern** televised nationally on NBC.

He would later play for the Chicago Bears, the Ravens, the Cleveland Browns and the Detroit Lions in addition to the Miami Dolphins' practice squad. Also, he played for the CFL's Hamilton Tiger-Cats, the Omaha Nighthawks of the UFL and was on the Arena League's Tampa Bay Storm's practice squad..

After his playing days, Cook became a strength and coaching in Michigan from 2011 to 2013 before taking a position as a mental health counselor with the Howard County (Md.) Public School System, which led to the Atholton coaching job. Atholton was 3-7 last season after winning just one game the year before.

He is survived by his wife, JaNiece, and three children, Mikah, Lucas and Brianna.

THOMPSON PROMOTED AT B-CU:

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – **Bethune-Cookman University** Director of Athletics **Lynn W. Thompson** has been elevated to the position of Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics, announced Tuesday, June 30, by B-CU President **Dr. Edison O. Jackson**. Thompson's duties as Vice President will begin July 1, and he will continue to lead the 17-sport Division I program.



Thompson

Thompson, a native of Daytona Beach, Florida and 1980 graduate of B-CU, has served as Director of Athletics at Bethune-Cookman since 1991, recently completing his 24th year at the helm in Daytona Beach.

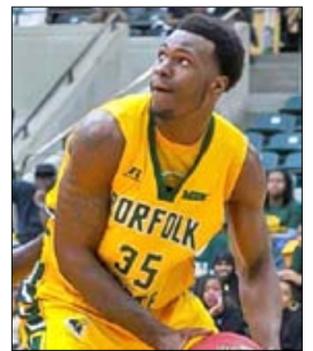
"We are so proud of the accomplishments of Wildcats Athletics under the direction of Lynn W. Thompson," said Dr. Jackson. "Under his leadership, Bethune-Cookman Athletics has become a championship program across the board with impressive academic performances of the student-athletes, conference championships and NCAA postseason bids in several of our sports. More importantly, his integrity, leadership and creative vision for branding Wildcats Athletics has opened doors for the entire university, and we are pleased to have him join the senior leadership and university cabinet as we further the mission of our institution."

During his tenure overseeing a sports program that is known throughout the nation, Thompson has directed the Wildcats to a total of 64 championships, beginning with 44 MEAC championships, including a dynasty of 12 baseball titles in the past 15 years; a run of five consecutive softball titles from 2000-2004 – as well as three addition consecutive titles from 2010-12. B-CU Football has won a total of six MEAC titles, including at least a share of the last three consecutive from 2012-14.

"I am humbled by the opportunity to join with Dr. Jackson and his cabinet to push forward the agenda of Bethune-Cookman University," said Thompson. "Dr. Jackson clearly understands the impact that a successful athletic program can have on the entire university, and I look forward to assisting in implementing his vision."



POWERS



GASTON

Hampton's Deron Powers latest MEAC hoops star to transfer

Hampton basketball senior point guard and 2015 **Mid Eastern Athletic Conference** Tournament Most Valuable Player, **Deron Powers**, has decided to transfer.

"Honestly, I want to play for a better program," Powers, a Williamsburg, Va. native, told *The Daily Press* of Hampton. "I'm definitely up for anything, and it doesn't have to be at the highest level. There are a lot of good programs I wouldn't mind going to, but I am looking for a higher-profile team that needs a point guard."

Powers, considered one of the best point guards in the MEAC and a third team all-conference selection, averaged 10.1 points, 29th best in the conference and fourth best on the Pirates squad, 3.8 rebounds and 3.1 assists, fifth in the league. A former MEAC rookie of the year, Powers played three years for Hampton and is fifth on the school's all-time assist list.

The decision is odd considering that he led the Pirates, a fifth seed, to the MEAC tournament title and then guided them to a win over Manhattan in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. Hampton lost to top seed Kentucky in the second round. All three games were nationally televised.

Powers joins a list of MEAC standouts who have decided to transfer following the 2014-15 season.

Norfolk State double-double machine, 6-8 junior forward **Rashid Gaston**, announced recently that he was leaving the Spartans.

Gaston averaged 15.5 points, eighth best in the MEAC, 9.6 rebounds, second behind Player of the Year **Kendall Gray** of **Delaware State** and shot .626 from the field, second only to the .660 of first team all-MEAC forward **Jordan Parks** of **North Carolina Central**. Despite those great stats, Gaston was not selected to the first, second or third all-MEAC teams.

A Warren, Ohio native, Gaston announced that he will return to his home state to play at Xavier.

"I feel like making the transition would give me better exposure, and just better player development and things like that," Gaston told Cincinnati.com.

Coppin State guard **Sterling Smith** graduated with a year of eligibility and is transferring to Pittsburgh for his final season. Smith led Coppin State in scoring averaging 13.9 points per game, 12th best in the MEAC. He was a second team all-conference selection.

Jermaine Rutley, a 6-4 guard who topped **Florida A&M** in scoring (17.4 ppg.), rebounding (6.7 rpg.) and assists (2.1 apg.) also announced he was leaving the Rattlers to play at Arkansas-Little Rock. Rutley was the league's third-leading scorer.

Sophomore guard **Clemmye Owens**, a former all-MEAC rookie who played in only 12 games for **Bethune-Cookman** with six starts, announced in January that he was leaving the Wildcats after averaging a team-best 15.3 points off the bench.



Smith



Rutley



Owens