

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



Texas Southern Sports Photo
DERRICK GRIFFIN: Talent galore on the field, questions galore off it.

WHO'S GOING IN THE NFL DRAFT?

NEW COACHES FOR COPPIN STATE, ALBANY STATE; SPRING RESULTS; TRANSFER SAGA, PT. 3

Unpredictability marks 2017 NFL Draft

LUT WILLIAMS
BCSP Editor

There are an unusual number of significant and intriguing black college prospects for this week's NFL Draft that begins Thursday (April 27) and will be held outdoors for the first time ever at the famous "Rocky Steps" in Philadelphia.

While none of this year's prospects has the status or cachet of 2016 top black college pick **Javon Hargrave** out of **South Carolina State** - who was projected to go early in last year's draft and went in the third round to the Pittsburgh Steelers - the sheer number of HBCU products getting major looks by league teams makes this year's possible selections quite interesting.

No HBCU player is projected to go off the draft boards in Thursday's first round which begins at 8 p.m. and none are expected to be taken in rounds two and three during Friday's selections which begin at 7 p.m.

But on Saturday, as many as ten prospects could be taken when the league's 32 teams make selections in rounds four through seven. Those selections will begin at noon Saturday.

It's even hard to choose which HBCU player will go off the boards first. That's what makes this year's



Tarik Cohen
NC A&T



Javarius Leamon
SC State



Grover Stewart
Albany State



Javancy Jones
Jackson State

Who goes, who goes first and where?



Chad Williams
Grambling State

Jylan Ware
Alabama State

Jessamen Dunker
Tennessee State

Ezra Robinson
Tennessee State

Brandon Barnes
Alabama State



Barnes (6-5, 255) are the top two pass-catching prospects. Each has generated some buzz with their performances leading up to the draft.

Perhaps the biggest HBCU talent and certainly the biggest enigma is former **Texas Southern** basketball and football standout **Derrick Griffin** (6-7, 230). Griffin was considered one of the top receiving prospects in the nation when he came out of a high school in the Dallas area but could not qualify academically at either Texas A&M or Miami. Instead, he enrolled at TSU.

In the 2015-16 season as a freshman, Griffin was a second-team all-SWAC receiver in football and first team all-SWAC forward in basketball, sweeping the player and defensive player of the year awards. This year as a sophomore, he was dismissed from the football team after just two games and quit the basketball team after 13 games to prepare for the draft.

Scouts say his skill set and athleticism are "off-the-charts" but how and where he projects in the draft is anybody's guess.

If all ten players mentioned make it into the draft it would be the highest number since eight were selected in 2003 and the first double-digit haul since 2000 (see STAT CORNER).

draft for HBCU products so unpredictable.

The first pick could be diminutive (5-9, 175) dynamic game-breaker **Tarik Cohen**, who finished his career at **North Carolina A&T** as the **Mid Eastern Athletic Conference's** all-time leading rusher (5,619 yards). Or it could be massive (6-7, 325) offensive tackle **Javarius Leamon** out of **South Carolina State**.

Many are projecting 6-4, 335-pound former **Albany State** defensive tackle **Grover Stewart** as one of the top sleepers in the draft and one who could be taken early. Others that could slip into the top spot are 6-2, 245-pound tack-

ling machine, linebacker **Javancy Jones** out of **Jackson State**, or 6-8, 295-pound offensive tackle **Jylan Ware** from **Alabama State**.

It would not even be a surprise if 6-4, 318-pound guard **Jessamen Dunker** of **Tennessee State** is the first off the board. Four TSU offensive linemen have been selected in the past three drafts.

Tennessee State defensive back **Ezra Robinson** (5-11, 189) is considered the top HBCU defensive back in this year's draft and has been given a draftable grade at his position.

Grambling State wide receiver **Chad Williams** (6-1, 204) and **Alabama State** tight end **Brandon**

SPRING SPORTS ROUND-UP

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

MEAC MEN'S TENNIS

NORFOLK, Va.,—**Florida A&M** ended **South Carolina State's** string of dominance on Saturday at the Folkes-Stevens Tennis Center on the campus of Old Dominion University, defeating the Bulldogs 4-2 in the championship match of the 2017 **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC)** Men's Tennis Championship.

The Rattlers won their first MEAC title in men's tennis since 2000.

MEAC WOMEN'S TENNIS

NORFOLK, Va., —**South Carolina State**, the top seed out of the Southern Division, won its second straight **Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC)** women's tennis championship with a 4-3 win over **Hampton** in the championship match Saturday morning.

The Lady Bulldogs, who have won 12 of the last 13 titles, are reportedly giving up tennis after this season.

CIAA TRACK & FIELD (Men and Women)

BOWIE, Md. — The **Saint Augustine's** men won their 20th consecutive title and **Winston-Salem State** edged **Johnson C. Smith** by one point to claim the women's title in the 2017 **CIAA** Outdoor Track and Field Championships on the **Bowie State University** campus Saturday.

The Falcons, led by CIAA Men's Field MVP **Anthony Soriano**, scored 174.5 points to cruise past **Virginia Union** (126.5) and **Virginia State** (105) in the men's events. Johnson C. Smith was fourth (100) followed by **Bowie State** (61), **Lincoln (Pa.)** (50) and **Livingstone** (24).

The Rams nipped the Golden Bulls 145-144 after scoring nine points in the final event, the discus throw. The Golden Bulls, who were the defending champions, led 144-136 after winning the 4x400m relay.

CIAA WOMEN'S TENNIS

BOWIE, Md. — With a clutch performance that likely saved their championship run, the **Shaw** women's tennis team came through when it mattered the most, downing No. 1 seed **Chowan** Saturday afternoon in the **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA)** Women's Tennis Championship by the score of 5-3 at the Fairland Sports & Aquatic Center.

SIAC MEN'S TENNIS

PEACHTREE CITY, Ga. - The **Benedict College** men's tennis team won the **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference** championship for the third year in a row with a 5-2 victory over **Morehouse College** in the championship match on Wednesday at the Peachtree City Tennis Center.

SIAC MEN'S GOLF

PEACHTREE CITY, Ga.- **Albany State** men's golf team has been making history all year as the first program at the institution. On Wednesday, in its first year of competition, ASU claimed its first **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC)** Men's Golf Championship at the Flat Creek Golf Course.

SWAC MEN'S GOLF

ALEXANDRIA, La. — The **Alabama State University** men's golf team captured its sixth straight **Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC)** golf championship on Wednesday afternoon at the Oak Wing Golf Course.

SWAC WOMEN'S GOLF

ALEXANDRIA, La. — The **Texas Southern** women's golf team claimed their first **SWAC** Golf Championship in program history by shooting a 307-329-636 to wrap up play on Tuesday at the Links on the Bayou in Alexandria, La.

The Lady Tigers broke up a four-year title run by **Alabama State**, who had also taken the SWAC Women's Golf Championship in five in the previous six seasons.

BCSP Notes

Juan Dixon to lead Coppin State men's hoops

Former Maryland Terrapins star **Juan Dixon** has been named head basketball coach of the Coppin State program.



Dixon

Dixon, 38, is expected to be formally introduced next week.

"Coppin State will be making a statement next week regarding the next coach of the men's basketball team. Date and time to be determined," a Coppin State athletic department spokesman told the Baltimore Sun.

Michael Grant, who replaced longtime Eagles coach **Fang Mitchell** in 2014, was fired by Coppin State in March after a third straight losing season. Coppin State was a combined 25-69, including an 8-24 record in 2016-17 under Grant.

For Dixon, this will be his first Division I head coaching job. He accepted his first head coaching job last year with the woman's team at the **University of the District of Columbia**, which is a Division II school.

Dixon became a household name in 2002 when he led Maryland to its only national championship. After breaking records at Maryland, Dixon enjoyed a seven-year NBA career.

Giardana to lead Albany State football

ALBANY, Ga. — **Albany State** named **Gabe Giardana**, the former offensive coordinator and offensive line coach at Charleston Southern, as

its new head football coach on Tuesday.



Giardana

Giardana, selected from a pool of more than 100 applicants following a national search, has more than eight years of experience in football leadership roles at the collegiate level.

"We wanted a strong leader with a plan and genuine passion about the social and academic development of our young men," said Albany State Director of Athletics **Sherie Gordon**. "We wanted someone committed to recruiting in the state and in bordering states. We wanted someone who could connect with our student-athletes and engage positively with the university and the Albany community. We wanted a winner. We have found that person in Gabe Giardana."

During his recent tenure at Charleston Southern, led by a multiple option offense, the football team amassed 36 wins in four seasons, the most wins in four years in that program's history. The team won two Big South Conference championships in 2015 and 2016, and made two NCAA playoff appearances. In 2014 and 2016, the offense averaged more than 400 yards per game. Charleston Southern ranked 14th in the NCAA Division I FCS Coaches Poll at the conclusion of the 2016 season.

As a student and graduate assistant for the University of Alabama, Giardana worked for both Mike Shula and current Alabama Head Coach Nick Saban. He played for the Crimson Tide from 2000 to 2003. He appeared in nine games and earned Academic All-SEC honors in 2003.

PART THREE

Missed opportunities plague HBCU transfers

LUT WILLIAMS
BCSP Editor

Packing your bags and moving to another location to close out your college basketball career is not always a good move. In fact, most times it has the opposite effect.

Bethune-Cookman's 6-9 shot-blocker and 2015-16 MEAC Defensive Player of the Year **LaRon Smith** moved to Auburn of the SEC for his final year. Six-ten senior **DouDou Gueye** left **South Carolina State** after a run to the 2015-16 MEAC Tournament finals to play at Ball State.

Smith started three of the 24 games he played in for Auburn this year averaging 2.6 points, 2.4 rebounds and less than one block per game in 12 minutes per contest. In the MEAC, he led the league in field goal percentage (.585) and blocks per game (3.0), pulled down 6.9 rebounds and played about 25 minutes per game. He was third in the nation in blocked shots.

Gueye averaged 0.8 points and 1.6 rebounds in nearly nine minutes per game at SCSU. He averaged about the same in two less minutes in 18 games at Ball State this year.

Coppin State 2015-16 scoring leader **Christian Kese** (14.6 ppg.) averaged 1.9 points in 29 games after joining head coach Tubby Smith at Memphis this season. He played 7.5 minutes per game for Memphis, a team-best 32.2 minutes at Coppin.

What gives? Funny thing is, it used to be the other way around. Talented players would flame out at this or that big-time Div. I program and look for solace and a home at an HBCU. While that's still happening to some degree, it's now almost in reverse.

The fact is, none of the former black college players guys are stars at their new locations. Hampton transfer and former MEAC tourney MVP **Deron Powers** at least came close to equalling his numbers at Hampton. He was third in assists (5.2 per game) and 18th in points per game (13.0) for Hofstra in the Colonial Ath-



TRAVELLING MEN

Third of a 3-part BCSP series on talented basketball players walking away from the HBCU hoops programs that have nurtured them



Auburn Sports Photo



Ball State Sports Photo

FLAMEOUTS: LeRon Smith (l.) and DouDou Gueye (r.) ended their careers at Auburn and Ball State respectively in obscurity.

letic Association though he did not make any of the three all-CAA teams.

It's hard to believe that any of these guys has increased his chances of playing professionally with their moves. They are more likely now to be overlooked.

Florida A&M head coach **Byron Samuels**, who was let go after this season, who in addition to losing Bernard from last year's squad lost his top two scorers (**Jermaine Rutley** and **Jorge Rosa**) off his 2014-15 team, calls the transfer debacle "a national epidemic and a disgrace."

"In Division I basketball last year alone, about 900 kids transferred," said Samuels. "That's ridiculous. Secondly, we've had about eight of our better players in the MEAC in the two-and-a-half years that I've been here, that have left to go to so-called higher levels. In some

cases, our guys are being recruited."

To date, *Verbal Commits*, an online site that tracks player movement, totals 503 transfers just in 2017.

NCCU head coach **LeVelle Moton** said early this season, "there's no loyalty in college basketball anymore." He spoke of a player that he took in, rescued, nurtured and fed from his own table only to see him bolt at the first opportunity.

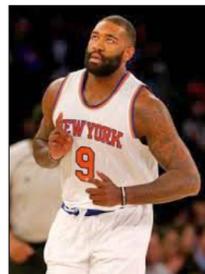
The big question is, why not take the route of former **Norfolk State** 6-10 center **Kyle O'Quinn**? The native New Yorker stayed at Norfolk State for four years and earned a bevy of awards (player of the year, defensive player of the year, tournament MVP) as an outstanding senior in the 2011-12 MEAC season, leading his team to the league's regular season and tournament titles and NCAA Tournament berth.

He then led the Spartans to a stunning upset of Missouri in the big stage in the NCAA Big Dance. He got national acclaim and an opportunity to prove himself before NBA scouts.

He played that into a second round selection in the NBA draft by Orlando and just finished his fourth year in the Association playing significant minutes for the New York Knicks.

What's wrong with that? Okay, so write this down. Basketball talent leaving Div. I HBCUs has become a new normal and a developing story in Div. I college basketball.

If this starts happening in college football however, with FCS HBCU stars leaving to join FBS teams, it will be no less than an upheaval.



NY Knicks Photo

O'QUINN: Stayed put. Got paid.

THE STAT CORNER

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

NUMBER OF BLACK COLLEGE PLAYERS TAKEN IN EACH NFL DRAFT SINCE 1994

2016	3	'08	5	'00	13
'15	4	'07	5	1999	7
'14	2	'06	3	'98	8
'13	2	'05	6	'97	13
'12	1	'04	2	'96	17
'11	4	'03	8	'95	13
'10	2	'02	5	'94	13
'09	4	'01	4		