



Virginia Union Sports Photo

GILBERT: Her nationally ranked Virginia Union Lady Panthers try to finish strong after winning 19 of their first 20 games.

BRING IT ON

LEONARD TAKES NFL DEFENSIVE ROY; JSU'S TIM O'NEAL ON PGA TOUR; HILL QUAD-DOUBLES AGAIN

MEN'S 2018-19 BLACK COLLEGE BASKETBALL (Standings and Top Players)

Table with 5 columns: Conference (CIIA, MEAC, SIAC, SWAC, INDEPENDENTS), Division, Team, W, L, and Top Players.

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

LEONARD WINS DEFENSIVE ROY AWARD:

South Carolina State product and Indianapolis Colts linebacker Darius Leonard



Darius Leonard

might have been snubbed by Pro Bowl voters, but he has more than made up for the oversight.

Leonard was named the league's 2018 Defensive Rookie of the Year at Saturday night's NFL Honors.

Since the Pro Bowl voting, which inexplicably left off Leonard, the Colts rookie went on to garner other high-profile awards, including being a first-team All-Pro selection by The Associated Press and being named Defensive Rookie of the Year by the Professional Football Writers Association (PFWA).

The 6-foot-2, 234-pound Leonard, whom the Colts selected in the second round out of South Carolina State, immediately became a force on an improved Indianapolis defensive unit.

Leonard posted double-digit sacks in three of his first four games with a season high 19 tackles, 15 solos, in just his second NFL Game. He took the league lead in tackles early in the season and maintained that lead throughout the season.

Displaying a knack to always be around the football, Leonard totaled an amazing seven games with 10 or more tackles, a feat that tied for the NFL lead.

The NFL recognized Leonard as the Defensive Rookie of the Month for September, and he was named the AFC Defensive Player of the Week for his production in Week 2 and Week 17.

He was selected as the BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE NFL ProFile Defensive Player of the Week 12 times during the regular season. Only North Carolina A&T's Tarik Cohen, a running back/kick returner for the Chicago Bears, who was an all-pro selection at kick returner, earned the BCSP honor more (13 times).

In addition to his tackles and sacks, Leonard finished his rookie season with 12 tackles for a loss, eight quarterback hits, two interceptions, eight passes defended, four forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries.

With Leonard leading the charge, the Colts finished the 2018 regular season ranked eighth against the run, a vast uptick from the 26th spot in 2017.

Leonard's playmaking skills weren't confined to the regular season, and he put them on full display in two postseason games, recording double-digit tackles in matchups against the Houston Texans and Kansas City Chiefs.

Given his eye-popping production, it's probably safe to say Pro Bowl voters won't forget about Leonard during the upcoming 2019 season, especially if he comes close to repeating the output when it comes time to cast ballots.

But even if the voters do, Leonard will clearly have other opportunities to earn other recognition, much like he's done in the past month.

CIIA and SIAC headed to final weeks

HOOPS THIS WEEK

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Table of basketball games for Thursday, Feb 7.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Table of basketball games for Friday, Feb 8.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Table of basketball games for Saturday, Feb 9.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Table of basketball games for Sunday, Feb 10.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Table of basketball games for Monday, Feb 11.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Table of basketball games for Tuesday, Feb 12.

LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

Just over two weeks of basketball, about five games, are left for each team in the CIIA and SIAC regular seasons with tournament play set to begin on Feb. 25 in Charlotte, N. C. and Birmingham, Ala. respectively (see STAT CORNER).

Here are how the men's and women's CIIA and SIAC races are looking as we head towards tournament time.

CIIA

The men of Virginia State and women of Virginia Union have set the pace in their respective CIIA races. Between the two, they are 22-1 against conference competition. Both are nationally ranked.

Lonnie Blow's VSU Trojans (19-3, 11-0 CIIA, 5-0 N. Div.) were 24th last week in the NABC Div. II rankings and 20th in the D2SIDA Media poll. The Trojans have won 16 straight games since a one-point loss to King (Tn.) University (86-85) in November a loss they have avenged.

AnnMarie Gilbert's VUU Lady Panthers (19-1, 11-1 CIIA, 5-1 N. Div.) were 12th last week in the WBCA Div. II Coaches Poll and 17th in the Women's Div. II SIDA poll. The Lady Panthers suffered their only loss (62-59) back on Dec. 6 in their only meeting vs. new conference member, Clafin. They have won 11 straight since that defeat.

The chief competition for VSU is likely its fellow N. Div. competitors, Virginia Union and Bowie State. VSU has double-digit wins over both but has rematch Sat. at VUU and on Feb. 20 vs. BSU in Ettrick, Va.

The Lady Panthers also are most closely pursued by N. Div. foes. They have close wins over Bowie State and Chowan. They host BSU on Feb. 13 and close out the regular season at Chowan on Feb. 23

SIAC

The men of Morehouse and women of Benedict have been the outstanding teams in the SIAC.

Morehouse (17-3, 11-3), who only has road losses at Clark Atlanta and Benedict over the last 15 games, was 17th in last week's NABC Div. II rankings. Grady Brewer's Maroon Tigers have a two-game lead in the E. Div. and have their remaining four games at home at Forbes Arena beginning with a return date vs. Clark Atlanta this Saturday (Feb. 9) and closing out with Benedict on Feb. 19.

Miles (14-7, 11-3) has the best record and is first in the men's W. Div. but LeMoyne-Owen (16-8, 11-5) is closing fast, winning seven of its last eight games.

Benedict's women (17-5), under head coach James Rice, have an unblemished (12-0) SIAC record. Tuskegee (16-5, 11-2) has the next best record in the conference. Benedict handled Tuskegee 58-39 on Jan. 5 but has eeked out wins vs. Paine (79-78) and Albany State (64-61). Benedict hosts Albany State Saturday.

BCSP HOOPS TOP TEN

- 1. VIRGINIA STATE (19-3, 11-0, 5-0 CIIA N) - Got wins over Bowie State and Lincoln. NEXT: @ Va. Union Sat., @ Chowan Wed.
2. MOREHOUSE (17-3, 11-3 SIAC) - Wins over Albany State and Fort Valley State. NEXT: @ Clark Atlanta Sat., Hosts Clafin Wed.
3. LINCOLN (MO) (11-5) - Defeated Emporia State and nationally-ranked Washburn. NEXT: Hosting Missouri Western Sat.
4. LEMOYNE-OWEN (16-8, 11-5) - Wins over Tuskegee and Miles. NEXT: Sat. @ Lane.
5. MILES (13-7, 10-3) - Lost to LeMoyne-Owen, beat Lane. NEXT: @ SHC Thurs., hosting Tuskegee Sat.
NCAA DIV. I (Men)
1. NORFOLK STATE (13-10, 8-0) - Beat Howard, 80-78 in wild one (see story below). NEXT: Sat. @ B-CU, Mon. @ FAMU.
2. PRAIRIE VIEW A&M (11-11, 9-0) - Beat Alabama A&M and Alabama State. NEXT: Sat. @ Texas Southern.
3. FLORIDA A&M (10-14, 7-2) - Got home wins over NC A&T and NC Central. Tied for 2nd in MEAC. NEXT: Hosts Howard Sat., Norfolk State Mon.
4. TEXAS SOUTHERN (11-11, 6-3) - Beat both Alabama A&M and Alabama State. NEXT: Hosting Prairie View A&M Sat.
2. JACKSON STATE (9-13, 6-3) - Win streak at three after wins over MVSU and UAPB, tied for 2nd in SWAC. NEXT: On the road at Alcorn State, Sat. @ Southern Mon.

BCSP Notes

O'Neal to play in PGA Genesis Open

LOS ANGELES - Tiger Woods has announced former Jackson State standout Tim O'Neal as the recipient of the Charlie Sifford Memorial Exemption for the PGA Tour's 2019 Genesis Open to be played next week in California.

Awarded since 2009, the exemption has represented the advancement of diversity in the game of golf. 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of Sifford's 1969 LA Open victory, his second and final PGA TOUR victory.

"I'm looking forward to seeing Tim compete in the Genesis Open," Woods said. "Like Charlie did as a player, Tim has shown great determination in his professional career. I know Charlie would be proud to have Tim playing in the Genesis Open as the Charlie Sifford exemption.

At the Genesis Open, O'Neal, 46, will be making his seventh-career PGA TOUR start, and his first since 2015, when he advanced from sectional qualifying to play in the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay. O'Neal has three career PGA TOUR Latinoamerica victories, most recent coming in 2016, and he has also carded victories at the 2018 Georgia Open and the 1997 Georgia Amateur Championship.

Prior to turning professional, O'Neal had a distinguished amateur career winning 16 college tournaments during his time at Jackson State. He also won the Georgia Amateur Championship in 1997.

In 2018, O'Neal played on the APGA Tour where he earned Player of the Year honors after one win and four top-five finishes. 2018 marked the second time O'Neal has won the APGA Tour's Player of the Year and he remains the tour's all-time leading money winner. Over the course of his professional career, O'Neal has played on the PGA TOUR, the Web.com TOUR, the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica circuit and had stints on the APGA



O'Neal

THE STAT CORNER

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

HBCU BASKETBALL TOURNAMENTS

CIIA Feb. 25-27 | Bojangles Coliseum Feb. 28, March 1-2 | Spectrum Center Charlotte, NC

SIAC Feb. 25 - March 2 | Bill Harris Arena Birmingham, AL

MEAC March 11-16 | Norfolk Scope Arena Norfolk, VA

SWAC March 12 | Campus Sites March 15-16 - Bill Harris Arena Birmingham, AL

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