

One selection ties NFL Draft low

By **LUT WILLIAMS**
BCSP Editor

It was looking bleak but late in Saturday's final rounds of the 2020 NFL Draft, the Chicago Bears did it. They selected **Tennessee State** offensive lineman **Lachavious Simmons** with the 13th pick in the seventh and final round, the only black college player to go off the draft boards. He was the 227th overall pick.

Simmons, a 6-5, 315-pound Selma, Alabama native, played every position except center on the offensive line in his four years competing for the Tigers.

In 2019, he was a first team All-Ohio Valley Conference selection at tackle. He is expected to add to competition on the Bears' line to protect quarterback Mitch Trubisky but is more likely to play guard.

Nicknamed "Pig," Simmons told a Chicago area TV station he's ready to work.

"I'm just ready to get to work against (Bears' premier pass rusher) Khalil Mack and for him to make me a better player," said Simmons, who described himself as a "farmboy" used to working hard. "I'm ready to get to the Windy City and start working."

The Bears drafted him one pick after drafting Colorado offensive lineman Arlington Hambricht.

Simmons did not work out at the NFL Combine nor play in the Senior Bowl, the primary showcases for players expected to go in the draft. He did participate in the College Gridiron Showcase and the Hula Bowl, where he was coached by former NFL head coach Rex Ryan.

He has great size and long arms and reportedly plays with a mean streak. He was described in one draft preview as "a mauler, who often takes opposing players to the ground."

"I'm a bloody your nose type of guy on the field," Simmons said.

Simmons' selection kept the HBCU ranks from being shut out for the first time since way back in 1950.

The single selection matched the worst output for HBCU players in the draft, matching **South Carolina State** defensive back **Christian Thompson** who was taken in the fourth round of the 2012 Draft by the Baltimore Ravens.

South Carolina State offensive tackle **Alex Taylor** – who performed at the Combine, played in the Senior Bowl and was projected as a late-round pick – was one of eight HBCU players signed to free agent contracts. Taylor inked with the Cleveland Browns (see STAT CORNER).

Ohio Valley Conference Offensive Player of the Year **Chris Rowland**, a wide receiver/kick returner out of Tennessee State, who led the FCS last season in receiving yards (1,437) and receiving yards per game (118.7) was signed by Atlanta.

Morgan State wide receiver/kick returner **Manasseh Bailey** was picked up by Philadelphia. He hauled in 54 passes for 996 yards and 10 TDs last season for the Bears, earning a third-team all-MEAC designation. He averaged 18.4 yards per catch and 83.0 yards per game. He also had one punt return TD.

Prairie View A&M had two of its players signed by Green Bay, quarterback **Jalen Morton** and tight end/fullback **Jordan Jones**.

Morton, an Arlington, Texas native, led the high-powered Panthers offense for the last

*Tennessee State
offensive lineman
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2020 NFL Draft*



to the CHICAGO BEARS in the 7th Round 13th pick 227th overall

Lachavious Simmons
6-5, 315, Offensive Tackle, Tennessee State

three seasons passing for over 5,000 yards and rushing for over 1,500 yards while accounting for 64 touchdowns.

Jones was an explosive target in the Panthers' passing offense, hauling in 28 grabs for 497 yards last season. The Frisco, Texas native hauled in 56 grabs for 963 yards and 11 touchdowns over his career, garnering all-conference honors in 2016 and 2019.

Former **Norfolk State** safety **Bobby Price**, a two-time all-MEAC performer, was picked up by the Detroit Lions. He played in 42 career games and started 37 times at safety. Price finished his career with 229 tackles, eight for

loss, to go with seven interceptions, 23 pass breakups and four fumble recoveries.

The New York Giants agreed to terms with **Hampton** defensive back **Christian Angulo**. Angulo was the Defensive MVP of the *Chicago Football Classic* with five pass breakups, three tackles and one interception in the win over **Howard**. He finished fifth in FCS with 14 pass breakups with a season-high four tackles against Monmouth.

Angulo was also named to the Big South All-Academic team, along with being a second team All-Big South Conference honoree.

How HBCU NFL Drafts have changed

By **LUT WILLIAMS**
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To dramatize how times have changed in the NFL and in America, in 1968, one year after the merger of the AFL and the NFL, **70 players from HBCUs** went in the NFL Draft.

By 1994 when the **BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE** was first published, those numbers had dwindled to barely in the double figures. Since then, HBCU draftees have not hit double digits since 2000.

There were some intriguing and historic picks in the 1968 Draft.

Five black college players were among the 17 selections by the Atlanta Falcons including first round pick **Claude Humphrey** a defensive end out of **Tennessee State**, who was the third overall selection. The Falcons had back-to-back black college picks as they took defensive end **Carlton Dabney** of **Morgan State** in the second round.

The Houston Oilers selected **North Carolina A&T** defensive tackle **Elvin Bethea** in the third round.

Oakland selected dynamic quarterback **Eldridge Dickey** of **Tennessee State** in the first round (25th overall), ahead of quarterback Ken Stabler of Alabama in the second round. Dickey became the first African-American quarterback selected in the first round by an American Football League (AFL) or National Football League (NFL) team. Despite a strong performance during training camp, Dickey was moved to wide receiver for the start of the season. He never played quarterback in an AFL or NFL game.

Maryland State (Eastern Shore) offensive tackle **Art Shell** was taken in the third round by the Raiders and defensive back **George Atkinson** out of **Morris Brown** was a seventh round choice.

Humphrey, Bethea and Shell are now in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

THE STAT CORNER II

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

NUMBER OF BLACK COLLEGE PLAYERS TAKEN IN NFL DRAFT - 1994 to 2020

2020	1	'11	4	'02	5
'19	4	'10	2	'01	4
'18	3	'09	4	2000	13
'17	4	'08	5	'99	7
'16	3	'07	5	'98	8
'15	4	'06	3	'97	13
'14	2	'05	6	'96	17
'13	2	'04	2	'95	13
'12	1	'03	8	'94	13

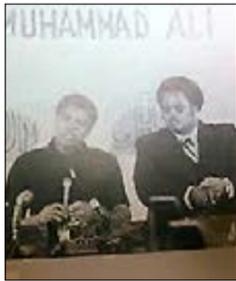
Prolific wide receiver **Harold Jackson** of **Jackson State**, one of the players the BCSP believes should be in the Hall of Fame, went to the Los Angeles Rams in the 12th round.

Texas Southern speedster **James Ray "Jim" Hines**, who held the 100 meters world record for 15 years and in 1968 became the first man to officially break the 10-second barrier in the 100 meters and won individual and 4x100 meter relay gold at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, was taken as a receiver by Miami in the sixth round.

The Cincinnati Bengals were added to the league as an expansion team and led the way with 12 black college draft selections among the 32 picks they were awarded. They took former **Southern** linebacker **Al Beauchamp** in the fifth round. The Bengals selected another three HBCU players among 40 players taken from other teams in the expansion draft.

The Baltimore Colts had six black college players among its 17 picks. One of them was running back **Ed Tomlin** of **Hampton**, biological father of current Pittsburgh Steelers' head coach **Mike Tomlin**, who was taken in the 10th round.

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



Alcorn State Sports Photo

BLAST FROM THE PAST

NFL DRAFT THEN AND NOW; NEW COACHES AT PINE BLUFF, ALCORN STATE; GILBERT LEAVES VUU

"THE GODFATHER": Marino Casem (r.), shown here with Muhammad Ali, earned his nickname for his on- and off-field exploits. The coach, AD and SWAC legend has passed at 85.

THE STAT CORNER

WHO'S IN AND WHO'S OUT IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

2020 HBCU UNRAFTED NFL ROOKIE FREE AGENT SIGNINGS

PHILADELPHIA

Manasseh Bailey, WR/KR, **Morgan State**

GREEN BAY

Jalen Morton, QB, **Prairie View A&M**

Jordan Jones, TE/FB, **Prairie View A&M**

ATLANTA

Chris Rowland, WR/KR, **Tennessee State**

CLEVELAND

Alex Taylor, OL, **South Carolina State**

TAMPA BAY

Nck Leveritt, OL, **North Carolina Central**

DETROIT

Bobby Price, S, **Norfolk State**

NEW YORK GIANTS

Christian Angulo, DB, **Hampton**

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

NEW FOOTBALL COACH AT PINE BLUFF

PINE BLUFF, Ark. – The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff has named **Charles "Doc" Gamble** as Head Football Coach. The 21st head coach in program history enters his third season with the UAPB, having joined the staff as assistant head coach and quarterbacks coach in the spring of 2018.



Gamble

In 2019, the Golden Lions ranked second in the SWAC in passing yards with 3,105. Using a two-quarterback system under Gamble's tutelage, **Shannon Patrick** (2,250 yards, 19 TDs) and **Skylar Perry** (784 yards, 8 TD) combined to rank third in the conference in touchdown passes with 28 as UAPB football posted a 6-5 record, the program's first winning season since 2012.

He replaces **Cedric Thomas** who left after two years to become an assistant at Southern Mississippi.

"In coming two years ago, we felt as a staff we could rebuild the program, and due to the hard work and dedication of the players, a great foundation has been laid. Our staff will remain diligent in our effort to put our players in the best position for success in the classroom and in competition to have a team and program that Golden Lion Nation will continue be proud of."

Prior to UAPB, Gamble spent five seasons at Kent State University as wide receivers coach. Prior to Kent State, Gamble coached running backs and tight ends and served as the recruiting coordinator at **Alcorn State**. Prior to Alcorn State, Gamble spent one season as an offensive assistant at the University of Cincinnati.

NEW HOOPS COACH AT ALCORN STATE:

LORMAN, Miss. – Having won conference titles in the SWAC as an assistant coach, **Landon Bussie** was announced as the head men's basketball coach at **Alcorn State University** last week.



Bussie

Bussie has spent the last six seasons at **Prairie View A&M**. Serving as an assistant coach, he was a part of a Panthers squad that won back-to-back SWAC regular season titles in 2018-19 and 2019-20. PVAMU won the 2018-19 SWAC Championship, advancing to the NCAA Tournament. The Panthers were the top overall seed again in 2019-20, reaching the semifinals before the season was called off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Known as a superior recruiter, Bussie recruited the 2019-20 SWAC Player of the Year, **Devonte Patterson**. He also recruited and developed **Gary Blackston**, the 2018-19 SWAC Tournament MVP.

Bussie worked alongside **Prairie View A&M** head coach **Byron Smith**, the back-to-back SWAC Coach of the Year winner in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Before switching to the men's side, Bussie was an assistant women's coach at PVAMU for one year.

Prior to his time at PVAMU, Bussie spent four seasons at his alma mater, **Xavier University** of Louisiana. During that span, Xavier won three consecutive GCAC regular season championships from 2012-14 and four straight appearances at the NAIA Championship Tournament from 2011-14.

BCSP Notes

SWAC legend Marino Casem passes

LORMAN, Miss. – One of the most iconic and powerful figures in the history of the **Southwestern Athletic Conference**, **Marino Casem** passed away in his home Saturday afternoon at the age of 85.

"The Southwestern Athletic Conference will forever be indebted to the contributions and historic achievements of former **Southern** and **Alcorn State** Head Football Coach and Athletics Director, **Marino Casem**," said SWAC Commissioner **Dr. Charles McClelland**.

"Coach Casem served our conference with class and integrity over the course of his legendary career as a coach and administrator. He is undoubtedly one of the best our conference has ever seen and a true legend whose impact is still felt to this day. We would like to extend our deepest condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time."

Dubbed "*The Godfather*" by famed late sportswriter **Roscoe Nance** because of his far-reaching influence in the SWAC and beyond, Casem was the head football coach at Alcorn for 22 seasons and served as director of athletics for 20 years. He's Alcorn's winningest football coach in history amassing a record of 132-65-8 from 1964-1985. Under him, Alcorn won seven SWAC championships and Casem was named Coach of the Year seven times competing against the likes of SWAC legends **Eddie Robinson** of **Grambling** and **W. C. Gorden** of **Jackson State**. He also coached the Braves to four Black College National Titles in 1967, 1968, 1973 and 1984.

As an athletic director, Casem led the effort in building the **Davey L. Whitney** Complex in 1975, the Alcorn basketball and volleyball home arena. Casem also served as athletic director at Southern from 1986-99 — including two stints as football coach, from 1987-88 and again in 1992.

Under his tenure Southern rose to nearly unprecedented heights. With Casem as his A.D., **Pete Richardson** built a resurgent, dominant program, winning four SWAC titles in 1993, '97, '98 and '99. Alcorn plays its home football games in a stadium named in his honor, **Jack Spinks-Marino Casem Stadium**. Casem was named to the SWAC Hall of Fame in 1992, Alcorn Hall of Fame in 1993, College Football Hall of Fame in 1998 and Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 2003.

To read a story on Coach Casem's relationship with Muhammad Ali, go to this link: <https://msfame.com/casems-remember-muhammad-alis-visits-to-alcorn-state/>

Gilbert leaves Virginia Union to take over at Detroit Mercy

DETROIT – Former **SIAC** and **SWAC** Commissioner and now Detroit Mercy Athletics Director **Robert C. Vowels** has reached into the black college ranks for the second time to fill a basketball coaching vacancy as he named successful former **Virginia Union** head women's basketball coach **AnnMarie Gilbert** to lead his program.

Gilbert was announced as the 12th head coach of the Titans on Friday. Vowels plucked **Mike Davis** from **Texas Southern** to lead the Titans' men's program two years ago.

It's Gilbert's fourth head coaching stop in college basketball and second in Division I as she has amassed 287 coaching wins and tallied eight-straight 20-win seasons as a head coach in 18 seasons. She has also guided teams to numerous post-season victories, including Virginia Union's run to the NCAA Division II National Championship game in 2017.

"AnnMarie Gilbert was our first choice because of her depth of experience as a head coach at Division I, Division II and Division III and is an excellent recruiter," Vowels said.

She guided the VUU Lady Panthers to a 135-18 record and an academic GPA of 3.3 over five seasons, including five trips to the NCAA Division II Tournament. Gilbert helped Virginia Union capture three CIIA championships (2016, 2018, 2019).

Gilbert is a three-time Coach of the Year, earning the honor in the **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association** (CIIA) in three-straight seasons (2016-18). She coached the CIIA Player of the Year in four out of the five seasons and one of her student-athletes, **Kiana Johnson**, was voted the 2016 NCAA Division II Player of the Year after leading the nation in scoring. "I hope to bring that same winning tradition to Detroit Mercy," she said.

Prior to Virginia Union, Gilbert was the head coach at Eastern Michigan University from 2007-2012, where she compiled a 94-64 record in five seasons including three consecutive 20-plus win seasons (2009-12).

As a player, Gilbert spent two years at Ohio University before becoming a Div. III national scoring leader (31 ppg.) and all-American at Oberlin College. She began her coaching career at her alma mater, rising to lead the women's program for eight seasons (1994-2002) before spending five seasons (2002-07) as an assistant coach on the staff at Michigan State.