



Florida A&M Sports Photo

LEGENDS NEW, AND OLD

ISAIAH LAND: Florida A&M junior defensive end up for Buchanan Award as top defender in the FCS.

SAM JONES AND KEN FREE, HBCU PIONEERS, PASS; 2021 "BAAD TEAM" DEFENSE UNCOVERED

IN MEMORIAM - LEGENDS OF THE BLACK COLLEGE GAME



SAM JONES



KEN FREE

Land, Houston, Bell leaders of the pack

LUT WILLIAMS BCSP Editor

We finish off the 2021 Black College Sports Page "BAAD TEAM" of HBCU all-stars this week with the defensive standouts.

This year's first team is led by Florida A&M linebacker Isiah Land, Jackson State linebacker James Houston and Florida A&M safety Markquese Bell.

'Led' could be the wrong word because all of our defensive first teamers as well as those on our second and third teams are leaders.

The trio and their cohorts on the first team however were extra special.

Land, a 6-4, 215-pound redshirt junior from Buffalo, New York, had 43 tackles, including 32 solos for the Rattlers this season. He produced 25.5 tackles for 147 yards in losses and 19 sacks (1.58 per game) for 121 yards in losses - all FCS-leading totals. The Southwestern Athletic Conference defensive player of the year had five QB hurries, two pass breakups, three forced fumbles and one fumble recovery. He had five sacks vs. SC State.

Land is one of three finalists for the Buck Buchanan Award given to the national defensive player of the year in Div. I FCS football. The award is named for the late legendary former Grambling State defensive tackle and Pro Football Hall of Famer.

The winner will be announced this Friday, Jan. 7 at the FCS National Awards Banquet in Frisco, Texas, with a broadcast of the festivities to begin airing the next day, Jan. 8, on Bally Sports Regional Networks.

If Land wins, it would give black college football back-to-back winners of the award for the first time. Southern defensive end Jordan Lewis, who led the nation in sacks in the 2021 spring season, took home the award earlier this year. Other HBCU winners of the award are North Carolina A&T defensive end Chris McNeil in 1997 and Bethune-Cookman safety Rashean Mathis in 2002.

Three other of our first teamers were among the 25 finalists for the Buchanan Award - JSU's Houston, FAMU's Bell and South Carolina State safety and defensive leader Decobie Durant.

Houston, a 6-1, 225-pound senior who was fifth in voting for the Buchanan Award, posted 16.5 sacks for 117 yards in losses to finish just behind Land in the FCS stats. He was fifth in tackles for loss with 24.5 (1.9 per game) for -143 yards. He also forced seven fumbles in 13 games to finish fourth nationally in that category. On the season he had 70 tackles (52 solos) with ten other hits on the quarterback.

DEFENSIVE LEADERS



Land



Houston



Bell

At 6-3, 205, Bell, a redshirt senior was the punishing tackler on the back end of the FAMU defense. He was 17th in the Buchanan voting after finishing fifth in the FCS in solo tackles with 71 (5.9 per game) and seventh nationally in forced fumbles with five in 12 games. He had a season best 15 tackles, ten solos, against South Florida.

Durant, a 5-11, 180-pound grad senior, anchored the Mid Eastern Athletic Conference champion SC State Bulldog defense that pulled off the stunning upset of existing HBCU No. 1 Jackson State in the Celebration Bowl. He finished one place behind Bell in the Buchanan voting. For the season, Durant had 38 tackles, 30 solos with 12 pass breakups, 16th in the FCS.

Durant's teammate, defensive end Jablonski Green, is also a first teamer. He was a 6-3, 265-pound terror for the Bulldogs. He led the FCS in tackles for loss with 19.5 (2.2 per game) and helped wreck the JSU offense in the Celebration Bowl.

Joining Green on the defensive line are Bowie State sophomore Jonathan Ross, Fayetteville State graduate Keyshawn James and Prairie View A&M senior Jason Dumas.

Ross piled up a host of awards for the CIAA champion Bulldogs including the conference defensive POY and NCAA Div. II Super Region II POY. The 6-3, 260-pound specimen led the Bulldogs with 76 tackles (40 solos), 26.0 tackles for 103 yards in losses (fourth nationally) and nine sacks. He also posted eight other QB hurries and six forced fumbles (fifth nationally).

James (6-3, 280) was the defensive stalwart for the CIAA Southern Division champion Broncos. He finished sixth nationally with 10.5 sacks per game and led FSU with 70 tackles from his defensive end position, 23.5 for losses which topped all of Div. II.

At only 5-10, 230 pounds, Dumas was a one-man wrecking crew for the West Division champ Panthers. He racked up 8.5 sacks and 17.5 tackles for loss (1.46 pg.) among his 38 tackles.

Redshirt sophomore Stephan Pierre (6-2, 190) is the pup of the first team linebackers but was one of the key reasons the Albany State defense pitched six shutouts this season. Pierre earned SIAC defensive POY by virtue of his leading the league with 56 solo

tackles. He added one sack and two fumble recoveries.

Joining Bell and Durant in the first team defensive backfield are Prairie View senior Drake Cheatum and Fayetteville State grad Brandon Brown-Barnes.

Cheatum led the Panthers with 86 tackles (7.2 pg.) and led the SWAC with five interceptions for 108 return yards and one TD. Brown-Barnes (5-11, 190) tied for the CIAA lead with five picks and was second in break-ups with eight.

FAMU grad placekicker/punter Jose Romo-Martinez holds down the first team punter and placekicker positions. In 12 games, Romo-Martinez punted 40 times for a black-college best average of 43.4 yards per game. He also scored 85 points as he hit on 17 of 24 field goal attempts and 34 of 36 PATs.

STAT CORNER II

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

BLACK COLLEGE FOOTBALL STAT LEADERS - DEFENSE

2021 FINAL

Table with columns: TACKLES, CL, G, POS, SOLO, Ass, YDS, TOT, AVGG. Lists top performers like Untareo Johnson, Joseph White, Aubrey Miller, etc.

Table with columns: SACKS, CL, G, POS, SOLO, Ass, YDS, TOT, AVGG. Lists top performers like Isiah Land, James Houston, Javon Frazier, etc.

Table with columns: TACKLES FOR LOSS, CL, G, POS, SOLO, Ass, YDS, TOT, AVGG. Lists top performers like Keyshawn James, Isiah Land, Issac Anderson, etc.

Table with columns: INTERCEPTIONS, CL, G, INT, YDS, TD, LONG, AVGG. Lists top performers like Brandon Brown-Barnes, Drake Cheatum, etc.

Table with columns: PASSES DEFENDED, CL, G, BRU, INT, TOT, AVGG. Lists top performers like Andre Fuller, Rontay Dunbar, etc.

Table with columns: FORCED FUMBLES, CL, G, TOT, AVGG. Lists top performers like James Houston, Jonathan Ross, etc.

Table with columns: KICKOFF RETURNS, CL, G, NO, YDS, TD, LONG, AVG. Lists top performers like Isiah Bolden, Imeek Watkins, etc.

Table with columns: PUNTING, CL, G, NO, YDS, LONG, AVG. Lists top performers like Jose Romo-Martinez, Orlando Fernandez, etc.

FIRST TEAM - DEFENSE

DL - Keyshawn James, Gr., Fayetteville State; Jonathan Ross, So., Bowie State; Jeblonski Green, So., SC State; Jason Dumas, Sr., Prairie View A&M; LB - Isiah Land, Jr., Florida A&M; James Houston, Sr., Jackson State; Stephan Pierre, So., Albany State; DB - Markquese Bell, Sr., Florida A&M; Decobie Durant, Jr., South Carolina State; Drake Cheatum, Sr., Prairie View A&M; Brandon Brown-Barnes, Gr., Fayetteville State; P - Jose Romo-Martinez, Gr., Florida A&M

SECOND TEAM - DEFENSE

DL - Devoan Hawkins, So., Tennessee State; Javon Frazier, Jr., Virginia State; Antwan Owens, Sr., Jackson State; De'Shaan Dixon, Jr., Norfolk State; LB - Devon Hunt, Sr., Shaw; Aubrey Miller Jr., Sr., Jackson State; B. J. Davis, So., SC State; DB - B. J. Bohler, Jr., Florida A&M; Myles Woolfolk, Gr., Bowie State; Josh Green, So., Tennessee State; Joshua Williams, Fayetteville State; P - Orlando Fernandez, Jr., Miss. Valley State;

THIRD TEAM - DEFENSE

DL - Jamal Holloway, Sr., Central State; Rafiq Abdul-Wahid, Sr., Chowan; Sundiata Anderson, So., Grambling State; Malik Barnes, Fr., Albany State; LB - Untareo Johnson, Sr., Bethune-Cookman; Chad Gilchrist, Sr., SC State; James Green, Jr., Tennessee State; DB - Zafir Kelly, Sr., SC State; Omari Hill-Robinson, Jr., Bethune-Cookman; Brandon Savage, Jr., Norfolk State; Will Adams, Sr., Virginia State; P - Ben Lennon, Jr., Bethune-Cookman;

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

HBCU, NBA LEGEND SAM JONES PASSES:

Black college basketball legend Sam Jones, who after attending and starring at North Carolina College (now NC Central) went on to a fabulous Hall of Fame career with the Boston Celtics, passed Thursday, Dec. 30, in Florida. He was 88.

At 6-4, 200 pounds, Jones was an unstoppable offensive force, a fierce defender, clutch shooter, consummate teammate and professional, and an incomparable winner. He was just what the Celtics needed - unselfish, complimentary, and a star when he needed to be. Jones played on ten NBA championship teams with the Celtics only surpassed in NBA history by teammate Bill Russell's 11.

As an integral and indispensable part of the great Celtics teams, Jones teamed with fellow Hall of Famers Russell, the late K. C. Jones, Tom "Satch" Sanders, the late John Havlicek and others to dominate the NBA. K. C., Sanders and Havlicek all won eight NBA titles with the team, third in NBA titles behind Russell and Sam. Russell once said Sam Jones was almost single-handedly responsible for six of those titles for his propensity for hitting clutch game-winning shots.

Jones was born on June 24, 1933 in Wilmington, N. C. and attended Laurinburg Institute, a private prep school in Southern North Carolina because there was not a black high school from which to graduate in Wilmington. Hall of Fame coach John McClendon recruited him to NCCU landing him away from Winston-Salem State head coach Clarence "Big House" Gaines and N. C. A&T head coach Cal Irvin.

Jones played one year under McClendon before pulling a two-year stint in the Army. He returned to NCCU to play for head coach Floyd Brown and finished his career there with a then record 1,170 points. That total is now second in NCCU history.

Though he didn't expect to play professional basketball, news of Jones' talents and exploits spread North to Red Auerbach, the famous coach of the Celtics. Auerbach took Jones with the eighth and final pick of the 1957 Draft's first round. He was the first HBCU player to be taken in the first round.

Jones, whose ability to sink bank-shots became legendary, never averaged less than double-figures after his rookie season (1957-58). He improved his scoring average every year for his first five years topping out at 19.7 points per game in 1962-63. Beginning in the 1964-65 season, he put up five straight seasons averaging more than 20 per game, with a high of 25.9 points per game in the 1964-65 season. Jones finished his career averaging 17.7 points over his 12 seasons.

In seven straight postseasons (1962 through 1968), he averaged over 20 points per game and averaged 18.9 points per game in his playoff career.

Jones was inducted into the NAIA Basketball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1969, he was the first African-American to be inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame. He went in to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1984. In 1970 he was named to the NBA 25th Anniversary Team and in 1996 he was named one of the 50 Greatest players in NBA history. In October of this year, Jones, Willis Reed of Grambling and Earl Monroe of Winston-Salem State were the black college players named to the NBA's 75th Anniversary team.

KEN FREE, THE MEAC'S FIRST FULL-TIME COMMISSIONER, PASSES AT 85:

Ken Free, who guided the Mid Eastern Athletics Conference from 1978 to 1996 as its first full-time commissioner, passed last Wednesday, Dec. 29 in Greensboro. Free was 85.

During his tenure, he was instrumental in the conference's member institutions receiving Division I status from the NCAA, which occurred in 1980. In 1987, Free became the first African-American to be named to the NCAA Div. I Men's Basketball Selection Committee.

"Ken Free was a consequential figure not just in the MEAC, but in all of college athletics," outgoing MEAC Commissioner Dennis E. Thomas said.

"We are saddened by the passing of former MEAC Commissioner Ken Free and send heartfelt condolences to his family," MEAC Commissioner-elect Sonja Stills said. "He was a trailblazer in the field of collegiate athletics and laid the foundation for the MEAC that we will continue to build upon."

The Greensboro Parks & Recreation Department in 2018 honored Free by naming an indoor and outdoor athletics facility at Barber Park in his name.

2021-2022 MEN'S BLACK COLLEGE BASKETBALL (Records and Weekly Honors)

Table with columns: CIAA, MEAC, SIAC, SWAC, INDEPENDENTS. Sub-columns for CONF, ALL, W, L, W, L. Lists records for various divisions and conferences.