

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Howard Sports Photo

FLY LIKE A BYRD: Former NCAA Div. I scoring king James 'J-Byrd' Daniel of Howard appears to be next talent leaving HBCU hoops.

**GOING,
GOING,
GONE!**

**BIG-TIME PROGRAMS LEADING THE
RAID OF TALENTED HBCU HOOPSTERS**



TRAVELLING MEN

Part One of a three-part series by BCSP Editor Lut Williams on talented players walking away from the HBCU hoops programs that nurtured them.

Transfer of talent draining HBCU hoops

LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

You know things have changed in NCAA Div. I men's college basketball when HBCU teams are being raided of their talented players.

In the latest reported defection, **Howard** senior guard **James 'J-Byrd' Daniel**, who led the nation in scoring in the 2015-16 season but played in only two games this season after suffering a preseason high ankle sprain, has decided to leave the Bison for what he hopes will be greener pastures.

Reports this week indicate Daniel is choosing between Missouri, Michigan, Ohio State, Tennessee and DePaul.

That never happened before. For the most part, HBCUs got good but marginal players and certainly not the kind of blue-chip talent that major D1 schools went after and landed.

That was then.

Now, HBCU coaches better keep their heads on the proverbial swivel and keep their talented players under wraps, or at least keep them happy. That's because the so-called 'high major' teams in the ACC, Big East, SEC, Big Ten, Pac 12 etc., and even the mid-majors are being drained by the NBA of their top talent, primarily by the NBA, and early in most cases, in players' first or second years. One-and-done is

the new normal. That means those big-time programs have to look elsewhere, anywhere for talented players.

Even to HBCUs, you might ask? Even to HBCUs is the answer.

It's a dog-eat-dog world!

Howard head coach **Kevin Nickelberry**, who recruited Daniel out of Hampton, Virginia's Phoebus High School and has coached him in his four years playing for the Bison, says his biggest recruiting task each year Daniel has been at Howard has been keeping him there.

In the 2013-14 season, the 5-11 Daniel became the first freshman to lead the MEAC in scoring when he averaged 21.7 points per game and was named the conference's top freshman. With more talent around him as a sophomore, he put up 16.7 points per game and was named first team all-conference.

Last year as a junior he topped the nation scoring 27.1 points per game and also led all Div. I players in free throws made and attempted, was fourth in total points and fifth in total field goals. He was the 2015-16 MEAC Player of the Year and the 2016-17 preseason pick by league coaches to repeat with that honor.

He is already Howard's all-time leading scorer with 1,933 points and trails only **Tom Davis** of **Delaware State** (1987-91)

as the MEAC's all-time leading scorer (2,275 points).

Though Daniel told the BCSP two weeks ago that he had not ruled out returning to Howard, Nickelberry now seems resigned to losing him.

"It's a trend in college basketball now. Fifth-year guys look at their options," said Nickelberry. "He's had an unbelievable career for us and it would be selfish of me, and unfair to the process, not to let him go through it. I'm going to support him. And whatever happens, it can't change the career he's had for us and what he's done for our program.

"This is a family decision. And I'm sure he'll make the best decision for him, his future and his family."

Nickelberry also said **James T. Miller**, a talented redshirt junior who battled injuries this season but was Howard's second-leading scorer at 14.7 points per game, will play his final year of eligibility elsewhere. Miller has decided to transfer to Missouri State.

According to NCAA statistics, 40% of Div. I basketball recruits leave their initial school by the end of their sophomore year. In other words, plenty players transfer. Sometimes it's for lack of playing time. Other times it's because they get in trouble or don't get along with the coach. Or per-

haps, the school is facing some kind of probation. Some leave for a less competitive Div. I conference or move down to Div. II.

Increasingly, players are leaving to play elsewhere in their fifth year of eligibility.

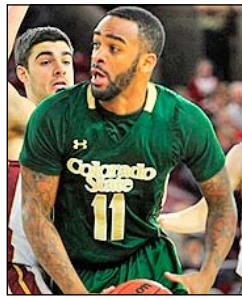
Regardless of why, HBCU teams losing their star players is a new phenomenon. The **Mid Eastern Athletic Conference** has been hit particularly hard.

North Carolina Central's 6-7, 215-pound forward **Stanton Kidd** could be the poster boy for this new trend. Kidd averaged 14.5 points and 6.9 rebounds in 2013, his only year at NCCU after two years at South Plains Junior College in Texas and one year at Charleston Southern.

In 2013, he left the Eagles to play his last year of eligibility at Colorado State. The move so shocked and caught NCCU head coach **LeVelle Moton** off-guard



NC Central Sports Photo



Colorado State Sports Photo

WELL TRAVELLED: (L.) Kidd at NC Central (r.) and later at Colorado State.

that he refuses to talk about it even now.

He was first team all-MEAC at NCCU. But what got him to thinking about so-called 'greener pastures' was that he played well against the major programs, averaging right at 20 points in games against Wichita State, Drake and Marquette.

At the time, Kidd told his hometown newspaper, *The Baltimore Sun*, "I shocked myself. I said, 'If I can do that here, I know I can do it

at another level against better competition.' I'm not saying I played down to my level, but if you play at a higher level, it brings out the best in you."

There it is. At least, that's one way the thinking goes.

Without Kidd, NCCU finished 28-6, won the MEAC Tournament and played and lost to Iowa State (93-75) in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. With Kidd, they may have gone farther. At CSU the following year, Kidd, after sitting out a year, averaged 11.6 points and 5.1 rebounds. CSU finished 27-7 and lost a first round NIT game to South Dakota State. Kidd is playing this year overseas in Germany.

Since then, the flood gates have opened.

PART TWO: Next week's installment, "Grass not always Greener elsewhere."