

FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 18 - 24, 2017

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Xavier Sports Photo

THE OTHER SIDE OF TRANSFERRING

PLAYERS WHOSE NUMBERS WERE UP ON THE HBCU LEVEL, STRUGGLE WHEN MOVING ON

RASHID GASTON: From 15 points and 9 boards at Norfolk State, to half that – 7 points and 6 boards at Xavier. Is it worth it?



TRAVELLING MEN

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

Grass not always greener for transfers

LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

At least 12 all-MEAC basketball players or all-MEAC caliber talents have transferred out of the conference in the last four years.

Former **Norfolk State** 6-8 forward **Rashid Gaston** and former **Florida A&M** 6-6 left-handed guard **Malcom Bernard** left the Spartans and Rattlers respectively over the last two years to play their final seasons at Xavier of the Big East.

“I wanted to have the chance to go to the NCAA tournament,” Bernard said on Cincinnati.com of his move last year, similar to what Gaston expressed while leaving NSU two seasons ago. “I wanted to win a lot of games and be successful,” Bernard said. “I thought if I transferred, I would be able to do something bigger somewhere else.”

That’s not necessarily been the case.

At NSU in the 2014-15 season, Gaston averaged a near double-double of 15.5 points and 9.6 boards per game on a 20-14 team. Bernard left an 8-21 Florida A&M team after averaging 14.1 points and 7.1 rebounds a year ago. At Xavier, playing on much more talented squads, neither has approached those numbers.

Gaston averaged 7.4 points and team-bests of 5.9 rebounds and 0.5 blocks for the 24-14 Musketeers this season, just above Bernard’s 6.6 points and 4.1 rebounds. Bernard started 35 of 38 games. Gaston started 18. Bernard averaged over 28 minutes per game, Gaston 20.

Both had their moments.

Gaston led Xavier in rebounding in 11 games and had his best outing in a 23-point, 10-rebound effort in a loss to Villanova on Feb. 11. He followed that up with a 19-point, 14-rebound performance in a loss to Providence four days later.



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LOST: Gaston (l.) and Bernard (r.) at Xavier.

Bernard had perhaps his best game in a battle against Arizona in the NCAA Tournament’s Sweet 16. He scored 15 points and pulled down six rebounds in a 73-71 Musketeers win over the second-seeded Wildcats that advanced Xavier to the Elite Eight. Both Gaston and Bernard had five points in a 83-59 loss to eventual national runner-up Gonzaga that ended their season.

As for exposure, reaching the Elite Eight at Xavier is certainly bigger than 17-17 Norfolk State’s run to the MEAC Tournament finals and a first round appearance in the CollegeInsider.com postseason tournament or FAMU’s 8-21 finish.

Sterling Smith, an all-MEAC guard at **Coppin State**, wound up as a starter at Pittsburgh in the ACC in the 2015-16 season. **Richaud Pack**, a 17-point scorer and another all-MEAC player at **North Carolina A&T** in 2014, ended up as an occasional starter on Maryland’s Big 10 squad a year ago.

Smith, after averaging 13.1 points and 30 minutes a game at Cop-

pin, averaged just 4.3 points and 17 minutes for the Panthers last season. Pack's 17 points and 34 minutes per game at A&T turned into 5.8 points and 25 minutes a night for the 2015-16 Terps.

"I was stunned and disappointed," said **Cy Alexander**, then Pack's coach at A&T of his decision to transfer. "He was projected to be our leading scorer coming back. When he decided to leave at the late date that he did, it was impossible to recruit someone of his skill and athletic ability to replace him. It was an obstacle we could not overcome."

Alexander said Pack wanted to play in the NCAA Tournament and figured that Maryland, in a multiple-bid league like the Big 10, had a better chance than A&T in the one-bid MEAC.

Alexander said Pack indicated that it didn't matter if he didn't play at a place like Maryland.

Perhaps it's the old adage of, 'I'd rather be a little fish in a big pond than a big fish in a little pond.' Okay, but does that make sense?

Deron Powers of Hampton bolted the Pirates after they won the 2015 MEAC Tournament title and he was named the tourney's Most Valuable Player. He led the Pirates into a first round NCAA Tournament matchup with top-seed Kentucky. Powers, a 5-11 former MEAC rookie of the year who had scored 1,080 points and handed 385 assists in his three years at Hampton, would have been the top returning point guard in the MEAC. He scored 10 points and handed out 3.7 assists per game and was among the league leaders playing over 32 minutes per game in his final season with the Pirates.

He took up residence at Hofstra University of the Colonial Athletic Association, another one-bid league, and after sitting out last season played his final year of eligibility for the Pride. Powers



Hofstra Sports Photo

POWERS: From Hampton and MEAC Tourney MVP to Hofstra,

a "better setting."

Seriously?

Let's see. Hofstra drew 2,819 to its largest attended home game this season on Feb. 4 vs. Drexel. By contrast, Hampton drew 3,214 to its Jan. 25 home date vs. South Carolina State and 4,545 that showed up for a showdown vs. North Carolina Central on Jan. 16.

Hofstra finished 7-11 in CAA play, good for seventh in the 10-team CAA. Hampton was 14-17 overall, fourth in the MEAC at 11-5 and played in the College Basketball Invitational postseason tournament.

Powers went from a little pond to a smaller pond.

PART THREE: Next week, the final part of the series explores, "Missed Opportunities."

is one of the few whose numbers have gone up since transferring. He scored 13.0 points and dished out 5.2 assists per game for the 15-17 Pride in just about the same number of minutes.

Powers told a newspaper at the time of his transferring that one of his reasons for the move was "the vibe I got up there when I went to visit, how seriously they take basketball." He was also quoted saying he wanted to go to a "better program" in