

# BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Norfolk State Sports Photo

## TRANSFER SAGA, PART 3

**NOTHING BUT JOY:** An MEAC title and NCAA Tourney upset of Missouri spurred Norfolk State's Kyle O'Quinn entry into the NBA.

TO TRANSFER OR NOT TO TRANSFER, THAT IS THE QUESTION? THE ANSWER LIES IN THE FINISH



## TRAVELLING MEN

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

# Missed opportunities plague HBCU transfers

### LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

Packing your bags and moving to another location to close out your college basketball career is not always a good move. In fact, most times it has the opposite effect.

**Bethune-Cookman's** 6-9 shot-blocker and 2015-16 MEAC Defensive Player of the Year **LaRon Smith** moved to Auburn of the SEC for his final year. Six-ten senior **DouDou Gueye** left **South Carolina State** after a run to the 2015-16 MEAC Tournament finals to play at Ball State.

Smith started three of the 24 games he played in for Auburn this year averaging 2.6 points, 2.4 rebounds and less than one block per game in 12 minutes per contest. In the MEAC, he led the league in field goal percentage (.585) and blocks per game (3.0), pulled down 6.9 rebounds and played about 25 minutes per game. He was third in the nation in blocked shots.

Gueye averaged 0.8 points and 1.6 rebounds in nearly nine minutes per game at SCSU. He averaged about the same in two less minutes in 18 games at Ball State this year.

**Coppin State** 2015-16 scoring leader **Christian Kesse** (14.6 ppg.) averaged 1.9 points in 29 games after joining head coach Tubby Smith at Memphis this season. He played 7.5 minutes per game for Memphis, a team-best 32.2 minutes at Coppin.

What gives?

Funny thing is, it used to be the other way around. Talented players would flame out at this or that big-time Div. I program and look for solace and a home at an HBCU. While that's still happening to some degree, it's now almost in reverse.

The fact is, none of the former black college players are stars at their new locations. Hampton transfer and former MEAC tourney MVP **Deron Powers** at least came close to



Auburn Sports Photo



Ball State Sports Photo

**FLAMEOUTS:** Bethune-Cookman's LeRon Smith (l.) and South Carolina State's DouDou Gueye (r.), key players for their MEAC teams, ended their careers at Auburn and Ball State respectively, in relative obscurity.

equalling his numbers at Hampton. He was third in assists (5.2 per game) and 18th in points per game (13.0) for Hofstra in the Colonial Athletic Association though he did not make any of the three all-CAA teams.

It's hard to believe that any of these guys has increased his chances of playing professionally with their moves. They are just as, and perhaps more, likely now to be overlooked.

Florida A&M head coach **Byron Samuels**, who was let go after this season, who in addition to losing Bernard from last year's squad lost his top two scorers (**Jermaine Rutley** and **Jorge Rosa**) off his 2014-15 team, calls the transfer debacle "a national epidemic and a disgrace."

“In Division I basketball last year alone, about 900 kids transferred,” said Samuels. “That’s ridiculous. Secondly, we’ve had about eight of our better players in the MEAC in the two-and-a-half years that I’ve been here, that have left to go to so-called higher levels. In some cases, our guys are being recruited.”

To date, *Verbal Commits*, an online site that tracks college player movement, totals 503 transfers just in 2017.

NCCU head coach **LeVelle Moton** said early this season, “there’s no loyalty in college basketball anymore.” He spoke of a player that he took in, rescued, nurtured and fed from his own table only to see him bolt at the first opportunity.

The big question is, why not take the route of former **Norfolk State** 6-10 center **Kyle O’Quinn**?

The native New Yorker stayed at Norfolk State for four years and earned a bevy of awards (MEAC Player of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, Tournament MVP) as an outstanding senior when he averaged 15.9 points (6th in MEAC), 10.3 rebounds (1st) and 2.7 blocks (1st) in the 2011-12 MEAC season, leading his team to the league’s regular season and tournament titles and an NCAA Tournament berth.

He then led the Spartans to a stunning upset of Missouri on the big stage in the NCAA Big Dance. He got national acclaim and an



NY Knicks Photo

**O’QUINN:** Stayed put. Got paid.

ing story in Div. I college basketball.

If this starts happening in college football however, with FCS HBCU stars leaving to join FBS teams, it will be no less than an upheaval.

opportunity to prove himself before NBA scouts.

He parlayed that into a second round selection in the NBA draft by Orlando and just finished his fourth year in the Association playing significant minutes for the New York Knicks.

What’s wrong with that?

Okay, so write this down. Talented hoopsters at Div. I HBCUs leaving the programs that nurtured them to move to higher Div. I programs has become a new normal and a develop-