

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE

LET'S GET IT ON

29 GAMES ON TAP FIRST FULL WEEKEND OF 2008 BLACK COLLEGE FOOTBALL



BCSP Photo
LITTLE BIG MAN: Virginia Union QB in the spotlight as 2008 season kicks off.

Meaty matchups kick off season

LUT WILLIAMS
BCSP Editor

Some highly anticipated coaching debuts are included among the most intriguing matchups on a hefty schedule of 29 games that should give a rousing start to the 2008 black college football season this week.

None of the new coaches are at programs picked to win their respective conference races, but several have high profile names and gaudy past accomplishments that will have their fans on the edge of their seats, have their teams among the most closely watched and at least make conference races more interesting.

No coaching change is likely to be more scrutinized than **Joe Taylor's** move after 16 years from **Hampton** to take over the storied fortunes at **Florida A&M**. The Taylor era begins for the Rattlers Saturday in Tallahassee as they play host to **Alabama State** (5 p.m.) of the **SWAC** in the opener for both teams.

Taylor, the dean of **MEAC** coaches, built Hampton into a conference power over the last decade winning five titles and making five I-AA playoff appearances. His move to conference foe Florida A&M sent shock waves thru the league. Highly regarded in national coaching circles, the big question is not if but when Taylor will get the Rattlers back into MEAC contention after languishing in the middle of the pack for three years under former coach **Rubin Carter**.

Prior to Carter's tenure, former head coach **Billy Joe** had led FAMU to the top of the MEAC food chain, winning five conference crowns and making seven I-AA playoff appearances in 11 years. Joe's years had Rattler fans remembering the days (1945-69) when **Alonso "Jake" Gaither's** Rattlers ruled black college football compiling an incomparable 204-36-4 record and .844 winning percentage under his tutelage.

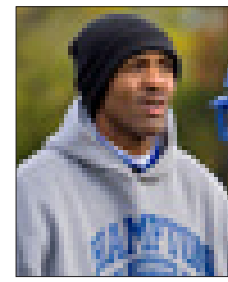
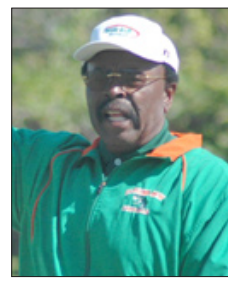
Taylor has made it clear that the challenge of restoring FAMU's greatness is one of the key reasons he left Hampton for Tallahassee.

"I've got one more resurrection in me," said the 67-year old Taylor, who has amassed 197 wins (197-78-4) in a head coaching career that includes stints at **Virginia Union** and **Howard**. He chalked up 136 of those wins at Hampton (136-49-1) which included winning three **CIAA** titles before the Pirates joined the MEAC.

One recent and key transfer to the Rattlers' program is former University of Kentucky quarterback and Kentucky state High School Player of the Year, **Curtis Pulley**, who was cleared to join the squad last week by the NCAA. The outstanding athlete is expected to challenge holdover starter **Eddie Battle** for playing time at quarterback.

Taylor's replacement at Hampton, first-year head coach **Jerry Holmes**, gets thrown right into the fire with a nationally televised (ESPN2) matchup with **SWAC** champion **Jackson State** in the fourth **SWAC/MEAC Challenge** in Orlando Saturday (live at 2 p.m.)

In his first head coaching job, Holmes should be in good shape. He inherits a Pirates' squad that finished 6-5 in Taylor's last year, has a number of highly-regarded transfers, ten players on the preseason all-MEAC team but



NEW JOBS: (Clockwise from top l.) Joe Taylor at Florida A&M, Jerry Holmes at Hampton, Johnnie Cole at Texas Southern and Billy Joe at Miles are among new head coaches whose debuts will be closely watched as the 2008 season begins.

recently lost all-conference quarterback **T. J. Mitchell** to academics. Holmes will turn over the reins of the Pirates' offense to little-used 6-4, 236-pound sophomore **Herbert Byne**.

Perhaps just behind Taylor in impact but nearly equal to him in intrigue, is the resurfacing of Joe at **Miles College** after a three-year hiatus from the sidelines.

Joe, the winningest coach active coach in black college football (237-108-4) and second only in black college circles to late great **Grambling** coaching legend **Eddie Robinson**, begins his tenure by leading the Golden Bears into Birmingham's Legion Field Sunday (6 p.m.) for a **Labor Day Classic** matchup with SIAC foe **Stillman**.

This will be Joe's fourth turnaround assignment. After accomplishing the feat at **Cheyney State**, **Central State** and **FAMU**, the 68-year-old Hall of Fame coach and former NFL running back will try to do the same at Miles who was 35-41 most recently in seven years under **Wade Streeter** and has not won an SIAC title in 30 years.

It's been longer than that for **Texas Southern** who has not won a SWAC title since sharing the crown in 1968. The Tigers turned to former TSU quarterback **Johnnie Cole**, fresh off restoring the fortunes at **Lane** during a three-year stay, to replace **Steve Wilson** who won just four games in four years at TSU and was 0-11 in 2007.

Cole and TSU will open Saturday (7 p.m.) in a **Labor Day Classic** tussle with crosstown Houston and SWAC rival **Prairie View A&M** whose head coach **Henry Frazier** showed his turnaround mastery in his first four years leading the Panthers. **Prairie View** finished 7-4 last season, its first winning season in 30 years and its most wins since 1964. With 19 returning starters, the Panthers should be one of the contenders for SWAC honors this year.

That projection will be challenged early by Cole, who goes into battle with his brother, successful former **Tennessee State** and **Alabama State** head coach **L. C. Cole** as his defensive coordinator and a much ballyhooed transfer quarterback, **Bobby Reid**, running his

GAMES THIS WEEK

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

E.Stroudsburg vs. Virginia Union in E.Stroudsburg, PA 7:30

SATURDAY, AUGUST 30

Lincoln (PA) vs. George Mason in West Grove, PA	1
Saint Paul's vs. Wingate in Lawrenceville, VA	1:30
West Virginia State vs. Lincoln (MO) in Institute, WV	2
Alcorn State vs. SE Louisiana in Alcorn State, MS	5
Miss Valley State vs. Texas College in Itta Bena, MS	5
Florida A&M vs. Alabama State in Tallahassee, FL	5
Alabama A&M vs. Tennessee State in Normal, AL	6
Ark.-Pine Bluff vs. Ark.-Monticello in Pine Bluff, AR	6
Houston vs. Southern in Houston, TX	6
Stephen F. Austin vs. Langston in Nacodoches, TX	6
Central Florida vs. SC State in Orlando, FL	6
Clark Atlanta vs. Fort Valley State in Atlanta, GA	6
NC A&T vs. Johnson C. Smith in Greensboro, NC	6
Nevada-Reno vs. Grambling State in Reno, NV	6:05
Albany State vs. Shaw in Albany, GA	7
Catawba vs. Saint Augustine's in Salisbury, NC	7
Elizabeth City State vs. Chowan in Elizabeth City, NC	7
Kentucky State vs. Lane in Frankfort, KY	7
Savannah State vs. Jacksonville in Savannah, GA	7

CLASSICS

<i>Wade Wilson Classic</i>	
Cheyney vs. Bowie State in Cheyney, PA	1
<i>Palmetto Capital City Classic</i>	
Benedict vs. Morehouse in Columbia, SC	4
<i>Virginia Lottery Labor Day Classic</i>	
Norfolk State vs. Virginia State in Norfolk, VA	6
<i>Greenville HBCU Classic</i>	
Livingstone vs. Concordia in Greenville, SC	7
TV GAME	
<i>Labor Day Classic</i> - ESPN2 - Delayed-10:30p ET	
Texas Southern vs. Prairie View A&M in Houston, TX	7

SUNDAY, AUGUST 31

<i>MEAC-SWAC Challenge</i> - ESPN2 - Live	
Hampton vs. Jackson State in Orlando, FL	2
<i>Labor Day Classic</i>	
NC Central vs. Fayetteville State in Durham, NC	4
<i>Dayton Classic IV</i>	
Central State vs. Dayton in Dayton, OH	5
<i>2nd Labor Day Classic</i>	
Miles vs. Stillman in Birmingham, AL	6

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



Beijing Olympics Photo

NIPPED AT THE LINE: Former Howard hurdler David Oliver (left) finishes just behind gold medal winner Dayron Robles (center) and American David Payne (right) in finals of 110-meter hurdles Thursday at the Beijing Olympics.

OLIVER, BROWN GET BRONZE:

Former **Howard** Bison trackster **David Oliver** earned a bronze medal in the 110-meter hurdles at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing China last Thursday at the National Stadium. Oliver took home the third place prize finishing in 13.18 seconds. Oliver, a gold medalist at the 2008 U.S. Indoor Games, finished one one-hundredth of a second behind runner up David Payne of the USA. Dayron Robles of Cuba took home top honors in 12.93. Oliver is the first Bison track and field athlete to earn an Olympic medal.

Also, former **Norfolk State** track sprinter **Chris Brown** ran the anchor leg to help the Bahamian 4x400 meter relay team capture a silver medal Saturday. The United States won the gold medal with an Olympic-record time of 2:55.39. Brown held off Russia to earn his first-ever Olympic medal.

Brown's silver represents the first Olympic medal for an NSU alumnus since the trio of **Brian Lewis** (USA), **Tim Montgomery** (USA) and **Chandra Sturup** (Bahamas) each won gold in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney as part of their respective countries' 4x100 meter relay teams. Brown, 30, finished fourth on Thursday in the men's 400-meter final, his best-ever individual Olympic finish in three tries. Brown advanced to the semifinals of the 400 meters at the Athens Olympics in 2004 and also ran in the qualifying heats at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. He also ran on the Bahamian fourth-place 4x400 meter relay team in 2000.

MEAC SCORING LEADER OUT:

Maryland-Eastern Shore standout guard **Ed Tyson**, who led the MEAC in scoring last season, will not return for his senior season with the Hawks. "Tyson has rendered himself academically ineligible and will no longer be part of the men's basketball program," said new UME head coach **Frankie Allen**.



TYSON

Tyson, who averaged a conference-best 20.2 points per game, started all 32 games for UMEs last season, also leading the team in steals, minutes played and 3-pointers. His 646 total points last season was second best in school history. Tyson entered the UMEs career 1,000-point club on Dec. 22 last year against Navy. The 6-2, 200-pound senior will remain in school to concentrate on academics.

VUU QB Little has plenty more to do

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The **Virginia Union** Panthers figure they have some unfinished business to take care of this football season, and they are counting on senior quarterback **Lamar Little** to handle it.

Two years ago, a loss to **Elizabeth City State** cost them a berth in the CIAA championship game. Last season, they reached the title game but lost to **Shaw** in overtime. With a more experienced Little, the 2007 CIAA Player of the Year and a candidate for the Harlon Hill Trophy (NCAA Division II Player of the Year), running the offense, the Panthers are confident they won't fall short again.

"We have a chip on our shoulder," says Little, who says he watched tape of last season's championship game every day during the offseason. "We're using that as fuel to get the job done this year."

"We have a sense of urgency to finish the things we've started," said first-year coach **Greg Richardson**. "It's been frustrating. We've been a young team, and we had growing pains."

The Panthers will be anything but young this season. They return 58 lettermen from last year's 9-3 squad, which posted the best record at VUU over the last 15 seasons. That number includes more than 30 seniors and 20 starters. Seven Panthers were named to the preseason All-CIAA team.

None of the returnees figures more prominently in the Panthers' plans this season than Little, a 5-10, 210-pound left-hander from Candor, N.C. Last season he threw for 2,340 yards and 28 touchdowns and rushed for 513 yards and another nine scores.

Little is a relative newcomer at quarterback. He moved under center as a high school senior

after playing cornerback because his coach wanted a superior athlete at that position. His forte was running the ball when he arrived at Virginia Union, but he has shown steady improvement as a passer after spending his summers working out with his school team.

"I knew I had to work on my passing," Little says. "I had to get my arm stronger to make college throws, and I worked on my timing so I could get the ball where it needed to be."

Richardson expects even more from Little this season. Richardson, who took over the helm after serving as defensive coordinator when **Arrington Jones** resigned last spring, has installed a spread offense to further exploit Little's skills.

"Being a good athlete is half the battle," Richardson says. "He has been blessed with great athletic ability. That allows him to improvise when he's in trouble. But he also understands reads and coverages. He's not forcing the ball. That comes from maturity and being in the system."

"We've challenged him to do more. He'll have a great year. Last year he did a lot of things on his own. By going to the spread offense, we want to get him to the second level (of the defense). If we can get him to the second level, we'll take our chances with him against anybody."



BCSP Photo

LITTLE: Reigning CIAA Player of the Year leads Virginia Union into battle at East Stroudsburg Thursday that kicks off 29 black college games this week.

Coming off his performance from last season, Little enters the season as a marked man given all the offseason attention he has received and he has his own blog on Union's web site.

Little understands and accepts that he is the Panthers' leader, and being in opponents' cross hairs doesn't faze him.

Things get started for the Panthers when they kick off a hefty schedule of 29 black college games this week when they travel to East Stroudsburg (Pa.) for a Thursday night (7:30 p.m.) matchup vs. East Stroudsburg.

"I was a marked man since the year that I came here," he says. "I don't feel any pressure. As long as I prepare myself like I did last year, there is no pressure. We have a whole team. The pressure falls on all of us. I just do my job and allow my teammates to do theirs. Leadership comes with playing quarterback. All the responsibility falls on the quarterback. I feel I can take it."

His two favorite targets from last season, seniors **Jarad Taylor** and **Michael Hampton**, are still on hand. Taylor caught 42 passes for 703 yards and 10 touchdowns. Hampton led the CIAA with 1,148 all-purpose yards. All-Americans **LaQuentin Blair** (6-4, 260) and **Kyneth Moses** (6-2, 280) anchor the offensive line. "We worked on all the flaws we had last season," Little says. "We feel good coming into the season."

THE STAT CORNER

WHO ARE THE BEST PERFORMERS IN BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

SBN SPORTS BLACK COLLEGE FOOTBALL PRESEASON POLL

TEAM	TOTAL POINTS	1st PLACE VOTES	LAST SEASON
1. Tuskegee*	241	(15)	12-0
2. Delaware State	197	(6)	10-2
3. Jackson State	193	(3)	8-4
4. South Carolina State	178	(4)	7-4
5. Southern	152	(1)	8-3
6. Norfolk State	124		8-3
7. Grambling State	87		8-4
8. Virginia Union	65		9-3
9. Albany State	45		8-3
10. Alabama A&M	43		8-3