

# BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE

## A NEW DAY IN WASHINGTON AND AMERICA

HAMPTON, TENNESSEE STATE HAVE PLAYERS IN SUPER BOWL XLIII

### UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



#### SUPER BOWL CATCHES 'YES WE CAN' FEVER!

The 'YES WE CAN' fever has struck this year's Super Bowl!

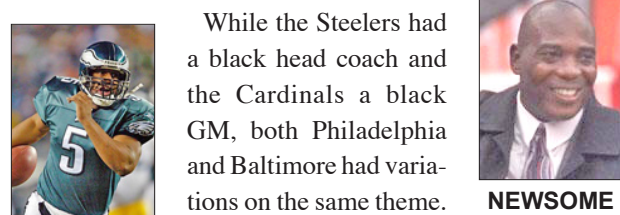
In the BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE's celebration of the inauguration of **Barack Hussein Obama**, we are taking a look at black figures in sports whose accomplishments and achievements proudly proclaim the theme of the new U. S. president historically and today.

That is no more evident today than in the soon-to-be contested Super Bowl XLIII in Tampa Bay.

Pictured above in the neon glow of their team's colors are Pittsburgh Steelers' Head Coach Mike Tomlin (l.) and Arizona Cardinals' General Manager Rod Graves (r.) whose respective teams will take the field on February 1st to crown the champion of American football.

It's clear that these African-American men stand on the shoulders of many others that have come before them, many of them pictured in this edition of the BCSP. But they also represent a continuation of the new president's theme reflected in the lives of all those pictured here – a realization that thru hard work, dedication, a commitment to excellence and a determination to live out your dreams, anything is possible.

It's somewhat ironic that however last weekend's NFL Conference finals had turned out would have reflected well on the 'YES WE CAN' theme.



**McNABB** Donovan McNabb was the Eagles' starting quarterback and Ozzie Newsome is the Ravens' GM.



**NEWSOME**

But you may ask, 'what's all of this got to do with black college sports?' which is, after all, the theme of this publication. Well, we can make that case, too. Try this.

Mike Tomlin's father, Ed, attended and played football at **Hampton University** for head coach **Melvin Labat**. Yes, the same Hampton Pirates that the BCSP covers on a weekly basis. And we hear he was pretty good.

In fact, according to one of his teammates (**Charles Smith**) who is a friend of the BCSP editor, the elder Tomlin had NFL skills. As a 6-2, 225-pound fullback at Hampton in the mid 1960s, Ed, according to this source, was a true talent.

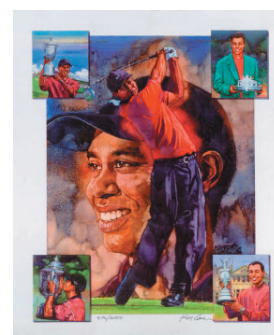
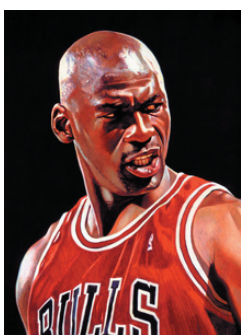
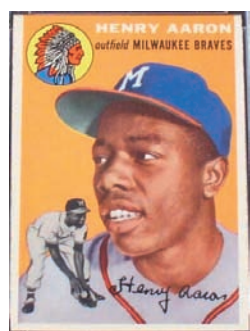
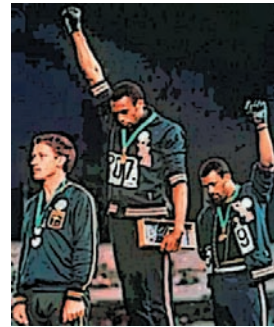
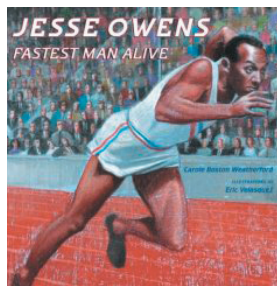
Graves' father, the late Jackie Graves, was a scout for the Philadelphia Eagles and those bloodlines came in handy as Rod spent 13 years with the Chicago Bears in various personnel capacities. He joined the Cardinals in 1997, assumed responsibility for the scouting department in 1998 and became vice president for football operations in 2002 after six years as special assistant to the president. He currently serves as the team's general manager.

Graves oversees all facets of the Cardinals' football operations including contract negotiations, overseeing college and professional scouting efforts.

In that role, he can be held responsible for drafting the only black college product playing in Super Bowl XLIII – budding star **Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie**, the defensive back out of **Tennessee State** taken in the first round of the 2008 NFL Draft. The rookie cornerback has six interceptions in the 11 games he has started and is already assigned the opposing team's top receiver.



**RODGERS-CROMARTIE**



# A Tribute to Sports, Obama and 'YES WE CAN'

**LUT WILLIAMS**  
BCSP Editor

The inspiration for this special edition of the BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE comes from the historic inauguration this week of **Barack Hussein Obama** as the first black president of the United States of America and from a comment made on the weekend edition of ESPN's *Outside The Lines*.

On that show this past weekend in a piece reflecting on barrier-breaking precedents in sports by African-Americans and how they have reverberated thru all facets of American life and spurred momentous changes in the greater society, former Oklahoma Republican Congressman **J. C. Watts** made an insightful comment which moved me.

Watts, a barrier breaker himself as the first black quarterback in University of Oklahoma football history and the first elected to statewide office in his state, remarked that boxing legend Muhammad Ali represented the "YES WE CAN" of another generation.

In that statement about Ali, Watts, I believe, captured the spirit that Barack Obama made the theme of his historic campaign – 'YES WE CAN.' It was not only reflected in the life of Muhammad Ali but in a host of others, both on and off the fields of play, and it has been the rallying cry of soaring accomplishments for African-Americans in the face of difficult and sometimes seeming insurmountable odds.

Ali, in his indomitable way, indeed championed the causes of racial justice, religious freedom and conscience while battling discrimination inside and outside the ring. And he in many ways today, is still a symbol of that struggle.

Watts' statement however spurred me to capture the names and pictures of heroes in many sports who have, in their own way, advanced the cause of African-American achievement, accomplishment and liberation and played a part in the election of America's first black president.

In the field of human endeavor, sports, by no means, has been the leading catalyst for change. In fact, because of its primacy in the eyes of an adoring public, it has been amongst

the most resistant to it. But also because of it occupying that same place in the American psyche, the breaking of its barriers has been among the most striking.

In making their historic contributions, each of the persons pictured above played and competed as individuals but knowingly or unknowingly, willfully or unwillingly carried the hopes, dreams and aspirations of a people with them, thundering in their accomplishments a resounding 'YES WE CAN.'

Jesse Owens      Jackie Robinson      Althea Gibson      Charlie Sifford      John McLendon

Bill Russell      Wilma Rudolph

Muhammad Ali      Tommie Smith & John Carlos

Arthur Ashe      Jim Brown

Doug Williams      Hank Aaron

Michael Jordan      Tony Dungy      Serena & Venus Williams      Tiger Woods

**PRESIDENT  
BARACK  
HUSSEIN  
OBAMA**