

# BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



Alabama State Sports Photo

## DIFFERENCE MAKERS

**MELLENDEZ:** Former B-CU head baseball coach leads Alabama State to record finish, first SWAC title.

**SWAC, SIAC LEAD IN FOOTBALL ATTENDANCE; NEW DEALS, NEW COACHES, NEW CHAMPS**

## UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

### HARRIS NEW FSU TENNIS COACH:

FAYETTEVILLE, NC – **Fayetteville State** announced **Erika Gee Harris** as the fourth head women's tennis coach in program history last week. Women's tennis became a varsity sport at FSU in 2002. Harris will begin her leadership role of the women's tennis program for the upcoming 2016-17 season.

Harris brings over 35 years of experience as a tennis player and several years of experience in the areas of development and coordination of adult and youth programs of various age ranges and skill sets.

She has strong ties and affiliation with the United States Tennis Association (USTA), the Cape Fear Regional Tennis Foundation, and the Wizards Tennis Association. Harris also served as the assistant girls' tennis coach at nearby E.E. Smith High School for two seasons (2014-16). She was named the 2015 Volunteer of the Year for her work and as the secretary with the Cape Fear Regional Tennis Foundation.

Harris served as captain of the USTA Southern Women's 40+ Singles League (2015) and Co-captain of the 18+ Adult League. She is the current captain of the overall 40+ Adult League. Harris joined the Wizards Tennis Association in 2012 and then began service on the tournament committee in 2013. She took the reins at tournament director in 2015.

"I am extremely honored to have been chosen to the head coaching position for the FSU Women's Tennis Team," stated Harris. "My goal is to encompass a complete tennis program that utilizes on and off court lessons. When athletics is combined and balanced with a positive academic and social atmosphere, each aspect benefits the other."

### FAMU INKS NIKE APPAREL DEAL:

**Florida A&M's** athletic department recently secured a three-year deal with Nike, Athletic Director **Milton Overton Jr.** told the *Tallahassee Democrat* on Saturday.

Overton said the deal would run concurrent with the MEAC's current shoe deal with Nike, and that Nike would provide both new uniforms and apparel for the school. FAMU's and the MEAC's previous apparel deal was with Russell Athletic ends next month.

"Most of the conference moved to Nike," Overton said. "Some of the conference members went to a different apparel company. I won't necessarily say numbers. What I'll say is it was a 50-percent increase in value from Russell to Nike."

Overton said at the end of the three-year deal, there will be an option for FAMU to renew. He added new uniforms and fan apparel will be released within the next two to three weeks.

### POWELL TO LEAD LANGSTON WOMEN:

LANGSTON – **Langston University** announced former WNBA player **Elaine Powell** last week as the new head coach for the women's basketball team.

Powell joins LU Athletics having previously served as an assistant coach for women's basketball programs at **Alabama A&M**, **Ohio University** and **Grambling State**.

She spent nearly a decade playing in the WNBA, where she earned numerous awards and honors. Under former coach and Detroit Pistons player, Bill Laimbeer, she was a three time WNBA champion with the Detroit Shock.

Prior to her professional basketball career, she was a student athlete at Louisiana State, where she was a Kodak All American and finished her career as LSU's 11th all-time leading scorer with 1,163 points. She was the first player in LSU history to be drafted into the WNBA.

"Elaine Powell is a proven leader whose dedication and commitment to excellence has shown in her work while coaching at the NCAA DI level for more than 8 years," said **Langston Athletics Director Donnita Drain Rogers**.

Powell succeeds **Cheryl Miller**, who had a record of 49-12 and two NAIA Tournament appearances during her two-year stint. Under Miller, the Lady Lions finished the 2015-16 season with a 20-8 and received a third straight bid to the NAIA Division I Women's Basketball National Championship tournament in Independence, Missouri.

# SWAC, SIAC kings in football attendance

## LUT WILLIAMS

BCSP Editor

Conferences made up of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) continued their dominance leading the nation in home football attendance as 2015 figures were released by the NCAA last week.

The **Southwestern Athletic Conference** (SWAC) led all Football Championship Series (FCS) conferences in attendance in 2015 for the 36th time in 37 years while the **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference** (SIAC) led all NCAA Div. II conferences for the 13th consecutive year and 24th time in the last 26 seasons.

The ten SWAC teams drew an average of 12,823 fans for its 51 home games last season. The Missouri Valley Conference finished second with an average of 10,916 fans for its 60 home games. The Big Sky Conference was third averaging 9,877 fans over 70 games of its 13 teams.

The **Mid Eastern Athletic Conference** (MEAC), the other HBCU FCS conference, finished sixth averaging 8,937 fans for 52 home games of its 11 programs.

Nine black college FCS teams – five from the SWAC, three from the MEAC and one independent (**Tennessee State**) – finished in the top 30 in team attendance.

**Southern**, out of the SWAC, was eighth averaging 18,310 fans for its four home games. MEAC-member **South Carolina State**, with an average of 15,629 for five home dates, led a three-team contingent including **Florida A&M** and **North Carolina A&T** at 10th, 11th and 12th.

2015 NCAA DIV. I FCS CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE				
CONFERENCE	TEAMS	GAMES	TOTAL	AVERAGE
1. <b>SWAC</b>	10	51	653,962	12,823
6. <b>MEAC</b>	11	52	464,749	8,937

2015 NCAA DIV. II CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE				
CONFERENCE	TEAMS	GAMES	TOTAL	AVERAGE
1. <b>SIAC</b>	11	54	328,016	6,074
5. <b>CIAA</b>	12	53	167,599	3,162

## 2015 NCAA DIV. I FCS HOME ATTENDANCE TEAM LEADERS

TEAM	G	TOTAL	AVERAGE
1. Montana	7	168,975	24,139
8. <b>Southern</b>	4	73,239	18,310
10. <b>South Carolina State</b>	5	78,147	15,629
11. <b>Florida A&amp;M</b>	4	60,240	15,060
12. <b>N.C. A&amp;T</b>	5	74,940	14,998
14. <b>Tennessee State</b>	4	58,481	14,620
15. <b>Jackson State</b>	5	66,258	13,252
18. <b>Alcorn State</b>	5	61,716	12,343
24. <b>Alabama State</b>	5	51,449	10,290
28. <b>Grambling State</b>	3	30,105	10,055

## 2015 NCAA DIV. II HOME ATTENDANCE TEAM LEADERS

TEAM	G	TOTAL	AVERAGE
1. Grand Valley State	6	74,187	12,365
2. <b>Tuskegee</b>	5	53,313	10,663
6. <b>Albany State</b>	4	29,729	7,432
10. <b>Virginia Union</b>	4	26,499	6,625
11. <b>Morehouse</b>	5	32,545	6,509
13. <b>Winston-Salem St.</b>	4	24,272	6,068
15. <b>Fort Valley State</b>	5	30,236	6,047
22. <b>Livingstone</b>	4	20,071	5,018

In Div. II, the SIAC drew 328,016 fans, an average of 6,074 per game to its 54 home dates to lead the Division.

"The robust attendance that our schools enjoy is not only a testament to the sacrosanct relationships that our member institutions maintain with their students and alumni, but also speaks to the strong connections our institutions share with the communities where they both operate and serve," said SIAC Commissioner **Gregory Moore**.

The Lone Star Conference was second in Div. II averaging 5,867 fans per its 42 home games. The Gulf South Conference finished third.

The **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association** (CIAA), the other Div. II HBCU conference, was fifth with an average of 3,162 fans for its 53 home dates.

The SIAC placed four teams and the CIAA had three teams in the top 30 in Div. II home team attendance. **Tuskegee** out of the SIAC finished second to Grand Valley State (12,365) and was the only other team to top 10,000 fans per game with an average of 10,663 for five home games.

SIAC member **Albany State** was sixth with an average of 7,432 fans per game. **Virginia Union** of the CIAA was tenth drawing an average of 6,625 fans to its four home dates.

# BCSP Spring Notes

## Alabama State sweeps to first SWAC baseball championship

NEW ORLEANS – **Alabama State** staved off a late comeback attempt by **Texas Southern** for a 7-5 win that claimed the program's first **Southwestern Athletic Conference** Baseball Tournament Championship.

The win also completes the first perfect record in conference play in the history of the league, with the Hornets amassing a 28-0 (including tournament) record against conference foes this year.

The Hornets finished 38-15 overall.

Former **Bethune-Cookman** head coach **Mervyl Melendez**, who won 11 MEAC titles over 12 years at B-CU, led the Hornets to the title and record-breaking season in his fifth year at ASU.

Both sides traded scoreless first innings before Texas Southern threatened in the second. Although consecutive walks and a hit batter by Hornets starter **Angel Alicea** eventually led to runners loading the bags, Alicea sat down **Kamren Dukes** to escape the jam.

Tournament MVP **Dillon Cooper**, who went 4-for-4 with two runs scored and four RBI in the championship game, tagged a three-run homer in the third inning to put the Hornets on top. He added an RBI double in the sixth inning.

TOURNAMENT MVP  
Dillon Cooper, Alabama State

### ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

Troy Lewis, Southern; Aderly Perez, Jaquese Moore, Arkansas-Pine Bluff; Colin Carroll, Alcorn State; Miguel Yrigoyen, Cornelius Copeland, Jackson State; Robert Pearson, Kamren Dukes, Texas Southern; Tyler Howe, Yamil Pagan, Eriq White, Dillon Cooper, Alabama State

## Bethune-Cookman meets Norfolk State in MEAC baseball championship

SALISBURY, Md. – **Bethune-Cookman** faced **Norfolk State** at 1 p.m. Tuesday for the MEAC Baseball championship after both advanced Monday with semifinal wins.

B-CU scored three runs in the sixth inning en route to a 5-2 victory over in-state rival **Florida A&M** while Norfolk State's **Devin Hemmerich** went all nine innings in the Spartans 4-2 win over FAMU to knock the Rattlers out of the championship picture.

Bethune-Cookman will bring an overall record of 28-25 into the final showdown while Norfolk State is 29-20.

NSU must beat the Wildcats twice to win its first-ever MEAC title. B-CU is the defending champion. The Spartans will be making their seventh appearance in the MEAC championship finale.

## Alabama State, Florida A&M bow out in NCAA Div. I softball playoffs

GAINESVILLE, FL – The SWAC champion **Alabama State** softball team's long journey in the 2016 season has finally ended.

It came to a close on Saturday in an elimination game of the NCAA Tournament in the Gainesville regional with an 8-0 loss to No. 22 Florida Atlantic.

ASU finishes with the third most wins in a season (28), its first SWAC Championship and first appearance in the NCAA Tournament in program history.

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The MEAC champion **Florida A&M** softball team battled back valiantly from a 5-0 deficit in the late innings, but came up two runs short Saturday afternoon in a season-ending 6-4 setback to South Florida in the Tallahassee Regional at JoAnne Graf Field.

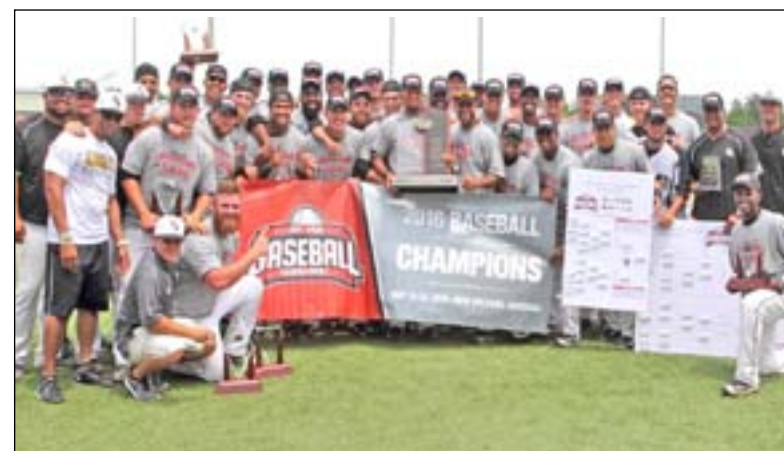
FAMU finishes the season 27-30.

"Our players set a goal before the season that they wanted to get to the regionals and compete and I think we accomplished that," said FAMU head coach **Veronica Wiggins**.

## Clafin and Chowan eliminated in NCAA Div. II baseball playoffs

Two first-time participants in the NCAA baseball postseason suffered season-ending losses in elimination games.

TAMPA, FL. – **SIAC** champion **Clafin** bowed out of the NCAA Div. II South Regional baseball tournament with a 7-1 loss to West Geor-



Alabama State Sports Photo

## RECORD BREAKERS

The Alabama State baseball team poses after taking the school's first-ever SWAC baseball title with a 7-5 win Saturday over Texas Southern. The team is also the first ever to go through the SWAC regular season and tournament undefeated. The Hornets posted a 28-0 conference mark and 38-15 overall record.

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The Panthers, who were competing in its first-ever NCAA Post-Season tournament, finish 2016 with a 24-29 overall record.

WEST LAWN, PA – **CIAA** champion **Chowan's** baseball team's season came to an end on Friday afternoon with a 19-2 loss to East Stroudsburg University in the NCAA Atlantic Region Tournament.

Chowan closes out the 2016 season with a 26-26 overall mark including earning its first CIAA Championship title and making their first NCAA Atlantic Region appearance in program history.

## Lincoln (Mo.) women, St. Augustine's men enter Div. II Outdoor Track nationals as favorites

The **Lincoln (Mo.)** women's track & field team and **Saint Augustine's** men's team will enter this weekend's NCAA Division II Outdoor Championships as the prohibitive favorites after claiming the top overall positions in this week's United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCA) Division II national rankings.ncaa track field.

The Men's and Women's Outdoor Track and Field Championships begin Thursday, May 26, and conclude Saturday, May 28, at the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla. The Pre-Championships rankings, released by the USTFCCA on Monday, include only the regular-season results of this week's meet qualifiers.

Lincoln's women will be looking to repeat as outdoor champions while Saint Augustine's is favored to win its fourth consecutive men's outdoor track and field title.

Based on the current marks of the Blue Tigers who will be competing in that meet, Lincoln was awarded 167.77 points to earn the nation's top overall ranking.

Saint Augustine's led the men's national rankings with 244.82 points and is a heavy favorite over No. 2 Texas A&M-Kingsville. The Falcons have been ranked No. 1 for the eight straight weeks this season.

The championship meet will be streamed live on ncaa.com each day. The starting times are 10:30 a.m. Thursday, 9:30 a.m. Friday and 11:30 a.m.

## Xavier men's tennis falls in NAIA championship match

The **Xavier University** Gold Rush fell to top ranked, undefeated, defending champion Georgia Gwinnett, 5-2, in the NAIA National Championship final at the Copeland-Cox Mobile Tennis Center in Mobile, AL.

This was the first Xavier team in any sport to play in an NAIA national final.

After entering the tournament as the third seed, the Gold Rush had advanced to the finals with wins against Westmont (Calif.) (5-1) and two all-out battles against Keiser (Fla.) (5-3) and Lindsey Wilson (Ky.) (5-3) in the semifinals.

XU won 2 of 3 doubles matches to take a 2-1 lead entering the singles matches. Georgia Gwinnett powered through four singles matches to seal its third consecutive national title and increase its win streak to 32.

Xavier finishes its season with a 17-8 record.