

Another game bites the dust *From Page 3*

player taken in the draft.

Williams entered their pre-season camp as a prime contender for one of the Jets cornerback positions. While he didn't start, he has secured himself a place on their roster.

That's why the game was initiated in 1984. In its first year, the Freedom Bowl was staged as an all-star contest between the two Division I black college conferences -- SWAC and MEAC. Based in Atlanta, there were rumblings among the locals that no Atlanta University schools were involved and that neither of the Division II conferences were invited to participate.

The following years, the field was expanded to include Division II -- the CIAA and SIAC, along with independents such as Central State, and Division I-AA member Tennessee State (a member of the Ohio Valley Conference).

The first game in Atlanta drew well, an estimated 22,000 witnessed the inaugural event. But after that, the crowds were frighteningly sparse. You could stand in one end zone and hear someone call your name on the opposite end of the field.

The pro scouts, however, loved it. It gave them a chance to re-evaluate some people they had seen previously. It also gave them a look at some people they didn't think were worth looking at earlier in the season. And you can believe that the scouts made it their business to be there. No team at the pro level can afford *not* to have a scout see the game and check out the talent.

The game's sponsors continued to pour money into the event each year. Still, fewer people bothered to get a look at some of the best black college grid talent assembled on one field. The game moved to D.C. in '86, then moved to Winston-Salem, NC, the following year.

MEAC sponsors the game and they took one of those red ink baths the last time around. That conference reportedly lost \$38,000, according to informed sources.



Photo by The Magnificent Eye

The Freedom Bowl has provided black college seniors with one final opportunity to show NFL scouts what they can do.

The 43 black colleges that were represented at the contest, reportedly made no efforts to help the MEAC offset its losses.

What is even more disturbing is that none of the other black college conferences sold very many of their blocs of allotted tickets. Ken Free, MEAC commissioner, was said to have received almost as many tickets back from the conferences and the schools as he had sent out initially.

To make matters worse, SWAC, which had been a co-partner in this venture from its inception, withdrew from the partnership last May.

MEAC officials, feeling that the other conferences and their respective schools should help shoulder some of the financial load, mandated that the commissioner find an underwriting source by July 1 of last year, or forget about having a Freedom

Bowl in '88.

Free says that the game takes approximately \$200,000 to pull off. And in order for corporate sponsorship to be consistently positive, there needs to be seed money to show that this game is a serious undertaking. When you put your money where your mouth is, sponsors tend to look at your event in a more serious light.

There was a last gap effort by the MEAC to somehow pull a rabbit of the hat and still have the '88 contest. Had there been time, there was a chance that sufficient funding could have been generated. It's a pity that this year's crop of black college seniors, which include: Fred Garner of Alabama A & M; Earl Harvey of North Carolina Central; Jimmie Johnson of Howard; and Clemente Gordon of Grambling -- have been denied the opportunity to

show their wares to the scouts one more time.

BCSR has been told that none of the 43 black colleges whose athletes have appeared in the Freedom Bowl were able to sell their allotment of 100 tickets at \$10 a ticket. The plan was to play the game at North Carolina A & T in Greensboro, NC on a "bare bones" budget.

It just doesn't make sense for a game that's sorely needed to fall prey to clashing egos, jealousy, and misdirected pride. Anytime you have a collaboration on anything, there's always going to be disagreement. But in the end, it's the athletes who suffer.

But then again, what else is new?
About us!

-Craig T. Greenlee

Bethune-Cookman is awarded MEAC grid title

The controversy is finally over.

Bethune-Cookman College is the official MEAC football champion for the 1988 season. And there's little doubt that they deserve it.

This is the first MEAC grid championship for Bethune since 1984.

The Wildcats won the title by virtue of their head-to-head wins over Delaware State and Florida A & M. All three teams finished their conference slates with identical 4-2 records.

B-CC opened the door for themselves in their season finale vs. FAMU, a resounding 25-0 victory over their state rivals in the Florida Classic which was played on Thanksgiving weekend.

The controversy over who the conference champion would be started dur-

ing the opening week of the season. Florida A & M beat Delaware State 35-31, but was forced to forfeit that game because they used an ineligible player.

Then, during mid-season, the Hornets, who were unbeaten in conference play at that time, dropped a 10-9 decision to the Wildcats. But before the regular season ended, a question came up concerning the eligibility of one of DSC's players.

A conference investigation followed and it was determined that the Hornets had used an ineligible player, so they had to forfeit their conference victories. Going into the last game of the season, B-CC needed a win to have a shot at earning the conference title.

Although the Wildcats didn't reach

the .500 mark overall (5-6), they won the games that counted the most. And for a good part of the season, coach Larry Little never had a completely healthy squad. But everything came together for his team in the Florida Classic.

With a crowd of better than 50,000 watching, the Wildcats maintained control in all phases of the game and took a 18-0 lead at the half and coasted to victory.

Quarterback Anthony Thomas was the guiding hand for the B-CC offense for the entire season. Thomas, a senior, led the MEAC in total offense (2,258 yards).

But there's more to Thomas than an accurate passing arm. He was most

responsible for his team edging Delaware State earlier in the season. Prior to that game, he wasn't scheduled to play.

The coaching staff didn't want to take chances with his injured knee. But he convinced the coaching staff that he could handle it and he responded by throwing the game-winning touchdown pass to Lebron Sumpter during the game's late stages.

Thomas was also blessed with having two very capable receivers on his side. Stevie Thomas (no relation) and James Jackson were a potent pair, combining for over 1,000 receiving yards. Each wide-out averaged over 18 yards per reception.

-Brandon Shane