

serve its viewers with additional programming.

Neal openly admits that it's a difficult chore to select games that will produce excitement on the field and fan appeal on folks TV screens. When you're a part of the national media, program planning is best done on an advance basis.

For example, the '88 football broadcast schedule was made up in July, nearly two months before the start of the season. "It's like spinning a bottle and waiting for it to stop spinning and seeing where it points," Neal says in jest. "There's really no way you can tell if the games you pick to air in July will be the same type of game you think it will be when it's played in October."

Rivalries, match-ups, pre-season predictions, and projections of the teams involved are the main items that Neal looks at in making up the BET sports programming slate.

"I have to sit down, look at the teams, look at what they did the year before, who they have coming back, and make a choice of whether or not a particular match-up will be good for us to show on the air. We try not to show the same teams all the time. Our thinking is to try and give everybody (schools) a piece of the pie."

One example of this involves the basketball rivalry between Xavier and Dillard in New Orleans. Both schools are Division III members, but the interest generated by the game has prompted BET to air that contest.

Still, there are those aren't satisfied that the network has been equitable in its coverage -- specifically, schools in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. SIAC schools have been featured on a very sparse basis in past years. Only Tuskegee and Fort Valley State have appeared in football. None of the conference's schools have played a BET basketball game yet.

SIAC observers consider this a bit strange, considering that in basketball, Alabama A & M was the only team to



Photo courtesy of Black Entertainment Television  
**"It's like spinning a bottle and waiting for it to stop and seeing where it points. There's really no way to tell if the game you pick in July will be the same type of game you think it will be when it's played in October."**

— Charlie Neal, BET Sports Director

advance very far in last season's Division II basketball playoffs. The Bulldogs finished the regular season ranked No. 3 in Division II.

That will change this month. The Bulldogs will play Alabama State in the network's first black college basketball broadcast this year. In addition, other teams who haven't gotten air time in

recent years, will do so this year -- Texas Southern, for one.

However, there are valid reasons why some teams may get more air time than others, Neal explains. The playing facility of a game has to be conducive to television. Lighting is a major factor. Improper lighting makes for poor viewing on the tube's screen. That's why in a

lot of instances, schools who don't have the facility to accommodate a TV broadcast are likely to get air time only if they are the visiting team in a facility that has all the accoutrements a network needs to properly air the contest.

Facilities have to have sufficient room for the network to position their cameras. There must also be enough power to handle all of the electrical demands that the network's equipment will place on a facility. "We always have to make sure that we have a back-up generator," Neal says. "We could go into some places and overload the circuits because of all the power our equipment needs to properly function."

BET is looking to expand its coverage to include additional sports such as baseball and track and field. In previous years, they covered the SWAC tennis tournament, Neal says.

But before additional sports becomes a regular part of the programming, the budget to cover expenses must be expanded and that only happens with increased advertising revenue.

"Sports is a very expensive proposition," Neal points out. "Sports has the biggest portion of BET's budget. When we started doing live broadcasts, we spent close to \$250,000 more than we did when we were doing the delayed taping of the games. You're talking about air fare, hotel lodging and meals for the crew and people who are on the air. There are also expenses for getting the broadcast trucks from one place to the other every week."

In the final analysis, however, BET is well received and is serving a useful purpose for black college sports. The network pays a rights fee to the schools that play on the air and for the coaches, TV coverage is an excellent recruiting tool.

The national exposure that black college sports receives via BET is the kind that can't be measured by dollar signs.

— Craig T. Greenlee

## BET's '89 Live Black College Basketball Broadcast Schedule

Date	Teams	Location	Time
Jan.	Alabama A & M vs. Alabama State	Birmingham, Ala.	8 p.m.
Jan. 14	Virginia State vs. Norfolk State	Norfolk, Va.	8 p.m.
Jan. 16	Jackson State vs. Texas Southern	Houston, Tex.	8 p.m.
Jan. 21	Hampton vs. Virginia Union	Richmond, Va.	8 p.m.
Jan. 28	Dillard vs. Xavier	New Orleans, La.	8 p.m.
Jan. 30	North Carolina A & T vs. Florida A & M	Tallahassee, Fla.	8 p.m.
Feb. 4	Alcorn State vs. Southern University	Baton Rouge, La.	8 p.m.
Feb. 11	N.C. A & T vs. South Carolina State	Orangeburg, SC	8 p.m.
Feb. 17	N.C. Central vs. Winston-Salem State	Winston-Salem, NC	8 p.m.
Feb. 25	CIAA Tournament	Norfolk, Va.	7 p.m.

All game times are Eastern Standard Time.

\* Friday night games

\*\* Monday night game

All the other games will be aired on Saturday nights.