

Coach Bob Hopkins team faced a killer schedule during the past month or so. They mixed it up with these heavyweight opponents -- St. Louis, California, Michigan, Memphis State, and Tulsa.

Claude Newell is top scoring force for GSU (15.4 ppg), but the Tigers haven't been able to do very much on the glass. Their step-up in competition has a lot to do with that. Heading into January, Grambling opponents were out-rebounding them by nearly 10 caroms per contest.

But the Tigers do have a pair of guys who are accurate shooters from the field. Andrew Glover (58.8 percent) and Terrell Wesley (48.3 percent) rank among the SWAC leaders in that department. And when it comes to free throws, GSU makes the opposition pay. As a team, they're converting 71.3 percent to lead the conference.

The once dominant Alcorn State team (1-10) has struggled to regain their prominence. So far, they haven't been able to recapture a lot of their past glory on the hardwood. They've experienced problems producing points (65.1 ppg - lowest in SWAC) and they haven't been able to shut teams down very much. Their average margin of defeat (at presstime) was a -16.4 points.

#### Coppin's knockin' in MEAC

Coppin State (6-4) is viewed as one of the teams most likely to wind up in the MEAC tournament's Final Four come March. And the way the Eagles have started, it appears that they want everyone to know that they are bona fide contenders.

The Eagles blasted out of the chute with two tournament championship titles. Their first triumph was the Liberty University Classic where they downed Samford (65-61) in the opening round, then outlasted Robert Morris in double overtime, 103-93 to claim the tourney title.

Coppin wasn't satisfied with that. They played the spoiler at the Youngstown State Classic in Ohio. They spanked Houston Baptist 88-60 in the first round of the classic, then barely got past Prairie View, 72-70 to claim their second tournament championship trophy.

Phil Booth and rookie Larry Stewart are shouldering a lot of the load for the Eagles. Booth averages 15 points and six boards a contest, while Stewart is scoring 17 points and pulling down almost seven rebounds per outing.

South Carolina State isn't believing that victories are going to come easy. They've hit the road and come away with some satisfying performances since the season tipped off in November. It appears that second-year coach Cy Alexander, a former assistant at Howard University, has the ingredients to change the previous pecking order of the MEAC this time out.

The Bulldogs (6-5) opened the year by winning the San Juan Shoot-Out in Puerto Rico. In a three-game span, the Dogs downed the Puerto Rican national team, Davidson, and Southern Illinois to win that championship.

SC State also defeated Eastern Kentucky, 79-45.

Guard Eric Jeter was the catalyst in Puerto Rico. Against Davidson and Southern Illinois, he scored 32 points, handed out six assists, had three steals and two blocked shots. Jeter is a transfer student from Utica College (NY).

Nevertheless, how far the Dogs go this season will hinge on the consistency of rugged post player Rodney Mack. Mack is the top MEAC rebounder (10.6 a game) and gives SC State potent offense in the paint with 15 ppg.

Perhaps Morgan State (4-6) played to the best of their ability in dropping a very close 66-60 verdict to Marquette University over the holidays. But they've had some decent moments, beating Brooklyn College, Long Island College, and Tennessee State. Their win over TSU earned them the consolation trophy in the John McClendon Classic that was played in Chicago.

Forward Anthony Reid leads a veteran team, scoring 18 points and grabbing an average of almost seven rebounds per outing.

The early portion of the season has been a struggle for Howard University's Bison (4-6). Drexel University hand-

ed them a 78-71 defeat in the opening round of the Mt. St. Mary's Tournament, but they salvaged something from the trip by downing Brooklyn College 58-47 for the tourney's consolation prize.

Tyrone Powell is the top Bison performer (12ppg, 8.5 rpg) while guard Milton Bynum has the role of supporting cast member (10 ppg, 4.5 apg).

The year didn't start off especially sweet for Florida A & M, one of the pre-season favorites to win the MEAC title. In their first game, they were handed an 81-76 upset loss by Bethune-Cookman in the Tampa Classic. The three wins they recorded weren't surprises (Tennessee State, Edward Waters College, Savannah State). The latter two wins came in their own Florida A & M Invitational Tournament.

It's a good bet that coach Willie Booker and his team (3-5) welcomed the start of the new year with open arms. The rest of the '88 portion of their schedule was not very kind to the Rattlers.

Swingman Leonard King is the soul of the Rattlers. King averages 16 points a game, while point guard Terry Giles handles the offense, handing out 6.5 assists a contest.

Delaware State (2-6) is going through growing pains and a rebuilding process that started this season with new coach Jeff Jones. The Hornets opened the season with an

83-82 overtime win over Baptist College, but little else has happened since then. Tom Davis (15 ppg, 7 rpg) is the stable force that Jones counts on. Paul Newman adds scoring punch with a 12 points per night average.

After upsetting Florida A & M, the Bethune-Cookman Wildcats (2-7) have had more than their share of misfortune. James Turner is the top guy with 16 points a game. He was the ring leader against the Rattlers, burning them for 24 points and being named as the game's MVP in the Tampa Classic.

B-CC's other victory was also a surprise, that one being a 64-55 triumph over Wright State (Ohio) in the first round of the Wright State Tournament. However, the winning spirit didn't stay with the Wildcats. The following night, Northeast Louisiana administered an 80-67 decision over them in the tournament championship game.

Aside from the Turner, B-CC relies on guard Christopher Carter (10ppg, 5 apg) to get the ball to the right people, while Timothy Jones (seven boards a game) handles the bulk of the board work.

The Aggies of North Carolina A & T knew the going would be rough for '88-'89. If they ever had any thoughts otherwise, the first half of this season proved them wrong.

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## Conference Tournament Update

Even though 1989 has just started, it's still not too early to begin thinking about the black college conference basketball tournaments which begin in late February and end in early March.

Winners of those post-seasons affairs will receive bids to compete in the NCAA basketball playoffs in both Division I and Division II.

Here's a brief rundown on the conference tournaments, including dates, location, and the likely teams who will comprise the Final Four to battle for those conference hoops titles.

#### SWAC

The Southwestern Athletic Conference Basketball Tournament will take place March 9-12 at the Felton G. Clark Activity Center on the campus of Southern University in Baton Rouge, La.

The tournament will be round robin, single elimination with the finals being played on March 12. The ESPN television network will carry a live broadcast of the championship final that day at 7 p.m. EST. The finale was originally slated for the 11th, but was moved to the next day (Sunday) to accommodate the network's wishes.

The tournament winner receives an automatic bid to the NCAA Division I basketball playoffs.

The best bets to make the SWAC tourney's Final Four include: Southern University (defending champs), Grambling, Jackson State, and Texas Southern.

For more information on this tournament, contact the SWAC office at: Louisiana Superdome, Sugar Bowl Drive, New Orleans, LA 70112, or call 504/523-7574.

#### SIAC

The Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Basketball Tournament is scheduled for March 10-12 at the Elmore Health & Science Building on the campus of Alabama A & M University in Huntsville, Ala. Game time for the championship final had not been finalized at presstime.

The tournament victors will receive an automatic berth to the Division II basketball playoffs.

In post-season play, the conference tournament field is made up of the top four teams from each region. The No. 1 team in the West Region will get a first round bye because only three teams in the East Region qualify for post-season competition.

Teams who are favored to make the Final Four this season are: Alabama A & M (last year's winner), Morehouse College, Albany State, and Morris Brown.

For additional details on this tournament, contact the SIAC office at P.O. Box 92032, Atlanta, Ga. 30314, or call 404/659-3380.

#### MEAC

The Midwestern Athletic Conference Basketball Tournament starts on Feb. 28 and ends on the weekend of March 3 and 4 at the Greensboro Coliseum in Greensboro, NC.

All of the conference's nine teams will participate in the round robin, single elimination tournament. The tourney's top seeds will host the first round games on their respective campuses on Feb. 28. Those winning in the first round will advance the Final Four in Greensboro that weekend. Game times for the semi-finals on March 3 are 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The championship game will be played the following day at 9 p.m. The ESPN network will televise the tourney finale live on that night.

Tournament winners advance to the NCAA Division I basketball playoffs. Those familiar with the MEAC feel that South Carolina State, Florida A & M, Coppin State and North Carolina A & T will be the teams who make up the Final Four for that tournament.

For more information, contact the MEAC office at P.O. Box 21205, Greensboro, NC, 27420-1205, or call 919/275-9961.

#### CIAA

The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association Basketball Tournament takes place Feb. 22-25 at the Norfolk Scope in Norfolk, Va. Black Entertainment Television will provide coverage of the semi-final and final round of tournament action. The network will air a live broadcast of the championship game on Feb. 25 at 7 p.m.

This tournament involves all 14 member schools of the conference. It is round robin, single elimination, with winners of the respective divisions each receiving first round byes. Pairings for the tourney are based on records in the division, conference, and overall (in that order). The CIAA doesn't have a regular season champion. They only have division champs. The conference title is awarded to the team that wins the conference tournament and that school gets an automatic berth to the NCAA Division II playoffs.

The teams most likely to appear in the tournament's Final Four are Virginia Union, North Carolina Central, Norfolk State, and Virginia State.

For more information on this tournament, contact the CIAA office at 2013 Cunningham Drive, Suite 230, Hampton, VA 23666, or call 804/838-8801.