

BLACK COLLEGE

Sports Review

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Ernest H. PittPRODUCTION
Deborah Holiday-Belcher
Kathy Lee
Crystal WoodSTAFF WRITERS
Barry Cooper
Langston Wertz, Jr.
Roscoe NancePHOTOGRAPHERS
Mark Gail
Joe Daniels
Wade Nash

Black College Athletes Can Play

Last month's Sheridan Black College All-American Weekend drove home a point that has always been clear.

Football players from black colleges can and do play in the NFL. Somehow, over the years many black athletes have been brainwashed into thinking that the road to the NFL and successful lives goes through the Notre Dame, Alabamas, Georgias, Floridas, and Miamis; that playing at schools who have 100,000-seat stadiums will get them to the pros; that playing on TV every week and getting their names in the newspapers is their ticket to a professional career.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. There are no shortcuts, and the road to the NFL does detour around black colleges. If you can play, it doesn't matter if you attend Florida A&M or Texas A&M. Seeing the likes of L.C. Greenwood, Jackie Slater, Willie Davis, Rayfield Wright, Mel Blount, and other members of the 100 Year All-Black College team was a reminder of that.

The men chosen to that team are some of the greatest athletes who've ever played football, not just at black colleges but at any level. Many of them changed the way we define greatness.

For years, Jim Brown was the yardstick by which all running backs were measured, then it was O. J. Simpson. Currently it's Walter Payton, who played in relative obscurity at Jackson State but it is now known around the world and is the NFL career rushing leader.

Arguably, no defensive players has had a more dramatic impact on football than David "Deacon" Jones, who played three seasons at South Carolina State and one at Mississippi Vocational (now Mississippi Valley State). He coined the term quarterback sack and introduced and refined the head slap, a move so devastating that it has been outlawed.

Where you come from doesn't determine where you're going. But too many young black athletes - and their parents - don't understand that. They're too busy chasing the fools' gold that the big white schools dangle before during the recruiting process. This is not to say that it is wrong for black athletes to attend large schools. But they should make sure they aren't attending them for the wrong reasons.

It seems as though every other week we hear about a former athlete from one of these schools who is spilling his guts about under-the-table cash, cars and doctored grades. In 10 cases out of 10, it's black athletes who are doing the talking. They chose their school for the wrong reason. Invariably, they got the money; they got the car; they played in front of the big crowds and on TV for four years. But at the end of four years, they didn't get a pro career or a degree. Meanwhile, they see their white teammates - who in many instances were less talented and played a less significant role in the team's success - graduate and get a good paying job.

They're left bitter and feeling betrayed.

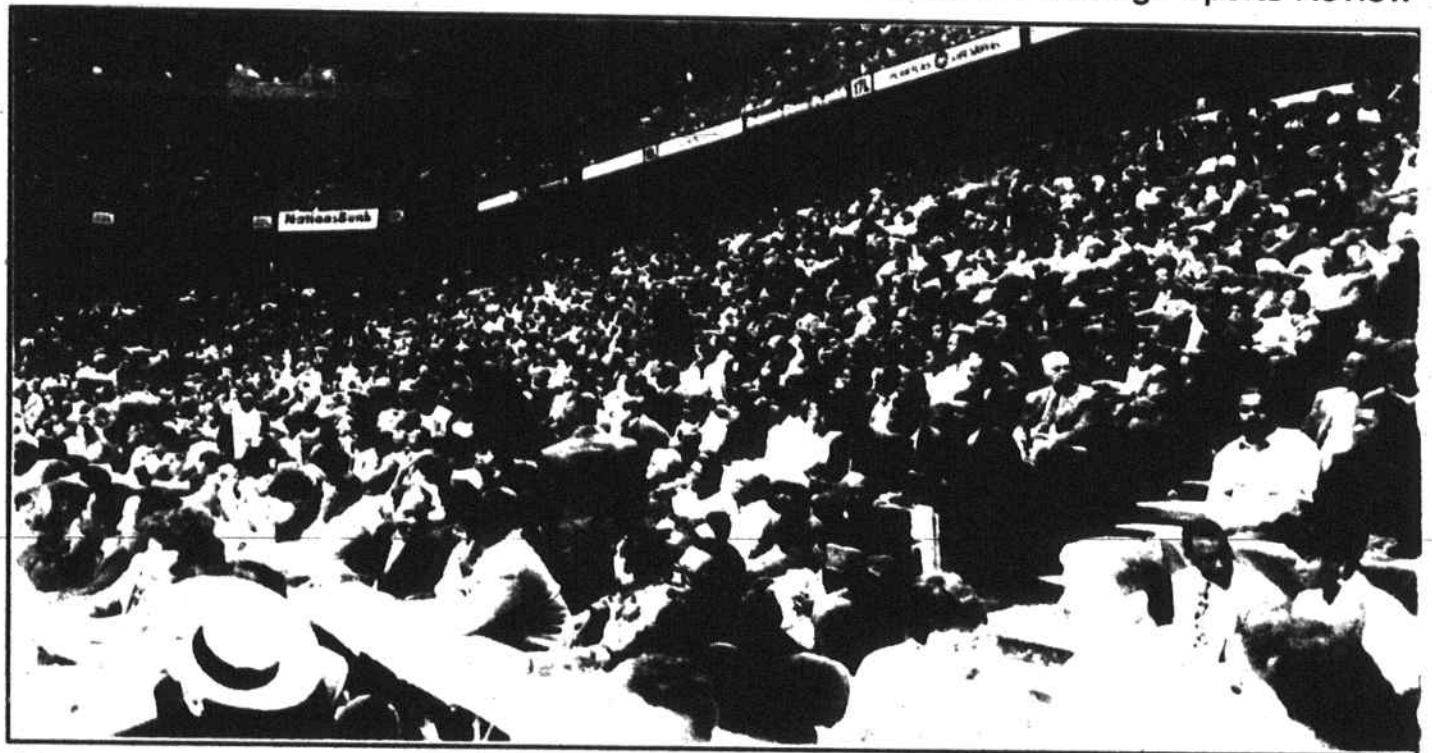
Black colleges have their problems too. But the blatant exploitation of athletes isn't among them. If it were, Lem Barney, Doug Williams, Tank Younger and Donnie Shell wouldn't speak in such glowing terms about their experiences at those schools and how they helped them develop into outstanding football players and even more outstanding men.

— Roscoe Nance

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More than 11,000 sophisticated fans jammed the Richmond Coliseum to see the CIAA Tournament. The event will be in Winston-Salem, N.C. next year.

Commentary, Letters CIAA Tourney Great...But...

RICHMOND - The CIAA Tournament again showed why it's one of the best in the nation when it was held here the last week of February.

The tournament is like a black Mardi Gras, a party of fashion, fun and frolic.

Oh, and the basketball is good.

But there was one problem with the tournament. The men's championship game, a dramatic affair won by Virginia Union over N.C. Central, started too late.

The game began at 10 p.m. and ended just before midnight.

If you weren't in Richmond's Coliseum that night or happened to be watching the live broadcast that was available in some, not all markets, you didn't know who won.

Television newscasts couldn't get the score in during their 11 p.m. show. Many newspapers have final deadlines of about 12:15 on Saturday nights for Sunday editions, so very few media outlets were able to get the score out to readers or viewers.

And in this way, the conference did itself a disservice.

Not because the media room became a place for writers and television broadcasts to vent to one another about why the game was starting late, but because lots of people who were reading about the tournament - people who might've been new to the CIAA - couldn't follow the tournament to its conclusion.

The problem was the television contract the CIAA arranged with Sun Belt Video of Charlotte.

Sun Belt put together a wonderful television package that would beam the CIAA to a potential audience of more than 40 million viewers practically nationwide. But more than half of the stations carrying their feed would be showing the tournament finals on a delayed basis. That included Charlotte, which is the largest market where a CIAA team is located. Normally, a late game would begin at 9 p.m., and for several years, Black Entertainment Television began televising the CIAA men's final at 9 p.m. That time allows T.V. and print media to get the scores out to the masses. But Sun Belt scheduled the game for 9:30 p.m. and the CIAA agreed.

Then, the women's final, which began at 6 p.m. wasn't over until about 8:15. Sun Belt began showing the women's final at 7:30 and therefore couldn't begin

televising the men's game until at least 9:45. Michael Covington, producer of the event for Sun Belt, refused to comment on the matter, but a Sun Belt official was asked if the women's game could somehow be sped up - perhaps by deleting the halftime portion of the show - but the official said: "No, this game must be shown as if it's happening live."

So CIAA commissioner Leon Kerry met with Virginia Union coach Dave Robbins and Central coach Greg Jackson and told them that the game would start at 10 p.m.

The Richmond Coliseum had to be cleared after the women's final, and fans thinking the men's game started at 9:30 began arriving as early as 8:30. They couldn't get in. Some fans said they had to wait outside, in snow and sub-30 degree temperatures. Some waited as much as an hour.

Things happen, games run over and all of that. And Sun Belt did a top notch job of broadcasting the games, the best in recent memory.

But next year guys, let's start at 9, OK?
It'd make a lot of people happy.

Roosevelt Brown Should Have Been Among Them

Dear Sir,

I realize the selection of any all-star team isn't going to satisfy everyone; it is your selection, however there are a few I feel should have been given some consideration.

One is Roosevelt Brown, an All CIAA and All Black College tackle for Morgan State in 1952 under the legendary Eddie Hurt.

Brown went on to achieve All-Pro Honors with the New York Giants and is now in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Others are Roger Brown and Johnny Sample of Maryland State, both of whom went on to achieve All-Pro honors in the NFL. Oh yes, what about Willie Richardson of Jackson State, another who went on to stardom in the NFL.

There are a few others, but these players, especially Roosevelt Brown, should have been considered.

John Scott