

Commentary, Letters

# Reaching Into Its Past, SIAC Honors Legends

Too often, young athletes today fail to learn the history of their sports. A few years ago, New York Mets baseball star Vince Coleman, who played at Florida A&M, was chasing one of Lou Brock's base stealing records.

Reporters crowded around Coleman one evening and asked what he thought of Brock. Coleman, apologizing, said he didn't know who Brock was.

Of course, Coleman's case isn't an isolated one. Chances are few black college fans know about legendary former Miles coach Oscar Catlin. Some recent Alabama A&M graduates may not know of Louis Crews, one of the most talented football coaches ever. And how many black college sports followers would recognize the names Burwell Townes, Harvey or George Hobson?

Harvey, Hobson, Catlin and Crews, all little-known to today's athletes, have one thing in common. They have all been inducted into the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Hall of Fame.

It's another in a long list of accomplishments for the men, and provides them with some much-deserved recognition.

Black college sports have a tradition that runs deep. In the days before integration, sports fans in the black community were always talking about Jake Gaither's teams at Florida A&M, or about how Eddie Robinson's Grambling Tigers would fare.

Now, with integration and the proliferation of professional sports, a group of men playing checkers are more likely to talk about Mike Tyson's troubles than recall the great black college sports teams of the past. But the SIAC, with its recent Hall of Fame inductions, brings attention to some black college sports greats well worth remembering.

Harvey was so famous as a coach at Morehouse that his name ought to be known in households across America. Starting in 1934, he coached football, basketball and baseball, and some of his teams were awesome. In football, he com-

plied a 59-24-6 record and won three conference championships. Towns' basketball teams were a combined 131-17, including one eight-year winning streak. His baseball teams were a combined 112-45-3, while winning four conference championships.

Hobson, a 1933 graduate of Alabama State, began building his reputation at Roanoke High School in Virginia. In 1936, his Roanoke team was 9-0 and outscored its opponents, 337-0. Hobson moved to Alabama A&M in 1941 and turned in some ironman performances. For years, he taught a full load of seven classes, and also coached the football team and both the men's and women's tennis teams.

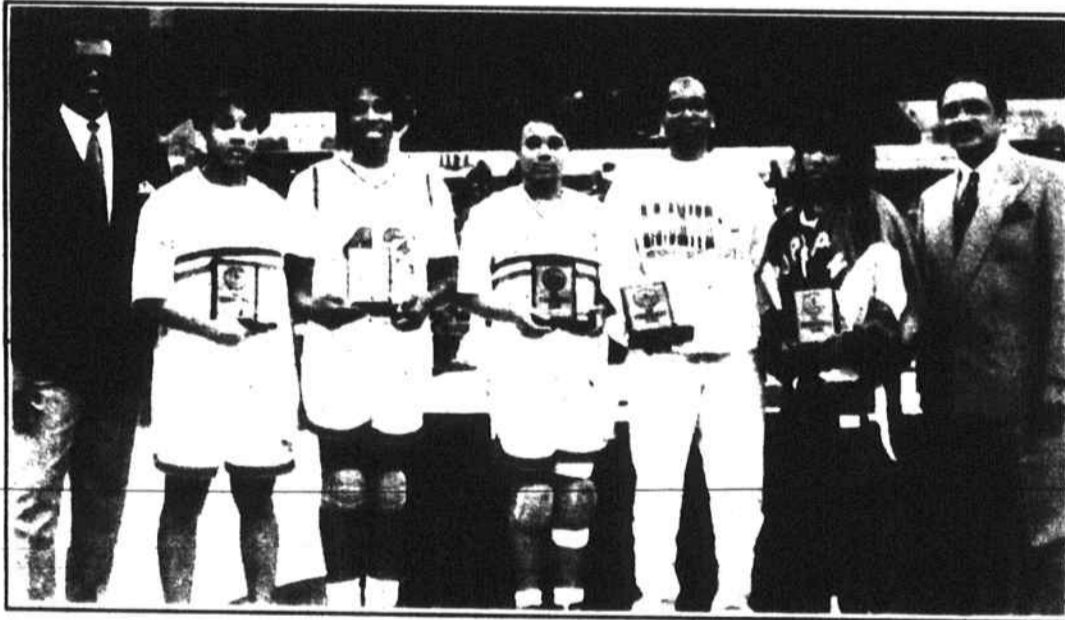
Crews was one of Hobson's successors at Alabama A&M. In 1960, he led the Bulldogs to their first SIAC football championship by posting a 7-1 record. In 1963, his Bulldogs were undefeated and remained unbeaten for four years in con-

ference play. He wound up with a 110-61-3 record. During his career, at Alabama A&M and at Alcorn State, he coached Jack Spinks, the first black player in Mississippi drafted to play professional football, and John Stallworth, who went on to become a Hall of Fame wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Catlin, who was Miles' first basketball coach, immediately built the school into a power. He was 93-13 in five seasons before leaving to become basketball coach at Tuskegee. While at Miles, his teams won two NAIA District Six titles made it to the NAIA Championships Tournament twice. He had his best team at Tuskegee in 1970-71, when he was named SIAC coach of the year after posting a 22-6 record.

Harvey, Hobson, Catlin and Crews may not be the household names they once were, but they certainly should not be forgotten.

—By Barry Cooper



Richard Franklin, Coca-Cola USA, S.C. State's Wanda Wiggins, Tabitha Barber, Sonya Wilson, NC A & T's Angela Hill and Coppin's LaShawn Scott, make up the 1993 MEAC All Tournament Team. Art Jarrett Coca-Cola Norfolk.



Teresa Hatch, Karen Russell, Tammi Scott, Richard Franklin Coca-Cola USA, LaShawn Scott, Art Jarrett, Tricia Hobbs, Tisha Washington, Allison Jenkins accept co-regular season championship.

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