

SPORTS WEEK

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WSSU bucking HBCU norms on road to title

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

There's an all-too-obvious degree of difficulty for black colleges to ascend to the mountaintop in the NCAA football playoffs.

Florida A&M is the first and only black school to ever win a national title in football. The fact that 34 years have passed since the Rattlers reigned is enough to tell anyone that "winning it all" in football is a seemingly next-to-impossible feat for any HBCU to accomplish.

But now, Winston-Salem State is on the verge of possibly writing a chapter of its own in the history books. The Rams made it to the NCAA Division II semifinals a year ago before losing to Wayne State (Mich.). After securing a heart-stopping 21-17 win over Indiana (Pa.) last week, they're back for a return trip to college football's version of the Final Four.

WSSU plays West Texas A&M on Saturday at Bowman Gray Stadium at 6:30 p.m. The winner earns a spot in the national championship game on Dec. 15 in Florence, Ala.

"Our sole focus right now is to win our next football game," said Connell Maynor, Winston-Salem State's coach. "We wanted to have the opportunity to return to the semifinals. We accomplished that, but we're not finished. Our goal is to get to the national championship game and win it. That's why we practice. That's why we play."

Maynor asserts that the number of available scholarships plays a huge role in any school's ability to advance in the playoffs. At the Division II level, schools can award a maximum of 36 scholarships for football. The teams that routinely do well in the post-season tend to be those schools that have the financial wherewithal to fund the maximum or close to the maximum number of scholarships allowed.



Coach Connell Maynor and his players celebrate another win on Saturday.

Most HBCUs, Maynor explained, have anywhere from 19 to 25 scholarships for football. Winston-Salem State has 28 scholarships, which is a little higher than the norm for HBCUs.

"It's all a matter of being fully vested (36 scholarships)," he said. "We're not fully vested yet, but we're trying to get there. Football teams have a long season. If you lose several key players, it's hard to replace injured players and still compete at the highest level. In the top Division II programs, they have enough scholarships to offer so that their second-team players are just as good as the first-team players."

"Let's say a school has 25 football scholarships. If that school can find a way to add 10 more scholarships, they can bring in 10 to 20 more players who are very good. That's

how you develop quality depth."

Even so, it still seems to be a mystery as to what makes the football playoffs such a hard-to-handle proposition for HBCUs, who rarely get past the opening round. Black college teams have won national championships in other sports: Winston-Salem State (men's basketball), St. Augustine's (indoor track, outdoor track), Shaw University (men's and women's basketball) and Virginia Union (men's basketball).

Why is football so different?

"It comes down to having superior depth on the interior line on both sides of the ball," Maynor said. "Most teams have good people at the skill positions. But you've got to have the beef up front to win at the national level. If you have excellent back-up linemen, it makes a huge difference."

Blue Bears promote Williams

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

In a move designed to propel Livingstone College football in a winning direction, officials announced Monday the appointment of former offensive coordinator Daryl Williams as Blue Bears' interim head football coach for the 2013 season.

Williams, a member of the American Football Coaches Association and a member of Livingstone's coaching staff for almost a year, replaces Elvin James, who had been the head coach since January 2010.

The Blue Bears were 3-28 under James, hardly good enough for Livingstone Athletic Director Andre Springs, who promised more competitive teams when he assumed the college's top athletic post in June.

"I felt it was imperative we make a coaching change to turn around our football program," Springs said. "We appreciate the work Coach James did during his tenure; however, we need to be much more competitive on the gridiron than we have been in recent years. Coach Williams has a solid background in coaching, including stints at Texas Southern University and Alabama State University. We feel he's the right man to get Livingstone's football program on the right track at this time."

Williams, who has a master's degree in counseling from Alabama State University and a bachelor's degree in health, physical education and recreation from Tennessee State University, served as associate head coach and quarterback coach at Texas Southern University in Houston from 2007-2011. During the 2010 season, Texas Southern won the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) championship.

From 2005 to 2007, Williams was the director of football operations for Alabama State University in Montgomery, Ala. Prior to that, Williams was the co-offensive coordinator and quarterback coach for Alabama State University from 2001-2005. Before joining the collegiate coaching ranks, Williams spent six years coaching football at high schools in Memphis, Tenn.

The Blue Bears experienced minimal success this season, going 2-8 overall, 2-5 in the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (CIAA) and winning their first back-to-back games in several years. The team was led by freshman quarterback sensation Drew Powell, who completed 197 of 349 attempts, passed for 2,322 yards and threw 18 touchdowns en route to winning CIAA Offensive Rookie of the Year honors.



Williams



James

Greensboro to host AAU tournaments

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Greensboro has been chosen to host four AAU National Championships in the next several years. City officials estimate that the events will have an economic impact on the city of more than \$20 million.

The city will play host to the AAU 7th grade boys basketball National Championship in 2015 and 2016; the AAU 5th grade girls basketball National Championship in 2014; and the AAU wrestling Grand Nationals in 2015.

The 9,300 guests expected at the 7th grade boys basketball tournament will book an estimated 21,500 rooms over the two years. The other tournaments will also be a boon for local hotels, restaurants and sports fans.

"We are thrilled that Greensboro is asserting itself as the centerpiece of AAU National Championships in North Carolina. The city has incredible facilities and a well-deserved reputation for exceptional hospitality, plus a can-do attitude that is vital to the success of high level events like these AAU National Championships," stated Sean Kilmartin, North Carolina AAU Governor.

The 2013 and 2014 7th grade boys basketball National Championships will be held in Memphis, Tenn., while the 2013 5th grade girls National Championships are taking place in Kingsport, Tenn.

The 2013 and 2014 wrestling grand nationals will be assembled in Billings, Mont. Wrestling is now the third largest participant sport in AAU behind boys and girls basketball.

"The AAU has long been one of the most significant developers of youth sports in America and we could not be more delighted to partner with our North Carolina AAU leadership to bring these impressive events to Tournament Town," said Kim Strable, President of the Greensboro Sports Commission.

West QB makes exclusive cut

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Benjamin Skradski, the junior varsity quarterback at West Forsyth High School, has been invited to participate in the 7th Annual Offense-Defense Bowl Week festivities at Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas later this month.

He was selected after being named an Offense-Defense All-American at an Offense-Defense Football Camp during the summer.

Thousands of young athletes from across the country attend Offense-Defense Football Camps in hopes of catching the eye of the Bowl Selection Committee. Offense-Defense Sports has been running full-contact football instructional camps for the past 44 years and currently operates in approximately 40 camp locations nationwide every spring and summer.

The Offense-Defense Youth All-American Bowl is part of a week-long series of events including the televised 7th-annual Offense-Defense All-American Bowl and an All-Star football game showcasing 88 of the top high school seniors in the country.

In the past, the Bowl featured NFL pros such as Cam Newton, Carlos Dunlap and Dez Bryant long before they were collegiate stars.

For more information visit <http://www.o-d.com>.



Quarterback Benjamin Skradski

Local team takes tough loss at Pop Warner Super Bowl

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem Indians Midget Team fell to the Canyon Hills Lancers of California 38-6 earlier this week in the first-round of Division I National Competition at the 56th annual Pop Warner Super Bowl at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Fla.

The Indians were slated to play a consolation game against the Detroit NW Lions on Wednesday, after The Chronicle's press time.

Sixty-four teams from across the nation have battled their way through regional competition to advance to the week-long Pop Warner Super Bowl, the pinnacle of their young football careers. National champions will be crowned in four divisions based on age and weight - Jr. Pee Wee (ages 8-11), Pee Wee (ages 9-12), Jr. Midget (ages 10-13) and Midget (ages 11-15).

Pop Warner is the nation's largest and oldest youth football, cheer and dance organization, and the only one that requires academic proficiency in order to participate. The NFL Players Association estimates that roughly 70 percent of current NFL players got their start playing Pop Warner.

Pop Warner Photos by Gerardo Mora

The W-S Indians battle the Canyon Hills Lancers.

