

C. JEMAL HORTON

Flimsy reasoning behind Aggie-Eagle's demise

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If A&T truly is concerned that having Division-II Central on the schedule will hurt its at-large playoff chances, then I'll go ahead and say it: Stop it. There's just no need to worry.

For one thing, the I-AA playoff selection committee is savvy. The people on the committee know that a game against a traditional archrival, especially for a black college, is a huge game, irrespective of NCAA affiliation. So if A&T loses to Central, it's not as if the Aggie lost to, say, Wabash.

There are people of influence associated with the selection committee who understand the plight of HBCU programs very well. For example, this year, there are athletics directors from two MEAC schools on

Division I-AA's six-person South Regional Advisory Committee, which helps evaluate prospective playoff teams - Bethune-Cookman's Lynn Thompson and Hampton's Joe Taylor.

And, then, well, there's this ugly fact: It just might not matter how deserving of an at-large berth an MEAC school is - if it doesn't win its conference championship and earn an automatic bid, it still might not get into the I-AA playoffs. For instance, last year, South Carolina State, with a record of 9-2 and schedule made entirely of I-AA opponents, failed to land an at-large berth - this while Eastern Washington, with its less-impressive 8-3 record, got in as an at-large.

But when all those things fail, usually it's one's roots that keep one strong.

Of course, this stoppage could wind up a mere hiccup in the rivalry's history. Central is considering moving to Division I-AA and, perhaps, joining the MEAC. The school will announce the results of a feasibility study in a matter of weeks.

Whether or not that happens, I hope Todd is listening to the voices of people who care about this rivalry - and have for years.

"Might be devastating to us old heads (if the rivalry ends)," Aggie football player Theron Thomas Jr., whose father has been the A&T equipment manager for 20 years, told The Greensboro News & Record.

"Everybody looks forward to the Aggie-Eagle. Everybody."

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NBA sets D-League ground rules

By Herbert L. White

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The NBA has a new affiliation and assignment system for the NBA Development League.

Each of the eight D-League teams will be affiliated with either three or four NBA teams, and the NBA teams may assign players in their first two seasons to play in the D-League. The Charlotte Bobcats will be affiliated with the Fayetteville Patriots, which will also take assignments from New York and Detroit.

The D-League develops players, officials and coaches under the NBA umbrella. Thirty-four players have been called up since 2001.

"This is another step in the right direction to assist in the continuing development of players," said Stu Jackson, NBA Senior Vice President, Basketball Operations. "It has long been our goal to have team affiliations between the NBA and the D-League and this structure should be mutually beneficial to both leagues and the players."

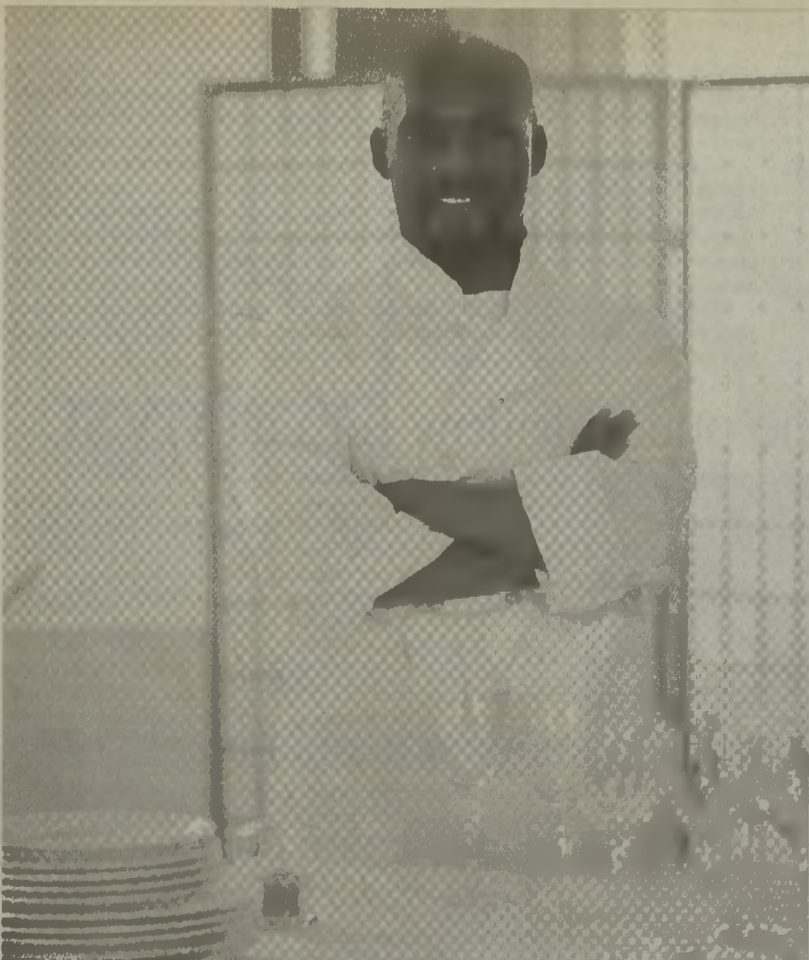
"This is terrific news for basketball fans in D-League markets," said Phil Evans, NBA Development League president. "Now, in

addition to seeing the best basketball players in the world not currently in the NBA, they will have the opportunity to see current NBA players as well, some of whom will be future NBA stars. We've now made a quality entertainment product even better."

This affiliation and assignment system will be reviewed by the NBA after the 2005-06 season, and if additional D-League teams are added for the 2006-07 season, affiliations will be adjusted to correspond with the total number of D-League teams.

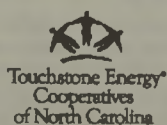
NBDL assignment rules:

- An NBA team may assign any player on its Active List or Inactive List to play in the D-League, provided that the player has zero or one Years of Service at the time of Assignment.
- No players may be given more than three Assignments during any season. There is no minimum or maximum length of a D-League assignment.
- No NBA team may have more than two players on assignment at the same time this season.
- A player on assignment will be carried on the Inactive List of his NBA team.



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