

MEAC Football

Collick: Prep coaches must make academic goals clear

By DAVID BULLA
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GREENSBORO -- William Collick had a taste of success last season in his first year as Delaware State's head coach.

Collick, who got the DelState job after Winston-Salem State's Bill Hayes turned it down, guided the Hornets to a 9-2 record and the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference championship. His team will be strong again this year, with 14 starters returning.

But the future looks bleak, Collick said last week at the MEAC preseason coaches' conference. His gloomy outlook is based upon the early effects of Proposition 48, which went into effect with this freshman class. The NCAA by-law calls for incoming athletes to possess 700 Scholastic Aptitude Test scores and a 2.0 high school grade-point average. A slightly scaled-down rule applies this year.

"This rule change is a real threat to (Division I-AA) black college football," Collick told his fellow coaches and the media. "We've got to get into the high schools and get with the guidance people and make these students realize how much they are going have to improve. We need to start the recognition of these standards as early as junior high school."

Collick said his recruiting efforts were diminished by approximately 60 to 70 percent because of the enactment of the new by-law. Most of the players he lost to the by-law signed with Division II schools.

"Young black kids are in a tough situation," he said. "We've seen the reports that say

the SATs are invalid. We had a player on the team who scored 750 on the SAT and now he's going to med school. The SAT doesn't always predict achievement."

But he said the rule is a reality now and must be dealt with and not ignored. The DelState coach said it is incumbent on high school coaches to ameliorate the situation.

"It will be extremely interesting to see if the champion has a loss. Rather than on rare occasions, I think close games are going to be the rule."

-- Mo Forte, A&T Football Coach



"Every Saturday these athletes play for high school coaches and they're not getting anything in return," Collick said. "We have to get them on track and keep them on track. I know a coach has many responsibilities, but this has to be top priority."

Proposition 48 is not the only new rule to affect college football this year. Larry Hill, the MEAC supervisor of officials, said the new 35-yard-line kickoff was the biggest rule change. He also said the offending team would have the option to start the clock after a penalty in the last 25 seconds of either half. The clock could start after the yardage was marked off or at the snap. In the past, the clock started at the snap.

While Collick's team was predicted to finish first in the vote of league coaches and sports information directors, North Carolina A&T was selected second based on its strong finish in 1985 for its first winning season since 1980.

"This is the time of year coaches tell big lies," Forte said. "It will be extremely interesting to see if the champion has a loss. Rather than on rare occasions, I think close games are going to be the rule."

"We now feel we have both quality and quantity. I don't know if we have enough quality to win always, but we'll be among the competitors for the league championship."

Forte said all-America quarterback Alan Hooker will be the

target of most defenses. But that would enable the Aggies to cut loose some of their other skill players, like wide receiver Herbert Harbison, another all-America, and running backs Stoney Polite and Juan Jackson.

"Alan can have not as great a year and we can still win more games," Forte said. "It's the cast around him that will enable us to win games."

Larry Little's Bethune-Cookman team loses standout quarterback Bernard Hawk, wide receiver Sebastian Brown, who signed with the New Orleans Saints, all-conference tight end Arthur Simmons and running back King Green. Little said his team will be built around an offensive line led by Donava Fann. Senior Greg Ross and transfer Anthony Thomas (Tennessee) are vying to fill the Hawk void.

Howard's Willie Jeffries, predicted to win the MEAC by *The Sporting News*, said his program is reaching some stability in its third year under his guidance.

"This is the first year we haven't lost anybody to academic attrition," said the coach with the most-eyer MEAC wins. "Well, we do have one player who's having trouble with an English class. His teacher introduced the lesson the other day by saying, 'Today we're going to study adjective and predicate clauses.' The football player raised his hand and said, 'You forgot one, teacher: Santa Claus.'"

Jeffries could have an early Christmas if he can get his team

to reverse some close scores. Last year's 4-7 squad lost in the last minute to Winston-Salem State, South Carolina State and Bethune-Cookman.

"Closeness only counts in handgrenades," he quipped.

The Bison's hopes for moving up from the conference's depth are pinned on quarterback Lee DeBose, running back Harvey Reid and wide receiver Curtis Chappell. DeBose earned the QB job as a freshman because of his ability to run Jeffries' dive option smoothly.

"We still will predominantly be a running team," Jeffries said. "If we get a seven-point lead, we'll go underground."

Howard also returns linebacker Marvin Jackson, who led the team in tackles, and Billy Johnson, who made eight interceptions last season.

South Carolina State's Dennis Thomas is the conference's newest coach. The former Alcorn State defensive coordinator begged forgiveness from his peers.

"I'm waving the white flag now," Thomas said. "Take it easy on us. Don't treat us too bad."

Thomas said he was partially handicapped by arriving late in Orangeburg, after the bulk of the recruiting season was over.

"I'll have to play with the cards that were dealt me and make the best of them," he said.

The Bulldogs will run an option offense that does plenty of trapping and multiple defenses.

Morgan State hasn't won a game since the 1983 season. Coach Jesse Thomas was probably working hard last week while his peers met in Greensboro, for nobody represented the Bears at the get-together.

Morgan, which operates with minimal scholarships, is eligible to win the conference title this fall.

That gives the MEAC the operative number of eligible teams to qualify for an automatic bid in the NCAA Division I-AA playoffs. Commissioner Ken Free said the conference will receive an automatic bid, but he would not elaborate.

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game and made an immediate impact. He tossed a touchdown pass to Willie McCants, hit Kevin Dendy with a two-point conversion pass and returned a fumble recovery 43 yards for a touchdown.

For the season, Covington totaled 476 yards rushing and 535 passes with a total of seven touchdowns. He also intercepted five passes.

But there's a lot more to his life than completions and interceptions. Covington was an honor roll student at Parkland and was recognized by *Who's Who Among American High School Students*. It comes as no surprise he was eager to get started at UVa. He planned to attend summer school, but had to choose between it and the all-star game.

"When I first applied for summer school, the people at the university said it would be no problem for me to take time off for the all-star game," he said. "But when it was time to start

summer school, there was a dilemma. So I chose to play in the all-star game."

Covington, who will be a business administration major, has already worked out his schedule for the fall semester. He'll take psychology, astronomy, English composition, drama and the history of jazz. The drama will be a return to an old passion. As a child he acted in the Little Theatre of Winston-Salem.

Covington, who played comedic roles, always keeps sports in perspective. For him they are a matter of having a good time.

"My friends think I'm a trip," he said. "But I like to make people laugh."

"I played in the all-star game to have fun. I felt if I gave 100 percent, had fun and represented Parkland well, then I made the right choice. Even though we didn't win, I tried my hardest."

The West team struggled in its loss to the East. Martin gained only nine yards on 10 carries as

the East's defensive front and linebackers gave the West problems. The 5-11, 200-pound Martin, who signed with North Carolina, also fumbled three times. He played with a pulled groin injury, but was baffled by the miscues.

"I don't know what was wrong," he said. "This is the most I've ever put the ball on the ground."

In Martin's defense, one of his fumbles came on a poor handoff and the other on a vicious tackle from behind in which the defender struck the football with his fist.

Fellow North Carolina signees Bernard Timmons of Fayetteville Smith and Stanley Daniels of Bandy were clearly the game's most productive players. Tim-

mons gained 84 yards on 18 carries and scored a touchdown. Daniels made several nifty receptions, including a 17-yarder from Alabama recruit Jeff Dunn of Greensboro Page.

"Our defense stayed on the field almost the whole first half," Covington said. "We thought we'd stop them in the second half and get it going in. But the defense was a little tired from the first half."

Covington also said that the East broke a pre-game pact to not blitz linebackers.

"The East coaches broke the agreement," he said. "They were big and jamming us so good that we couldn't get untracked."

Carver's Fernando Horn, bound for Auburn, caused an East fumble.

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