

Sports Review

BCSR Spotlight

NBC will air Bayou Classic

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Renegging could haunt SWAC, MEAC

It's interesting the things money can induce people to do.

In this case, it appears that the mean green caused the Southwestern Athletic Conference and the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference to renege on their word.

When the NCAA approved the Heritage Bowl, a post-season game that matches the SWAC and MEAC champions against each other, the conferences said the game wouldn't conflict with the 1-AA playoffs.

But when the Heritage Sports Authority of South Florida, Inc. came around and waved a \$150,000 per team guarantee in front of their noses to play the game at Miami's Joe Robbie Stadium on Dec. 21 — the same day as the 1-AA championship game — the conferences went for it.

Call it an offer they couldn't refuse. But they should have for integrity's sake.

Without the assurance that the Heritage Bowl would not conflict with the 1-AA playoffs, it would never have been approved. Even with that assurance, there were reservations.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that this is no way to do business. There will come a time in the future when the SWAC and/or MEAC will have to call on the very people they stiffed. The odds are that they won't be warmly received.

Granted, the Heritage Bowl guarantee represents a lucrative payday. But there are some things that should not be for sale. A person's word is one of those things, even if it means biting the bullet and taking home less cash.

In essence, what the MEAC and SWAC have done is thumb their noses at the NCAA. That isn't altogether bad, all things considered. But there is a way of doing things.

They would have been better served if they had been up front and said we don't care about the playoffs. We're going to play where we want, when we want.

That approach probably wouldn't have gone over very well, but at least it would have been honest and above board.

Apparently, when money is involved, those values are pushed aside.

The annual battle of the bayou will be televised by the Peacock this year, that's peacock as in the NBC television network.

Early this month, Grambling and Southern University announced the signing of a three-year contract with NBC to televise the Bayou Classic. This year's game will be played on Nov. 30. Kickoff time is set for 4 p.m. EST.

The arrangement represents a major breakthrough for black college athletics from a publicity and financial standpoint. The two schools will share a purse of \$480,000 over the contract period. Here are the splits for each year: '91 — \$155,000 each; '92 — \$160,000 each; and '93 — \$165,000 each.

The Bayou Classic, which is played in the New Orleans Superdome, is considered to be the granddaddy of black college football classics. In its 15-year history, the game has always drawn a gate of at least 50,000 people.

Last year, the game was a sellout at 70,610. Sources at NBC report that the '90 sellout was one of the major reasons why the network wanted to air the contest.

In past years, the Bayou Classic has been televised on a tape-delayed basis by Black Entertainment Television. This is the first time the game will be carried on a major network.

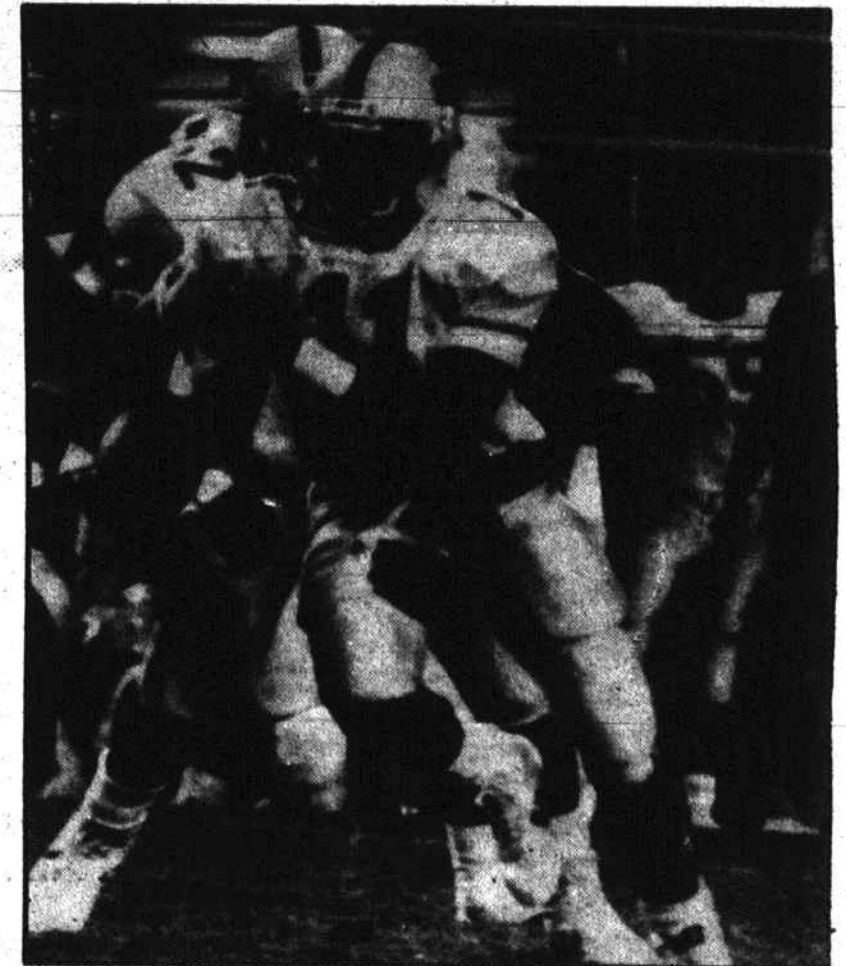


Photo by James W. Terry III

Southern quarterback Nate Harrison gets the chance to strut his stuff when his Jags square off against Grambling on the peacock network in November.

Heritage Bowl set for Miami

The first annual Heritage Bowl is set for Dec. 21 in Miami. The bowl, which will pit the SWAC champions against the MEAC champions, was sanctioned by the NCAA during their annual convention in January at Nashville, Tenn.

The game is an outgrowth of years of suggestions that a football game be staged between the two historically black college conferences.

The game will be played at Joe Robbie Stadium, which is the home of the Miami Dolphins.

The Heritage Sports Authority of South Florida, Inc. was the firm that was awarded the rights to stage the game. Jim McKinley, the authority's executive director, is a former head coach in the SWAC and MEAC.

This contest is expected to produce substantial financial benefits for both conferences.

All-star hoops classic on tap

The first annual Black College Basketball Classic is scheduled for April 25-28 at Rock Hill, SC.

This post-season affair is an all star game for black college seniors. Forty-eight players representing more than 60 historically black institutions will be taking part in this competition. All games will be played at the Winthrop Coliseum.

This two-day tournament is being held to provide a "last hurrah" for black college seniors. Players will get the opportunity to be looked at by pro scouts from the NBA, the newly formed World Basketball Association, the CBA and the European league.

In addition to roundball action, the classic features an employment and career seminar. The seminar is designed to provide student-athletes with a chance to explore career options during and after their pro sports careers.

Classic organizers say that they expect this

event to build a strong following with each passing year.



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