

# Sports Beat

with Bill Johnson



## In MEAC Race

# A&T Aggies Expected To Chase Morgan

Morgan State's Bears have been picked as the team to beat in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference football race this season but according to the coaches in the seven-team league, any team is capable of ending up on top. Earl Bank's eleven got the top rating in the conference but North Carolina A&T, defending champion North Carolina Central along with South Carolina State, and Howard are expected to be at the top of the ladder.

And don't count Delaware State and Maryland - Eastern Shore out of the race when you look at the returning rosters for both of these teams and the fact they knocked off the league leaders last year.

The main reason Morgan was picked to finish first in the conference is because of the fact the Baltimore squad returns 41 lettermen. Even with the wealth of talent returning, Banks is the first to admit Morgan has several question marks about the upcoming season.

The biggest problem in the Bear camp is finding a number one quarter-back.

Banks and his coaching staff will have four candidates to choose from for the number one signal calling post. Edmond Burt, a 5-11, 175-pound jr., is coming back from early season injuries and last year's frosh duo - Greg Grimes (6-2, 205) and Bernard Jenkins (6-0, 185) a year older and 10 games wiser in the ways of quarter-backing Bank's teams, the prospect of more steady leadership is expected this year. Add the name John Smalls (5-11, 175) who returns from the Military service, to the list of candidates for the signal calling post.

Morgan's one-two devastating ground gaining punch returns in the presence of All-MEAC Bobby Hammond and Jimmy Joe. Hammond, a 5-10, 185-pound junior was the second leading ground gainer in the conference last year with 784 yards in 160 carries for an average of 4.9 per carry. Joe, his running mate, finished seventh in the league with 478 yards.

With Hammond and Joe providing the brunt of the ground attack, the Bear's running game is solid with Mike Collier (5-11, 200), who was one of the nation's leading kick and punt returners last year, Craig Gee, Ken Goodrich, Less Brooks, Ron James and Gerald Harris in reserve.

Greg Latta, 6-4, 230, Sr., has the tight end position all to himself. The outside receiving position is up for grabs with soph Dale Robinson (6-2, 190) and Jimmy Wooten (6-1, 185) staging a battle. Versatile senior Curt Davis (5-11, 180) will handle the flanker position if he can stay healthy.

The offensive interior line is another problem for Banks and the Bears if they expect to improve on last year's 4-2 league record and 5-5 over-all mark. Tackle Bill Thompson (6-2, 245, Sr.), whose knee is still questionable, and center Wayne Frazier (6-2, 235, Jr.) are the only players with both size and experience on the offensive front.

A&T returns 28 lettermen this season along with a bumper crop of freshmen. The Aggies have talent at every position but Coach Hornsby Howell, beginning his sixth season as head of the Aggie forces, will need to develop depth at all positions.

Two juniors and time-tested quarterbacks are around to lead the offense for the Aggies. Leonard Relford (6-5, 205) is a deadly passer and Paul McKibbins (6-2, 195) is a running threat any time he has the ball.

Relford completed 45 of 120 passes for 665 yards and seven touchdowns last season. McKibbins rushed for 201 yards in 56 carries last year.

Ray Pettiford and Curtis Gooding will be the main targets for the Aggie quarterbacks. Gooding caught only six passes last year but gained 285 yards on these half dozen and scored two touchdowns.

Running backs Al Holland, George Ragsdale and Thomas Murphy, all juniors, return to handle the ground game for the Aggies who were 8-2 last year. Ragsdale (5-11, 190) was the rushing leader for the Gate City charges with 572 yards in 150 carries for a 3.8 average. Holland (5-11, 200) picked up 371 yards in 98 cracks at the line while Murphy (5-11, 200)



CHARLOTTE'S AGGIES COMPRISE LARGEST CITY DELEGATION

There are more football players at N.C. A&T State University from Charlotte than any other city including Greensboro. The large delegation includes (left to right) front row players Joe Kendrick, John Hairston, William Medley, William Blue, (second row) Mike Stanley, Howard Barnhill, Dexter Feaster, Assistant Coach Wylie Harris, Joe Crosby, Terry Bellamy, and Eric Wallace.

championship team which compiled a 9-2 overall record. Tillman Sease, head Coach of the Howard eleven, picks no bones about the upcoming season. "If we can find a quarterback, I think we will be right in the thick of the race for the conference title," he stated.

One of the reasons Sease is confident about his Bisons is because most of the starting defensive unit for Howard returns. Howard, which ranked number two in defense last season in the small college statistics, gave up only 85 points in 10 games including four shutouts.

Returning starters on the defensive unit include Gregory Butler, Norvell Fuller, Willie Harrell and Bruce Williams. Howard must develop some defensive linemen as back-up strength.

Two sophomores with no playing experience will lead

rushed for 346 yards in 81 attempts. Art Stanfield will be the number one replacement in the backfield for A&T.

Opening up the holes up front for the Aggies will be Danny Coleman (6-2, 225, Junior), John Hairston (6-0, 220), William Creecy (5-10, 205) and Melvin Rose (6-0, 250).

The defensive line is spearheaded by ends Reggie Strickland (6-2, 255), Carl Collins (6-4, 240) and tackle Donald Barnes (6-1, 205). The secondary returnees include Steve Jackson (6-2, 220), and John Hampton (6-2, 185).

North Carolina Central was picked to finish third in the conference by the coaches but new coach Willie Smith disagrees with the prediction because of the heavy losses from the championship team of a year ago.

The Eagles return 11 lettermen from the 1972

## Crystal Ball

Morgan

N. C. A&T

N. C. Central

Howard

Maryland - ES

S. C. State

Delaware State



VERSATILE AL HOLLAND ...A&T's Superstar

the list of quarterback candidates. Leon Jenkins and Darryl Bridges were on the squad last year but neither had any game experience.

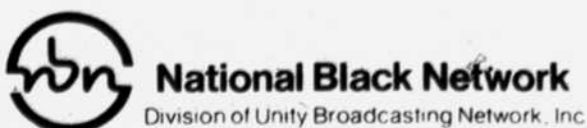
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