

FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 23 - 29, 2005

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE



Onnidan Photo

BIG TASK AHEAD: Fort Valley State head coach John Morgan takes his squad into Macon to face defending Division II champion Valdosta State.

AUDACIOUS STARTS

FVSU, WSSU AND SHAW TAKE ON TOP D2 TEAMS; COLES RESURFACE AT LANE



NFL.com Photos

N CAMP: Third-year veteran DE Robert Mathis (left Alabama A&M) of the Indianapolis Colts and rookie free agent RB Derrick Wimbush (right, Fort Valley State) of the Jacksonville Jaguars are two of over 70 black college products looking to make opening day NFL rosters. Mathis, who totalled 10.5 sacks to finish among NFL leaders in 2004, had three sacks and two forced fumbles in Saturday's pre-season game vs. Chicago while Wimbush rushed four times for 19 yards including a nine-yard TD run vs. Tampa Bay.

BCSP PRESEASON TOP TEN

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 HAMPTON | 6 SHAW |
| 2 ALABAMA STATE | 7 TUSKEGEE |
| 3 GRAMBLING STATE | 8 ALABAMA A&M |
| 4 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE | 9 SOUTHERN |
| 5 BETHUNE-COOKMAN | 10 ALBANY STATE |

Top matchups open football season

LUT WILLIAMS
BCSP Editor

It won't take long to find out how some NCAA Division II black college football teams measure up this year. As the 2005 season kicks off this weekend, three teams jump right into the fire taking on 2004 playoff teams that are traditional Div. II powerhouse programs.

Fort Valley State, picked as one of the top three teams in the **Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC)**, has probably the most challenging task as they head to Macon, Ga., to tackle the defending Division II national champion Valdosta State.

Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) champion **Shaw** tests its reported mettle when it hosts Carson-Newman, the South Atlantic Conference champion who fell to Valdosta State in the second round of the 2004 playoffs. And **Winston-Salem State** of the CIAA, playing its last season of Division II football, hosts SAC playoff participant Catawba.

FVSU finished 7-4 a year ago and is hoping to duplicate what SIAC champ **Albany State** did a year ago and knock off Valdosta State, perhaps the nation's premier Division II program. VSU, ranked first in the nation in several preseason polls and at least in the top three in all of them, leads the series 12-3 and has won the last five meetings including a 32-6 win in 2002. The 6 p.m. game, the second time the teams have met at Macon's Henderson Stadium, is billed as the *Inaugural Gridiron Network Classic*.

VSU head coach Chris Hatcher has compiled a 59-7 record in five years at his alma mater and made two appearances in the Div. II championship game. The Gulf South Conference champion Blazers, who also made it to the title game in 2002, broke through last year to win their first-ever national title with a 36-31 win over Pittsburg State. En route, they came from 24 points down at the half to beat Albany State 38-24 in a quarterfinal round rematch, avenging their only loss of the season, a 24-22 decision in the regular season.

Third-year FVSU head coach **John Morgan**, who has posted back-to-back 7-4 seasons, heads into Saturday's game minus his most potent offensive weapon from last season,



CLARK



BLOUNT

running back **Derrick Wimbush**, now in the NFL at the Jacksonville Jaguars camp. Wimbush led all black college rushers last year with 1,840 yards, scoring 22 TDs, averaging 7.4 yards per carry and 167.3 yards per game. VSU's big losses include QB Fabian Walker (417-299-8, 71.7%, 3,062 yards, 23 TDs) and RB Tyran Robinson (213 car., 1,267 yds., 17 TDs).

SIAC Freshman of the Year, QB **Willie Copeland** (194-98-6, 50.5%, 1,291 yards, 12 TDs) is back to lead the Wildcats, who return 16 starters. Copeland has been battling back spasms recently and may play behind fellow sophomore **Zedrick West** Saturday. His VSU counterpart, Barrett Wilkes, sat out as a redshirt last season but threw for 3,269 yards and 26 TDs leading the Blazers to the playoffs in 2003. The Blazers return 12 starters but took key hits on the offensive line.

Coming off an excellent 10-2 campaign, their first CIAA football championship in 47 years, a Div. II playoff snub and a *Pioneer Bowl* victory over **Tuskegee** of the SIAC, head coach **Deondri Clark's** Shaw Bears are looking for more and they'll get it with their 1:00 p.m. matchup in Raleigh (Garner High School) against Carson-Newman. The Eagles finished 9-3 a year ago, losing to Valdosta State 38-12 in the second round of the D2 playoffs after beating CIAA representative **Fayetteville State** (35-14) in the opening round.

Clark has said his goal is to turn Shaw, playing only its fourth year since returning to the gridiron, into a national power. Going up against CNU, ranked 14th in one preseason poll, will tell him how far he is along in that process. Clark certainly has the horses to make a run at it.

The Bears return a whopping 20 starters, 10 on offense and nine on a defensive unit that ranked as the nation's best in 2004. Junior QB **Jermonty Kimbrough** (237-97-10, 1,465 yards, 10 TDs) returns to lead the offense and will be

GAMES THIS WEEK

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25
TV GAME (ESPNU)
Morehouse vs. Benedict in Atlanta, GA 7:30pm

SATURDAY, AUGUST 27
Cheyney vs. Loch Haven in Cheyney, PA 1:00pm
J. C. Smith vs. Glenville St. in Charlotte, NC 1:00pm
Shaw vs. Carson-Newman in Raleigh, NC 1:00pm
Shepherd vs. Virginia State in Sh'stown, WV 1:00pm
W. Va. State vs. Bowie State in Institute, WV 1:00pm
W. New Mexico vs. Saint Paul's in Silver City, NM 1:00pm
Lane vs. Saint Augustine's in Jackson, TN 2:00pm
Tuskegee vs. Stillman in Tuskegee, AL 2:00pm
Clark-Atlanta vs. Kentucky State in Atlanta, GA 6:00pm
Miles vs. Albany State in Fairfield, AL 6:00pm
NC Central vs. Edward Waters in Durham, NC 6:00pm
Valdosta State vs. Fort Valley State in Macon, GA 6:00pm
W-Salem State vs. Catawba in Winston-Salem, NC 6:00pm
Elizabeth City St. vs. Livingstone in Eliz. City, NC 7:00pm
Fayetteville State vs. Va. Union in Fayetteville, NC 7:00pm
Texas A&M-K'sville vs. Texas Coll. in K'sville, TX 7:00pm

CLASSICS
Capital City Foundation Classic
Lincoln (MO) vs. Central State in Topeka, KS 7:00pm

aided by 2004 1,000-yard rusher **Dion McIver** and **Byron Cary**, who sat out last year after rushing for 914 yards in 2003. The defense is led by all-American free safety **Torrance Nunnally** and two-time all-CIAA cornerback **Shawn Woodard**.

With ten players selected to the preseason all-SAC team, Ken Sparks' Carson-Newman squad is again picked to win the conference title. RB Kiel Angry (626 yds., 5 TDs) is the leading returning runner on an offense that racked up 345 rushing yards per game last season, second best to Pittsburg State in Div. II. Linemen Shaji Jackson and Norris Wood key the Eagles' defense.

Any discussion of Winston-Salem State this year begins with its impending move to Div. I, I-AA in football, and the return of head coach **Kermit Blount's** two 1,000-yard rushers, 5-10 senior **Martin Hicks** (1,148 yds. 9 TDs) and 6-0 junior **Jed Bines** (1,137 yds., 12 TDs). Their play will be key to turning around the Rams' 4-6 record from last year which included losses to Carson-Newman and Tusculum of the SAC. The Rams take on Catawba at 6 p.m. at Bowman-Gray Stadium in Winston-Salem.

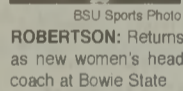
Catawba finished 7-4 last season, falling in the first round of the playoffs to Arkansas Tech. The Indians are picked behind Carson-Newman in both the coaches' and media polls in the SAC. RB Mario Crowe and WR Corey Ready are the offensive stars with DL Kolby Fisher and Marcus Huntley and LB Samario Houston anchoring the Indians' defense.

UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS

ROBERTSON / BSU RE-UNITE:

Bowie State Athletic Director **Derek Carter** officially announced the hiring of former BSU assistant **Douglas (Doug) J. Robertson, Jr.** as the new head coach of the Lady Bulldogs basketball program at a press conference last week. Robertson has spent the last five seasons (2000-2005) as the number one assistant to former BSU head coach **Ed Davis** at Division I **Delaware State**. There he helped guide Delaware State to an 82-64 overall record and assisted in leading the Lady Hornets to three Mid-



BSU Sports Photo

ROBERTSON: Returns as new women's head coach at Bowie State

Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) Championship game appearances. During his Bowie State tenure, Robertson was instrumental in the team's success, as the Lady Bulldogs compiled an overall record of 100-18, earned three consecutive **Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA)** championships and four berths into the NCAA Division II Tournament. "This journey has taken about 19 years in terms of my basketball career and my involvement in basketball," said Robertson. "I'm excited about the opportunity to be back at my alma mater and back with all the familiar faces that I remember during my first tenure here. My passion for the institution and our women's basketball program is enormous." Robertson, a native of Baltimore, earned a bachelor's from Bowie State in 1995 and is currently pursuing a master's of public administration. He was a member of the Bowie State Bulldogs men's basketball team for one season.

WATTEN LEAVING B-CC:

After establishing **Bethune-Cookman** as a budding national power in softball in just over eight years at the helm, head coach **Lauren Watten** has decided to pursue other opportunities. "I have enjoyed a great career here at Bethune-Cookman, and I've loved every bit of it," stated a saddened Watten. "I especially love the lives I've touched, and the impact I've had on this program. This [program] is my baby, and it's hard to walk away." Watten led the Lady 'Cats to five consecutive **MEAC** Championships (2000, '01, '02, '03 and '04), as well as six NCAA Regional appearances beginning in 2000 and led Bethune-Cookman to its first-ever NCAA Super Regional appearance this past season. "Laura's leadership in coaching and recruiting were a solid foundation upon which the program was built and her successor will have tremendous shoes to fill," said B-CC Athletic Director **Lynn Thompson**.

ROSCOE NANCE

BCSP Correspondent

Cole-blooded football, the coaching tandem of brothers **L.C.** and **Johnnie Cole**, produced outstanding results at **Tennessee State** and **Alabama State**. Now it's coming to **Lane College** with a twist, as the brothers have switched roles. This time Johnnie, 42, is head coach and L.C., 47, is his top assistant.

"It's pretty much the same as before," says Johnnie, who was his brother's offensive coordinator at Tennessee State and Alabama State and was receivers coach at Arizona Western last season. "Administrative roles have changed. I'm dealing more with administration and he's doing more of the internal stuff like handling travel and the equipment room and overseeing things when I'm not around, things that I did in the past."

The brothers' coaching responsibilities will be the same as they were when they were at Tennessee State and Alabama State. Johnnie, who played quarterback at **Texas Southern** in the 1980s, will run the Dragons' offense. L.C., who played defensive end at Nebraska, will coordinate their defense.

L.C. left Concordia College (Minn.), where he was defensive coordinator, to be on the Dragons' staff and help Johnnie in his first head coaching job.

"We're family," L.C. says. "I felt obligated to come and work with him. He left Cincinnati to come work with me (at Tennessee State). He sacrificed to come from a Division IA program to help me."

The Coles hope to duplicate the successes they had at Tennessee State and Alabama State where they produced a 48-33 record in seven seasons. They fashioned a 28-18 record in five seasons (1996-1999) at Tennessee State, won two Ohio Valley Conference championships and produced the top-ranked team in Division IAA in 1999.

They were 20-15 in two seasons (2000-02) at Alabama State and won the SWAC Eastern Division championship in 2001.

The Coles have a gargantuan challenge in front of them. Lane is a small school in Jackson, Tennessee that has 700 full-time students. The Dragons are a Division II program that competes in the **Southern**



Onnidan Photo

AT THE HELM: Former assistant Johnny Cole takes the reins for the first time at Lane and brought in his brother, former head coach L.C. Cole, to help.

Intercollegiate Conference and haven't had a winning since going 9-1 in 1991. The Coles won't have the resources that were available to them at Tennessee State and Alabama State even though Johnny was allowed to hire eight assistant coaches.

"The biggest thing is changing attitudes," Johnnie Cole says. "When you come into a program like this, your expectations are high. There are low."

Johnnie Cole has gone to great lengths to change attitudes, including painting the locker room, refurbishing the coaches' offices, cleaning up the equipment room, re-sodding the field, changing the color of the team's helmets from blue to white and replacing the Dragon logo on the side with L-A-N-E. The Dragons open Saturday (2:00 p.m.) at home vs. **St. Augustine's**.

"We've changed the face of the program," Johnnie Coles says. "We want to make sure we cleaned up everything within the program. We laid the law down to them. This is the way it's going to be." The Coles got a late start on their rebuilding job. They weren't hired until mid-May, and the coaching staff didn't meet any of the players until the start of preseason practice.

"We're having our spring practice now," Johnnie Cole says. "I'm getting to know them and they're getting to know me. We're finding out who can play, and we're getting ready to play a game."

The Coles are accustomed to rebuilding programs. Johnnie was a member of **Pete Richardson's** coaching staff that rejuvenated **Southern University**. Tennessee State and Alabama State were both 2-9 the year before Cole-blooded football arrived.

Ironically, Lane was 2-9 last season.

"That's our lucky number," L.C. Cole says, adding that "this is the third program that needed a facelift. I'm getting a little old for this."

Johnnie Cole's goal for this season is a modest one. He just wants the Dragons to win more games than they did a year ago.

"We want to be respectable," he says. "We want to look classy, professional. We want to put a quality team on the field."

Cole says that with a solid core of returning players and some quality recruits, the Dragons "have something to build on and will surprise some people."

Middle linebacker **Larry Brown**, the No. 1 tackler in the SIAC last season, outside linebacker **Lamar Allman**, cornerbacks **Michael Pleasant** and **Reggie Ingle**, who led Division II in pass break-ups, and safeties **Harvey Scott** and **Brad Campbell** will anchor the Dragons' defense.

The offense features a pair of big wide receivers in 6-3 **Jacoby Jones** and 6-5 JUCO transfer **Edward Williams**, quarterback **Dion Pickett**, another JUCO transfer, and former Tusculum College tailback **Reginald Thomas**. Veteran center **LaCourtney Kaiser** and tackle **Eric Martinear**, a 6-6, 280-pound freshman who originally signed with Alabama-Birmingham anchor the offensive line.

Cole says the kicking game is in capable hands with place-kicker **Chester Miranda**, a California junior college transfer, and veteran punter **Ja'Wesley Porter**.

Lane is picked to finish eighth in the 10-member SIAC, and given its history of football futility, it wouldn't seem to be the best place for a first-time head coach. But Johnnie Cole is confident that better days are ahead.

"My firm belief is I'm a winner," he says. "Put me in Baghdad and I'll win. I welcome this challenge."

Despite their successes, the Cole's reputations have been tainted by NCAA rules violations at Tennessee State and Alabama State during their tenure. Tennessee State placed the brothers on probation, and the NCAA placed the football program on probation for three years, reduced its scholarships for three



BCSP Photo

L. C.: Glad to return his brother's favor.

years and reduced the number of paid visits for recruits for two years.

An internal investigation at Alabama State led to the Coles' being fired, but the NCAA has not handed down any penalties. L.C. Cole says the NCAA hasn't named him in any of the charges and that the problems at Alabama State stemmed from a lack of institutional control and a power struggle between top school officials, one of whom wanted to get rid of him.

If the Coles are able to transform Lane into a winning program, it could catapult L.C. and linebacker coach **Richard Freeman**, who was also implicated in the investigation at Alabama State and was with the brothers at Tennessee State, into a head coaching job, which he says is his goal.

"I'm looking for it (a head coaching job)," L.C. Cole says, adding that he interviewed for three positions last year, including the opening at **Clark-Atlanta**. "But I want to make sure this situation here is done okay. I've had success. If they're looking for someone to turn a program around and who knows how to win, I'm the man."

Says Johnnie Cole: "Coach Cole is an outstanding coach. I'm fortunate to have him. He should be a head coach. I know what the naysayers say about the NCAA. The stuff that went on in those programs was minor. When you look at NCAA (violations) you can find stuff in any program."

Johnnie Cole expects his brother and Freeman to both get head coaching jobs sooner rather than later, especially if they can help build a winner at Lane. It could also serve as a stepping stone for him to move on to a more prestigious job. However, he says that's not part of his plan. "I've been coaching a long time," he says. "All I'm looking for is some security so I can eat. Things are in place for us to be successful. I'm making sure they stay in place."