

MEAC votes Winston-Salem in as 12th member

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 program in the league, joining N.C. A&T and S.C. State.
 • The 2006 football TV package includes seven regular-season games on ESPNU. The season kicks off Sept. 2 with Delaware State against Florida A&M in the Ford Labor Day Classic in Detroit, and ending Nov. 18 with the Florida Classic between Bethune-Cookman and FAMU in Orlando. Hampton, last year's league champion, will make four appearances,

the most of any school. Bethune-Cookman will make three.
 "From all indications, vying for this year's championship most likely will go down to the last weekend," MEAC Commissioner Dennis Thomas said. "The 2006 television schedule gives our fans an opportunity to closely watch the race from beginning to end."
 • Professional baseball will have to wait for N.C. A&T's Jeremy Jones.

The Aggies star decided this to return to school for his senior year despite being drafted in the 25th round by the Colorado Rockies. Jones drew Colorado's interest despite a broken hand that all but wiped out his junior season, but after consulting with his parents decided another year in Greensboro is best for his academic and athletic development. He wants to earn his degree in fitness and wellness and help A&T back to the top of the MEAC

pile.
 "I felt like I owed the team another year," he said. "It didn't feel right leaving A&T now, it didn't feel right leaving A&T after coming off an injury. Coming back for another year gives me an opportunity to work with (head coach Keith) Shumate on various aspects of my game.
 Jones, who can re-enter the Major League draft in 2007 and be available for any team to select, was MEAC player of the year in 2005, when he hit

402, set a school record for hits in a season with 82 and led the Aggies to the league title. Jones has a career batting average of .368, a .528 slugging percentage, nine homers and 73 runs batted in.

Sting seeks answers to skid

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 "Zone makes you settle for outside shots and shots you don't usually take," said rookie guard Monique Currie, who finished with two points against Phoenix.
 Although the Sting took a good amount of high percentage shots, they'd need more than a 40 percent shooting average to beat the highest scoring team in the league. They didn't, but they still have a chance to come out on top with the ten games they have left.

The Sting has already overcome one obstacle, they've won more games than they did last year.
 "Before we were letting our heads hang, now we are fighting back hard, because we know we are still in the game," said forward Tangela Smith. "We just have too short a season to focus on one loss. We can't get too high on wins or too low on losses. We just have to keep fighting and control the tempo from beginning to end."
 At 7-17, the Sting is still in playoff contention; though they are a long shot they could still get in by making up five games on Washington

"We have 10 games left and anything can happen," said Bogues. "We just have to continue to play better and keep improving, and that's what we are going to do until it's all over with."
 After facing Minnesota on the road, the Sting returns home on Saturday to play Eastern Conference rival New York 6 p.m. at Charlotte Bobcats Arena

Raiders set to open first camp after Shell's return

By Josh Dubow
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Before the Oakland Raiders even arrive at their first training camp in Art Shell's second stint as coach, it's clear that few jobs are safe.
 Shell has already penciled in two rookies as starters - second-round pick Thomas Howard at outside linebacker and third-round pick Paul McQuistan at right guard - and first-round pick Michael Huff is also in the mix at safety.
 After three straight losing seasons for the first time in Al Davis' more than four-decade tenure with the team, Shell knows changes are necessary.
 "I want the best football players out there," Shell said. "In this league you can play with young guys if the guy has talent. They're going to make some mistakes, but you can live with them if they make them aggressively."
 The Raiders report to their training camp in Napa on Monday with two-a-day practices in pads in the heat of wine country set to begin the following day. Shell has been pleased with his team's offseason workouts and wants to carry that attitude over into the season.

Shell, who coached the Raiders previously from 1989-1994, had a 54-38 regular-season record his first time around, leading the Raiders to the AFC championship game following the 1990 season. The team has had only three winning seasons since Shell was fired - one less than he had in five full seasons as coach.

"These guys are tired of losing and want to be part of a winning program," Shell said. "The work ethic this offseason shows they are on board and want to win. That's what they are here for."

The Raiders went 4-12 last season, leading to coach Norv Turner being fired after two seasons in Oakland. One of the biggest problems last season was on the offensive line, which couldn't open up holes for the running game, failed to give the quarterback enough time to make big plays to Randy Moss downfield and committed too many penalties.

Robert Gallery, the No. 2 overall pick on 2004, is being moved from right to left tackle, where Shell believes he can develop into a dominant blocker.

"I think it's a good fit," Shell said. "He played it for a number of years in college. I think he can be outstanding at it. I think it's time for him to arrive as a Pro Bowl-type player."

Barry Sims is slated at left guard, Jake Grove at center, Langston Walker at right tackle and McQuistan at right guard ahead of veteran Brad Badger. McQuistan, a four-year starter at Weber State, impressed the Raiders on film and in offseason workouts and will be tutored by two Hall of Fame linemen in Shell and offensive line coach Jackie Slater.

"There are rookies starting in this league every year on the offensive line," Shell said. "I'd feel comfortable if Paul McQuistan continues to grow as a football player for us and learns the nuances of pass and run blocking."

With Howard tentatively on the outside, Kirk Morrison has moved to the middle to replace former starter Danny Clark.

"Danny is an integral part of this football team," Shell said. "We are looking at players. Nothing is etched in stone. We don't know where we'll end up for sure. We have a long ways to go through training camp."

Free-agent Aaron Brooks enters camp as the No. 1 quarterback replacing the released Kerry Collins, but Shell said he'd like to give backups Andrew Walter and Marques Tuiasosopo some time with the first team.

"Right now Aaron Brooks is the guy," Shell said. "He's starting at the No. 1 spot going in. We're still going to take a look at what we have. You've got to have somebody start out, so he's the guy who's starting out."

Defensive tackle Warren Sapp, who missed the last six games last season with an injured right shoulder, is healthy for the start of camp. Receiver Ronald Curry, who tore his left Achilles' tendon in the second game last season, is not quite up to full speed yet, Shell said.

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