BLACK COLLEGE REPORT

MEAC: Tourney can prosper in Greensboro

By DAVID BULLA
Review Staff Writer

WITH A boost from the publicity arm of the Greensboro, N.C., Coliseum, Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Commissioner **Ken Free** has said next March's tournament could draw up to 12,000 fans on any given night with the right conditions.

The MEAC Tournament will return to Greensboro March 5-7 after being in Philadelphia the last two years. It has made two previous runs (1976-79 and 1983-84) at the Greensboro Coliseum, but left because of sagging attendance.

Now it has left Philadelphia for the same reason -- and after both sides agreed not to renew on the option year of their contract.

"We have a new emphasis on promotion," Free said. "We feel we can reach the number that will make the tourney successful for the four sessions."

Coliseum Manager **James Evans** has put together a committee to deal specifically with promoting the event. The committee, headed by Coliseum Publicity Director **Bailey Hobgood**, includes former North Carolina A&T Coach **Cal Irvin**, now a member of the Greensboro Sports Council, which helps promote sports events in that city.

"We want to sell at least 1,000 tickets to corporations," Hobgood said. "That would give us a successful tournament."

Hobgood also pledged a media campaign in the cities of the eight MEAC schools.

"Supporters from North Carolina A&T have made this tournament," Hobgood said. "We want their continued support, but we also want to make an effort at attracting the students and supporters from the other schools. We want them to think of the MEAC Tournament as a good party weekend.

"We also want to make it easier on our patrons once they are here. We will have a patrons' assistance room at the Coliseum and make it easier for the patrons to get around the city during their stay."

Hobgood said one potential stumbling block was that A&T was on spring break during the '86 tourney. But spring break falls on a different date in '87.

Both Hobgood and Evans said an attendance of 6,000 in the tournament finals, to be held March 7, would make it successful.

Evans, in his first year as the 15,300-seat structure's manager, said he was impressed with the tournament's potential for growth. He said a good brand of college basketball is played by historically black colleges, as evidenced by Mississippi Valley State's strong showing in the NCAA East Regionals at the Coliseum last March. But he said he believes that community involvement was the missing link the last time the tournament was in Greensboro.

"I think the most important thing we have to do is encourage community involvement," Evans said. "I think there's a parallel here to the Southern Conference Tournament in Asheville (N.C.). That tournament wouldn't work anywhere they put it. But the community in Asheville got behind it and it's a tremendous success."

Tickets in book form went on sale Oct. 3. Tournament books are $30 for adults and $20 for students through Jan. 30, 1987. After that, the prices increase to $37 and $25. Individual session tickets will not be available until Feb. 1, 1987. They will cost $5 for each of two first-round sessions, $7 for the semifinals and $8 for the finals.

Both the men's and women's tournaments will be played at the Coliseum.

For more ticket information, call the Coliseum at 919-373-7474 or the MEAC at 919-275-9961. Individual session tickets will be handled nationally by Ticketron.

Evans said the contract between the MEAC and the Coliseum runs for two years, with an option year.

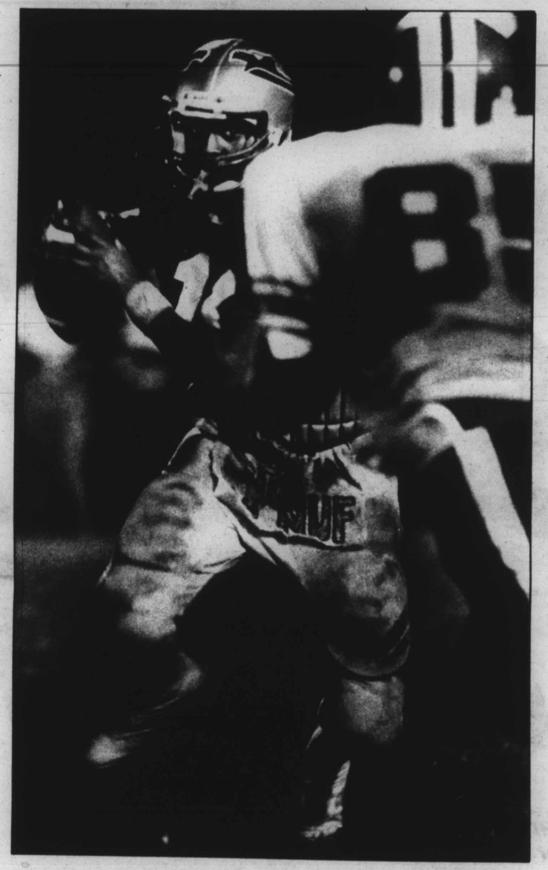
Free was hopeful about the long-range prospects for the tournament in Greensboro.

"Something tells me our return here will be a long one," he said. "I don't exactly remember how we promoted when we were here in the past, but we didn't have the committee. That's the one thing that will get us over the hump, plus help from the Sports Council."

South Carolina State is the defending women's champion.

While no team has defended in the women's division, A&T and Howard University have dominated the men's tournament. The Aggies have been in 12 tourney finals, winning 11. The Bison have advanced to 11 finals, with only two championships for their efforts.

Because of the required reclassification waiting period, both Coppin State and Morgan State will not be eligible for this season's tourney. Both schools moved up from Division II to I last season.



Harvey: CIAA's record-setting quarterback (photo by James Parker).

CIAA Hoops News

Three cities made bids for the 1988 Central Intercollegiete Athletic Association basketball tournament.

They were Charlotte, N.C, and Richmond and Norfolk, Va.

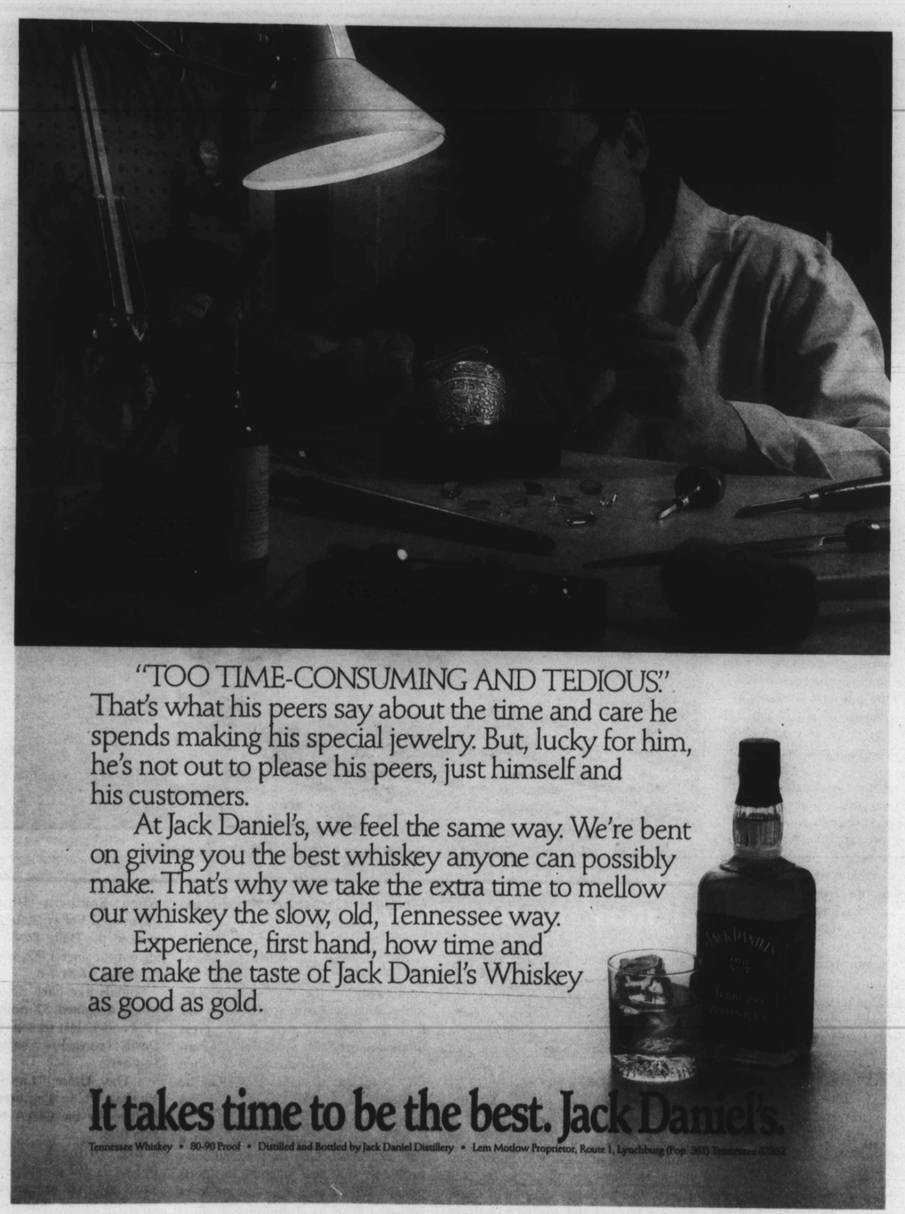
Richmond hosted the 1986 tourney and is the host again in '87.

Conference officials are visiting each city in preparation for a decision in November. The presidents of each school will discuss the pros and cons before turning the matter over to a committee headed by CIAA Commissioner **Bob Moorman** ....

• The conference's annual preseason meeting of basketball coaches will be held Nov. 11 at the Richmond Convention Center ....

• As the start of college basketball practice began, the honors for Norfolk State senior **Ralph Tally** were already starting to trickle in. He was named to the Division II all-America team by *Off The Glass* magazine and selected to the division's South Atlantic District first team.

Yardstick Yarns

• A Tiger Tale: There's more to the **Eddie Robinson** legend than his being

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