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BUYING -- AND SELLING

By ROSCOE NANCE

Playing for pay has become as important as playing to win at black Division I schools these days.

## IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

By DAVID BULLA

It's hard to tell whether North Carolina A&T or Howard University has the edge as the season opens. But it seems fairly certain that they'll face each other in March's MEAC Tournament final.

### THE PAINE-FUL FACTS OF SIAC LIFE

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE

Paine College is the team to beat in the SIAC's regular season, despite the strength of defending champ Alabama A&M, but Paine's satisfaction will be short-lived.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ERNEST

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE

Clark College's Ernest Lee may be a Panther, but he's chomping at the bit as he enters his final

# BLACK COLFGE SPORTI REVIEW

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ON THE COVER: Clark College scoring ace Ernest Lee (photo by Craig T. Greenlee).

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#### COMMENTARY

# The buying and selling of college basketball

By ROSCOE NANCE Review Staff Writer

BASKETBALL has become a different game at black Division I

Playing for pay has become as important as playing to win. That's the reason you'll see so many black schools appearing on major schools' schedules.

At first glance, it seems great for nationally respected powers such as an Indiana, Kansas or Purdue to play an Alcorn, Howard or Florida A&M. Visions of upset victories come to mind.

Such wins would give black schools instant credibility and coast-to-coast exposure. Those are things money doesn't buy.

But, as we all know, all things are not equal.

That becomes readily apparent when you check the schedules and notice where -- on the road -- and on what terms -- usually when their odds of winning are remote, at best -- black schools always play those games.

Then reality sets in and you realize that black schools don't have a snowball's chance.

But they do get paid well. Guarantees range from \$7,000 to \$12,000. In some cases travel expenses and lodging also are paid. Play three or four games with guarantees like that and the budget will be in pretty good

It makes a neat package. Black schools, with their increasing financial woes, get a big payday. The Big Boys, who can pack the house regardless of whom they play, get what amounts to a dress rehearsal for their players and more coins for their coffers without risking a loss.

"They aren't doing anything but buying games," said former Jackson State Coach Paul Covington Sr. "That's all it is."

That's a rather blunt way of phrasing it. But sometimes being blunt is the best way to tell the truth.

And for every buyer, there's a seller. "You've got to do it," said Covington. "You can't get them to come to you. That's the good thing about it for them. You can't afford to pay them that kind of guarantee. Besides, they aren't looking to go into a place with a possibility of losing. It's the idea of 'We need a tuneup. You ain't nothing but dogmeat anyway.' I guess they're trying to find out what they have."

Black schools are damned if they play such games and they're damned if they don't.

If they don't play them, when NCAA Tournament time comes, the selection committee takes one look at

whom they've played and says their schedule is too weak and they're made Texas El Paso. the lowest seed in the field.

Former Jackson State Coach Paul Covington Sr.: For the major powers,

black schools "are nothing but dogmeat anyway" (photo by Mark Gail).

If they do play the big schools and lose, their records suffer and they still have problems in the seedings. It's a no-win proposition.

So what do you do? You take the

"You're not going to win," said won that kind of game."

The only school that comes to mind

is Texas Southern, which defeated

around," said Covington. "Don't try to buy any games from them. They're loaded.' "

to pay you \$10,000 and then let you against you, is not unlike the Chrismoney and run - and hope for a win, too. That's like flushing money tians being fed to lions at the Coldown the toilet. If they wanted to risk a iseum. loss, they could easily play someone Covington. "Go back and check. It closer to their level of competition would be interesting to see who has rather than bring in the bum of the

Playing on the road is tough under

any circumstances. But when you're playing on the road and everybody knows you're supposed to lose, it's even tougher. That's the situation black schools face. Covington said he learned just how tough it can be when he made a three-game swing through California a few years ago.

"I had been getting on the referee," he said. "I said charging is charging everywhere. He came over to me and said, 'I ain't going to ever call a game in Mississippi. I have to call six or seven more here this year. Now sit down and don't make me call a tech on

That's tough.

And it's even tougher on the players. Coaches, for the most part, understand the game. They've been around the block a couple of times and know the

But players are different. They feel that, since all baskets are 10 feet high and everybody plays with a round ball, their chances of winning are as good as the next team's.

"I'd like it in the beginning," said Covington. "Maybe I was naive. It took me three or four games to learn what the score was. It was exciting from a standpoint of us not having played those teams before -- the basketball powers. The schedule looked good. I don't think many coaches go in thinking we have a chance to win, They're (the powers) so talented and their bench is as good as your starters. They go so deep. They're getting the kids. You need to have some of them to be competitive."

Coaches realize that, but not

"I don't think that the kids are aware," said Covington. "To a great extent I don't know if they still get that excited about playing them (the big schools). When we started, they thought they had a chance. Maybe they

Like most issues, there are other sides to this one -- all of which are not negative. The one positive thing for black schools -- in addition to the money they stand to pocket -- is that "If you win too many, the word gets these games can be a testing ground for their players.

Playing a major power on its homecourt in front of, say, 15,000 It's a fact of life that no one is going fans, all of whom are screaming

"If you've got experienced players and you can go in and play a good game, it will help you later in the season," said Covington. "I always Please See Page 21

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