MEAC

It's a two-team race -- again

By DAVID BULLA Review Staff Writer

WHILE North Carolina A&T returns its Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference championship team intact, Howard University has undergone some changes that will keep the race

Howard Spencer and Landreth Baugh are transfer students who could return Howard to the NCAA Tournament after a five-year absence. The 6-foot-8 Spencer and 6-9 Baugh should shore up an inside game that was good enough last season to produce a 19-10 record -- but not good enough to push the Bison past a then-rebuilding A&T program, which has made five straight NCAA appearances. Unfortunately, the Aggies are winless in each of those appearances.

Howard's strength is its backcourt, with Fred Hill, William Stuart and George Hamilton. Now Spencer and . Baugh give the Bison a frontcourt to

It's hard to tell which team has an edge as the season opens. But one thing seems fairly certain: A&T and Howard will meet again in March's MEAC Tournament final, the winner of which receives an automatic berth in the 64-team NCAA tourney.

When they do, it will be their 10th meeting in the finals of the 16-year-old tournament. So successful have these two schools been in this conference that A&T has gone to 12 MEAC championship games, Howard 11. Moreover, the two rivals own 37 percent of the MEAC's 1,255 victories in its 15-year history. Were the league's wins equally distributed among its teams, A&T and Howard's combined share would only total 25 percent.

NORTH CAROILNA A&T (22-8 in 1985-86) has beefed up its schedule, adding Atlantic Coast Conference power Georgia Tech, ranked in the Top 10 in many preseason polls, Detroit and Division II powers Virginia Union and Norfolk State.

The Aggies could lose more than half of those games, but they should do well by the tougher schedule when the conference slate gets under way Jan. 5 at Coppin State.

Senior guard George Cale is one of the best-kept secrets in college basketball. Cale averaged 14.8 points and 5.3 rebounds last season while earning allconference honors. The 6-foot-6 shooting guard's scoring stats figure to rise with the addition of the threepointer in college basketball.

The Aggies also have one of the best big forwards in college basketball in 6-7, 205-pound Claude Williams, who

Below, Howard's Mike Hampton: Do the Bison finally







Top right, Howard Coach A.B. Williamson. Below right, his nemesis, A&T Coach Don Corbett (bottom photo by Brian Branch-Price).

averaged 13 points and eight rebounds. The brawny Williams is similar to Lorenzo Charles, the former North Carolina State forward who played a year with the NBA's Atlanta Hawks.

The catalyst for A&T is junior point guard Thomas Griffis. The 5-8 Griffis is a former walk-on who earned a scholarship with his league-leading 140 Hill. The 6-2 Hill led the Bison in scor-

throws (85 percent), the most among MEAC starters.

HOWARD UNIVERSITY returns a solid backcourt, led by shooting guard assists. He also made 98 of 115 free ing with a 12.8-point average. Point

guard Stuart was the team's assist leader (101) and quarterback.

The Bison led in the first half against 1985 NCAA champion Villanova in the National Invitation Tournament last MEAC

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offing.

third down -- oops! Wrong sport.

injury and missed the rest of the game. The Wildcats won 71-61.

"Howard is the team to beat," A&T's Corbett said. "Their win over George Washington (90-85 on Dec. 4) I college basketball, says he figures to was good for the conference."

At long last, somebody else may compete for the crown in SOUTH CAROLINA STATE (10-18). The Bulldogs return all-conference forward Mack Joyner (6-5), who averaged 17.7 points, 4.2 assists and 1.3 steals per game. He also shot 56 percent from the field. If he gets the kind of help Coach Chico Carter would like to see from 7-footer George Paulk and 6-11 junior college transfer John Bell, S.C. State could make an impact on the conference race.

MORGAN STATE Coach Nathaniel Frazier will have a new look after a good recruiting year. The Bears landed 6-9 Curtis Wise, 6-7 forwards Raylon Adams, George McDowell and Damone Williams, 6-6 Gary Kotorwas and 6-2 Cliff Glover. Moreover, Morgan will return guard Thomas Foster, who was injured most of last season. Foster is potentially the team's most productive offensive player. Also back are guard Troy Brown (15.5 points per game) and swing man Randy Hampton (12.5 points).

The Bears (7-20) finished in a threeway tie for third place last season. All seven of their wins came against MEAC opponents. Again they face an ambitious schedule with Virginia Commonwealth, Seton Hall, Texas-El Paso, Lamar and Jacksonville waiting in the wings.

COPPIN STATE (10-17) returns all of its starters -- that's the good news. But the Eagles needed inside help to improve on their 7-7 MEAC finish last year and only landed one big man, 6-7 Donnell Anderson. It's too early to tell how much of a contribution he will make. Still, Coppin features a big little man in 5-10 point guard Steven Miller, who placed second to Griffis with 126 assists last season, and 6-5 Earl Lee, who averaged 14.4 points.

"Fang" Mitchell, who replaced John Bates, begins his first season at Coppin. Mitchell won 84 percent of his games in eight seasons at Gloucester County (N.J.) Junior College. The Eagles sink their teeth into a demanding non-conference schedule with George Washington, Iona, Miami of Florida and Oral Roberts on tap.

Veteran BETHUNE-COOKMAN Coach Cy McClairen searched far and wide for a replacement for departed MEAC Player of the Year Don Hill and point guard Ernest Bussie. Mc-Clairen landed seven recruits, but something all too similar to last

season's 7-22 campaign could be in the STATE (11-17), which was decimated games." McClairen, who is probably the only by graduation and academic attrition.

former NFL all-pro coaching Division "This is a year of transition," Coach use as much of the 45-second clock as Marshall Emery said. "There are a lot possible on most possessions because of new faces. his team is small. Or he might punt on

"As we move on in the season, we should get better. But our strength will

Hard times will visit DELAWARE be the determination we bring to the

Gone is all-conference forward Bernard Campbell (13 points, 11 rebounds per game), as well as 6-10 Dereck Hendricks, 6-8 Terrance Ball (11 points, eight rebounds) and guard Curtis Walker (12.4 points). Hendricks was

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