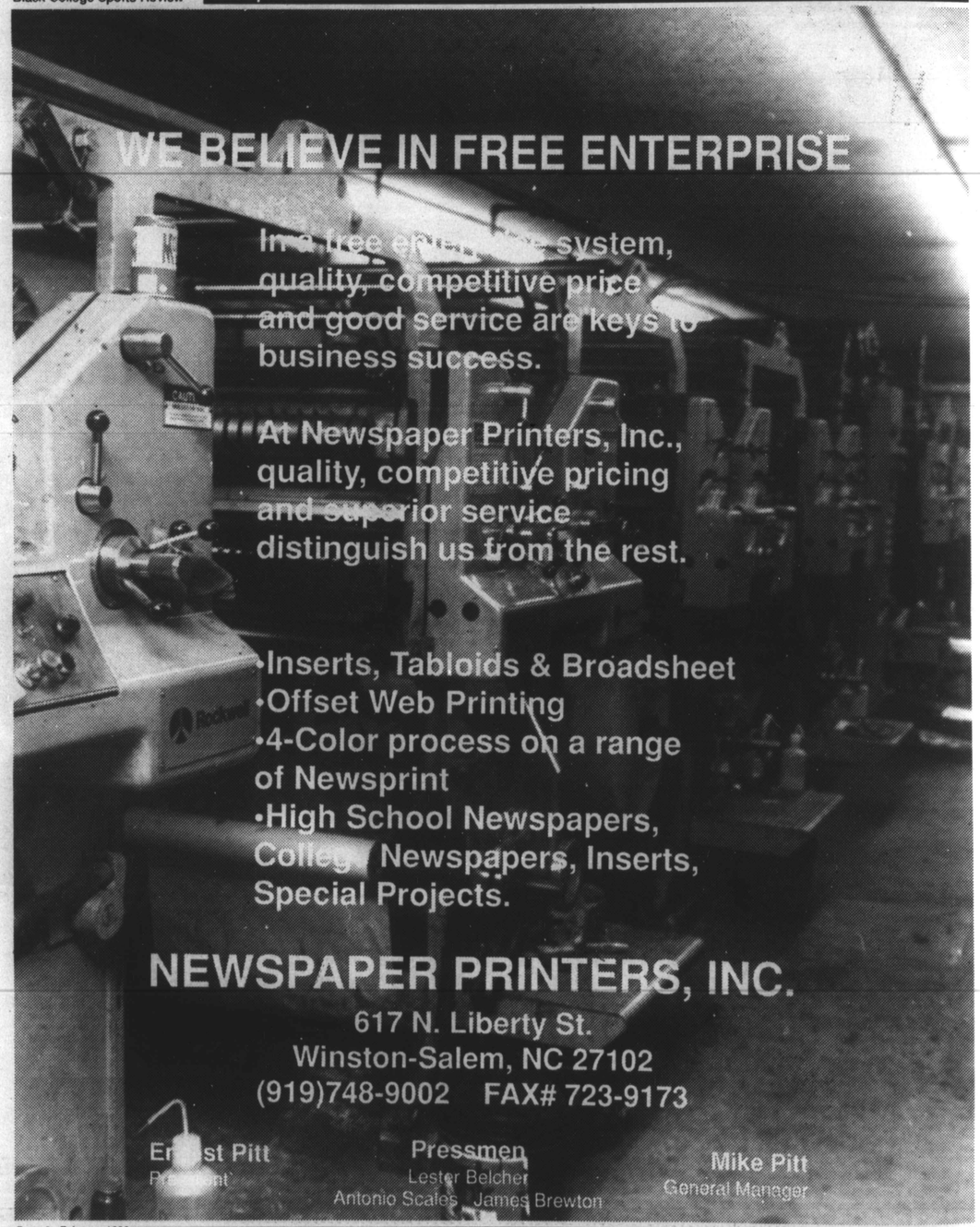

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There is a common ground for Freedom Bowl, UDC athletics

On the surface, the University of the District of Columbia's quest for membership in the NCAA Division I and the revival of the Freedom Bowl All-Star Classic appear to have little in common.

But upon closer scrutiny, they tell a strikingly similar story -- haste makes waste.

First the Freedom Bowl.

The game, revived after a one-year hiatus by Houston-based promoter Lionel Day, was a competitive success, with the North (MEAC and CIAA) defeating the South (SWAC and SIAC), 14-13.

But financially, it was a flop. Attendance was estimated to be between 2,500 and 3,500, including complimentary ticket holders.

There's little doubt that the game is worthwhile. But it seemed doomed from the start.

Initially, Day said the contest would include athletes from smaller predominantly white schools as well as those from predominantly black schools. That idea rankled officials of many black schools.

But that wasn't something that couldn't be smoothed over.

Neither was neglecting to include officials of the SIAC and CIAA in a press conference during the summer, held to announce that the game would be played. From the time of that press conference until approximately a month before the game, something funny happened -- nothing.

Day didn't secure a sponsor -- Budweiser, until well into the fall -- and the game was not well-promoted. The result was that as recently as a week before the game, participating players weren't sure if there would even be a game.

The Sheridan Broadcasting Network had considered holding its All-American banquet in conjunction with the game but backed off when it couldn't get a committment from Day that all systems were go. Coaches threatened to be no-shows because of problems concerning honorariums they were to receive. Even though most of the coaches did participate, two of them left.

It seems that the prudent thing for Day to have done would have been to secure sponsorship before going forward with his project. And once sponsorship was secured, do everything in his power to promote the game. The current slate of college football makes all-star games a tough sell to begin with. Taking the attitude that the game will sell itself guarantees no sale.

When the calender turned to October and the game still wasn't solidly in place, Day would have been better served to put the game on hold for another year so he could be sure that it

Please See Page 6

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Kerry is now the CIAA boss

Leon Kerry has recently been named as the new commissioner of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.

Kerry takes over for former commissioner Bob Moorman who resigned from the post last April. Kerry had served as the league's interim commissioner since that time while a permanent successor was being decided upon. Prior to Moorman's departure, Kerry had been the CIAA's business manager since December 1988.

However, there have been questions raised as to why the conference chose Kerry over the other finalists.

They point out that Kerry, whose primary work background is in banking and finance, has no experience as an athletic administrator. Those detractors also note that his inexperience resulted in the CIAA not being represented in the 1989 NCAA Division II football playoffs.

Back in November, the CIAA had at least two teams who would more than likely have made the playoff scene (Winston-Salem State with an 8-2 record and Hampton University who ended the year at 8-1-1). But the conference didn't file the necessary paperwork that would have allowed the playoff selection committee to choose teams other than the conference champion to participate in post-season play.

Bowie State won the title, beating Winston, but because of the Bulldogs' 7-3-1 record, the selection committee felt other teams were more deserving.

What really bothers some folk around the CIAA, is that the league had the opportunity to waive the bylaw that designates that only the conference champion can be considered for post-season play. In addition, the NCAA had sent out letters concerning this matter to all conference administrative offices last summer. Conferences had until the first of September to waive the bylaw.

Still, the CIAA had other options even if the league didn't meet the deadline. Conferences are allowed to petition and get that waiver, but they also have to pay a late fee. That option was never pursued.

Kerry has said publically that he had no knowledge of the letter and wasn't familiar with that regulation. In fact, nobody seemed to notice that the league had shot itself in the foot — that is, until after the fact..

In '88, the CIAA sent three teams to the playoffs — North Carolina Central, Winston-Salem State and Bowie State.

In summation, there are voices who say that Kerry wasn't willing to take responsibility even though he is the CIAA chief.

Leon Kerry

In fairness, it's way too early to tell just what kind of boss Kerry will turn out to be. But it's difficult not to think that he was chosen because of the perception that he will be a "yes" man for the presidents of CIAA schools.

It has been said often (although nobody will agree to be quoted) that the presidents of the league are wanting more total control of how the conference is run. The fact that the league's college presidents and Moorman often collided on issues, indicates that there's more than a measure of truth to that.

In essence, the major fear is that Kerry won't be his own man, that he will simply carry out the wishes of the college presidents. If the presidents are looking to exert that kind of control, the CIAA could be headed for major problems down the road.

The conference basketball tournament is a showcase event. But like any other venture, it can never get too much in the way of corporate backing and additional promotion that will enable the event to move to larger arenas and draw larger crowds.

This year's tournament has been sold out since last November. That demonstrates what kind of interest the tournament has generated. The fact that the Norfolk Scope (seating capacity around 10,500) is always busting at the seams in terms of attendance, indicates that the tournament can handle a larger group of fans and rake in the dollars in the process.

-Walton Dunn

MEN'S ROUNDBALL

BCSR's Top Ten

1. Coppin State
2. Southern University
3. Norfolk State
4. North Carolina Central
5. Florida A&M
6. Texas Southern
7. Virginia Union
8. Morehouse College
9. Alabama State
10. Albany State