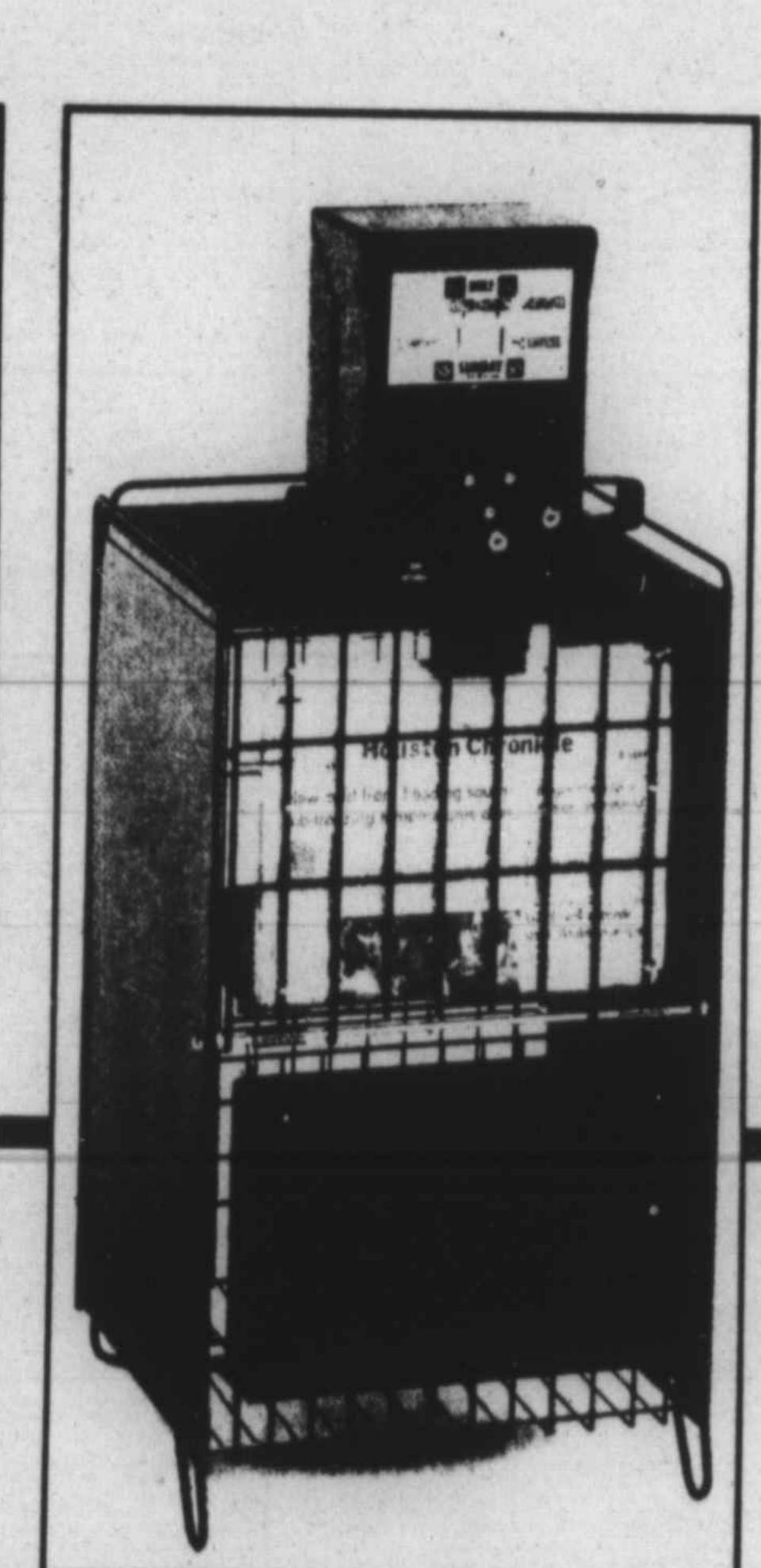
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Black college sports TV program needs our total support

For years athletic programs at predominantly black colleges have been plagued by an acute lack of television exposure.

Despite producing some of the country's top athletes in all sports, black colleges have competed in a virtual vacuum as far as national exposure goes.

ESPN's plan to air a weekly 30-minute program devoted to the four predominantly black leagues (Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference, Southwestern Athletic Conference, Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association) should help solve that problem.

Granted, a weekly 30-minute highlighting of the four conferences isn't a lot. But it's a start, and the potential benefits are too great to have it fail.

Because ESPN goes into so many homes across the nation, this show can give the schools involved instant name recognition. That's something money can't buy, nor can its value be measured in dollars and cents come recruiting time.

There are some things supporters of black colleges and their athletic programs can do to make sure the show has a long run.

First and foremost, people have to watch the program. Television is about ratings. While such a show is long overdue, we mustn't delude ourselves into thinking that the folks at ESPN -- in a fit of righteousness -came up with this idea and are committed to it no matter what. Television is about ratings. If the show isn't watched, it will be canned in a New York minute if not

If just half the alumni of black colleges were to watch the program on a regular basis, that would be enough to keep it on the air far beyond the initial 26 weeks ESPN has committed to.

Another means of supporting the show is through viewer comments. If you watch the show, let somebody who makes a difference, i.e., ESPN, know how you feel about it. Too many times, complaints and compliments are never expressed. If we remain silent, the powers that be can always claim they didn't know. Let's deny them that excuse.

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Photo Courtesy of University of District of Columbia

McElroy feels that UDC must have strong community support in order for the move from Division II to Division I to be a successful one.

McElroy leaves UDC for AD's post at Sacramento State

Dr. Lee McElroy is stepping down as athletic direc- Atlantic Coast and Big East conferences for support and tor at the University of the District of Columbia to assume a similar position at Sacramento State.

But he says his leaving doesn't mean that he lacks faith in UDC's decision to move from Division II to pen.

"I definitely feel I'm leaving an unfinished agenda," said McElroy, who assumes his duties at Sacramento and the support of the community and administration. State in July after only a year at UDC.

McElroy was UDC's sixth athletic director in 11 years. McElroy, 41, played football at UCLA and had been assistant athletic director at Houston.

"It was a very agonizing decision," said McElroy. "I just felt the optimism, growth potential and vision are teams, and its \$1.9 million budget has not been something I couldn't pass up. For them to conduct a increased. national search and come up with a black guy from Beaumont, Texas, is a storybook finish."

Sacramento State, which has 18 sports programs to 12 for UDC, is also in the process of moving from Division II to Division I. McElroy said the unlimited potential that Sacramento State has in terms of support was a ing in Division I-AA in football and Division I in all determining factor in his decision.

dollars into an athletic program. The rest has to come North Carolina A&T, Southern and Bethune-Cookman. from the community. You have to get collective community support. That, for me, was clearly the most frustrat- move into I-AA and the upcoming season. In the past, he ing thing at UDC. And it's going to be an ongoing and said, the Firebirds' biggest problem has been personnel complex issue because of the competition this town turnover. Each year, he's had a team full of first-year (Washington, D.C.). It's the most competitive situation in sports marketing anywhere."

McElroy was able to institute a sports medicine pro- cally ineligible. gram and academic support program, but failed in his attempt to organize a booster club.

Sacramento State will be the only Division I school

UDC has applied for membership in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference and will be in direct competition with Howard, Morgan State, Maryland-Eastern better people." Shore and Coppin State as well as schools in the

recruits in the Washington area.

McElroy says that UDC has the potential to be competitive in Division I, but certain things must hap-

"The level of intensity has to be increased," he said. "That includes the caliber of athlete who is recruited, It's an entirely different set of parameters."

Some think that UDC is making the move too soon. An internal report suggests delaying the move three to five years. UDC still does not have housing for its athletes, an NCAA requirement for Division I-AA football

McElroy said the benefits outweigh the negatives. He said that in order for UDC's move to be successful, the board of trustees, athletic department, faculty and staff and the community must all work together.

If UDC gains reclassification, it will begin competother sports in 1991. The Firebirds, who have not won a "That's essential," McElroy told The Washington football game in the last two seasons, will play five I-Post. "Institutions are only going to put X number of AA schools in 1989 -- Howard, South Carolina State,

> Coach Bobby Frazier says he is optimistic about the players. The 1988 football and basketball seasons were almost canceled because so many players were academi-

This year, 53 lettermen were out for spring football

Frazier says the reason for the higher retention rate is a mandatory tutorial session that has been initiated.

"We realize we'll have problems," said Frazier. "But it will make us better. The kids will play better against

-Roscoe Nance