BLACK COLLEGE REPORT

The MEAC Tourney: Again looking for a home

By DAVID BULLA
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The Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference's honeymoon with Philadelphia apparently is over.

Commissioner **Ken Free** said the conference is open to other proposals for next year's post-season basketball tournament, although he did not completely rule out the possibility that the league would return to Philadelphia for a third year. The MEAC has been there the last two years, but it had trouble filling first the Palestra and then the seldom-used Civic Center. The latter hadn't been open for six years and once housed the old Philadelphia Warriors of the National Basketball Association. It didn't even have a wooden basketball floor and one had to be shipped in from the Nassau Coliseum in Long Island, N.Y.

The conference faced two sources of competition in Philadelphia: the NBA's 76ers and the city high school tournament. Trying to fill either the 9,000-seat Palestra or the 10,500-seat Civic Center was a chore against such competition. Also, media questioned the conference's credibility after the attendance at March's title game between North Carolina A&T and Howard was announced at 8,500 in a half-filled Civic Center.

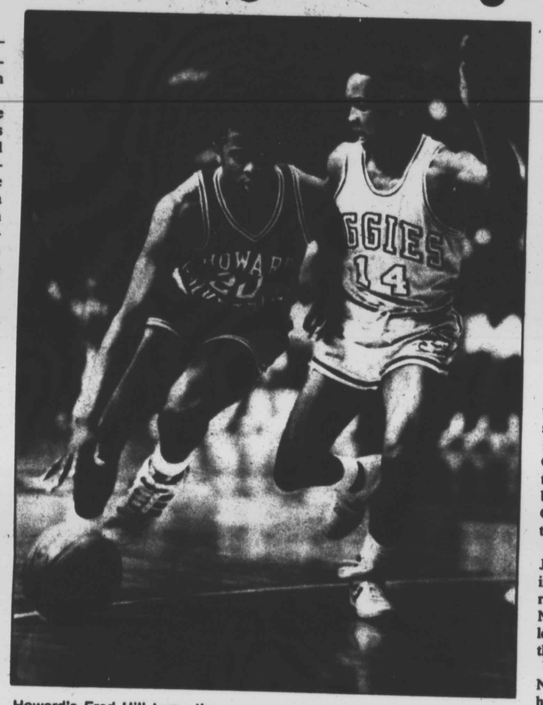
Some Philadelphians have suggested that the MEAC and the group that brought the tourney to the city ought to try a smaller arena like Temple's 4,500-seat McGonigle Hall, located in the heart of a black neighborhood. That might bring back the raucous atmosphere that was the tourney's trademark in its early days.

Moreover, there were rumors that at least one Philadelphia business wasn't very happy with the eight-school conference. One hotel reportedly was upset with a school that procrastinated on its bill payment in 1985.

Whatever the situation in Philadelphia, it is likely the MEAC Tournament will be elsewhere next year. An attractive alternative site is the Greensboro, N.C., Coliseum, which hosted the tournament in 1976-79 and '83-84.

"The whole problem with Philadelphia was trying to sell the tournament with no conference school located there," North Carolina A&T Athletic Director **Orby Moss**. "It's like asking Temple or the University of Pennsylvania to come to the Greensboro Coliseum and expect them to sell a lot of tickets."

Moss said he prefers an on-campus site for the tournament until the conference can start to make money on it.



Howard's Fred Hill turns the corner against A&T's pesky, 5-8 Thomas Griffis. But the MEAC Tournament hasn't turned the corner in Philadelphia (photo by Brian Branch-Price).

An on-campus facility would cost less and would ensure better ticket sales.

Free refused comment on the subject until after the MEAC Spring Meetings in late May at Pinehurst, N.C.

A&T Pays Off Debt

At a time when most black college athletic departments are facing the depths of financial crises, North Carolina A&T is about to pay off a debt that once surpassed $300,000.

The Aggies, given five years by the state of North Carolina to pay off the debt back in 1982, will complete payment at the end of June. Three consecutive years in the black led to A&T's beating its 1987 deadline.

"A lot of the credit for eradicating the debt goes to the men's basketball team," Athletic Director **Orby Moss** said. "With them going to five straight NCAAs, that's created a windfall of income for the athletic department."

Moss said cuts were minimal, but primarily came in non-revenue sports. In addition to the basketball windfalls that came with NCAA appearance money, the maintenance of a financial monitoring system was critical to diminishing the debt. Each expenditure has faced a three-part scrutiny.

"Chancellor (**Edward B.**) **Fort** established the financial monitoring system the year before I arrived," said Moss, who came to A&T from the University of the District of Columbia. "They paid about $25,000 on the debt the year before I arrived and it was merely incumbent upon me to follow the system."

When Moss arrived in Greensboro, the Aggie football program, the athletic program's biggest spender, was in a shambles. But things have gradually turned around under Coach **Mo Forte**, whose team went 6-5 last year. That was A&T's first winning record since 1981. Football ticket sales are expected to increase in the fall. In recent years, ticket sales have paid for only 50 percent of the $300,000 it takes to run the football program.

With a surplus of money expected next year, the Aggie AD hopes to turn his attention to upgrading the athletic program. Among the improvements would be increased scholarships for non-revenue sports, a new wooden floor in Corbett Sports Center and the installation of lights at Aggie Stadium.

Smith Tennis

Johnson C. Smith's tennis program is making a racket in the CIAA again.

Hampton University has dominated the rest of the conference, having won seven titles in a row and 15 of the last 19. But Smith, which last won the CIAA crown in 1968, has served notice that the Golden Bulls are not far behind, losing to the Pirates 6-3 in the CIAA championship match at Hampton, Va., last month.

Like Hampton's **Robert F. Screen**, JCSU Coach **William Madrey** was relying on imported talent to post a 27-5 record and a No. 10 ranking in the NCAA Division II poll. Three of the losses were to Division I programs and the other two to Hampton.

Three of Madrey's top six are from Nigeria. Freshman **Muritala Ajibade** has played No. 1 for the Golden Bulls. Ajibade is a former national juniors champion in Nigeria and currently ranks third there.

Innocent Modika plays No. 2 and **Yakubu Suleiman** is No. 4.

The Golden Bulls' other singles players are also foreigners, including No. 3 **Howard Rankin** of Montego Bay, Jamaica, No. 5 **Koray Ozturkler** of Ankara, Turkey, and **John Hattersly** of Sheffield, England.

Ajibade (with a 19-3 personal record), Modika (18-4) and Suleiman (17-5) all competed in the NCAA Division II Tennis Championships at California State Northridge May 12-18.

Alcorn Hires Danzy

Theo Danzy, an assistant coach at Alcorn State, was named football coach and athletic director at the school May 1.

Danzy replaces **Marino "Godfather" Casem**, who will become athletic director at Southern University

Please See Page 12

