

2017 Preseason Baseball Ranking Small School Division

By Michael Coker/Black College Nines

Benedict College

2016 Record: 27-19 .587 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.9

Benedict returns 15 players from last year's team that was 27-19 and for much of the year was the #1 ranked team in the Black College Nines National Poll. The Tigers hit 40 homeruns in 43 games and was the Black College Baseball Team National Homerun Champ. Benedict also led the NCAA Division II in stolen bases for the eighth consecutive year. Outfielder David White Jr was named to last year's Black College Nines' All Elite Team, along with RHP James Roman, named to the pre-season Black College Nine's All American team. The Tigers had 6 returning players make the Palmetto All State team in 2016.

Coach Selwyn Young looks for another winning season for the Tigers with the core from last season's team still in place. "We added transfer newcomers Omar Colon at first baseman, pitcher Brandon Halbert, outfielder's Darian Williams and Anthony Simmons, infielder Hector Mosqua, and catcher Sammy Suarez. Also added were freshmen pitchers , Jacob Lagos, Brian Nevills and KB Buchanon, as well as freshman infielders Alex Madeuke ,Chris Floyd , Joshua Shaw, Dantrell Lucas and Bryan De Aza.

Biggest Strength:

Aggressive on the base paths, speed, fielding, pitching depth, big bat David White Jr

Biggest Weakness:

Under .500 vs. non-conference in 2016

Bluefield State College

2016 Record: 10-32 .238 **Conference:** ECAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Bluefield State's outlook is still bright for 2017 due to the return of 14 lettermen and a large recruiting class consisting of 4 transfers and 6 freshmen. Returning seniors for 2017 include four-year players IF/RHP Justin Bowler, C/IF Sam Harris, IF/OF Chaz Rutherford, and OF/IF/C Bubba Smith. All four were starters for Bluefield State in 2016 and should be important

contributors again this year along with junior returnee RPH reliever Romero Cartwright and starting RHPs Tanner Muovich as well as transfers RHP Addison Meeks, and C Billy O'Hara.

Top freshmen recruits include RHP/OF Brandon Chandler, C/IF Kevon Moxey, OF Turner Nelson, IF/OF Jordan Wilson, RHP/U Brandon Wortkoetter, and OF Logan Wriston. Veteran Head Coach Geoff Hunter, entering his 33rd season at BSC, feels that this year's team has the right mix of talent and experience, which is stronger up the middle defensively and more consistent throughout the lineup offensively. "If our young arms can step up and replace the innings we lost to graduation, then we should be very competitive again."

Biggest Strength:

Adding arms with senior leadership

Biggest Weakness:

Hitting consistency

Clafin University

2016 Record: 24-31 .436 **Conferences:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.7

With the return of seven starters from last year's Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) championship team, the 2017 Clafin University baseball team is excited about the possibilities for the season. Despite losing some components from 2016, the Panthers return the core of its lineup from a year ago that played a tough non-conference schedule leading the program to the NCAA Division II playoffs.

The top returnees to the starting lineup from last season squad include: Lyndale Morley (P/OF), Reginald Rogers (SS), Johnny Stevenson (C), Christopher Gilliam (OF), Elliot Milton (OF), Damien "Rashad" Bivens (3B) and Jeturi Brown (INF).

The Panthers will look to take the core of the team and combine it with some talented newcomers to help in defense of the title. Joining the Panthers this season are transfers, Johnathan Parnell, Eric Dubose, Rashad Webster and Darrell Langston. Additionally, Clafin has a strong freshman class with the likes of Chazz Walker, Neftali Rayes, Brian Shaw, Jalen Spurrll and Caleb Green. Clafin baseball looks forward to opening day.

Biggest Strength:

Reginald Rogers, Damien “Rashad” Bivens and Jeturi Brown back to lead team to another NCAA DII playoff run

Biggest Weakness:

Unproven newcomers on the mound

Clark Atlanta University

2016 Record: 11-31 .262 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Clark Atlanta Baseball looks to build upon the success of 2016. With the majority of the key figures returning for 2017, look for the Panthers to make a run at the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championship having missed the postseason by one game last year. Returning are All-SIAC selection 3B Malcolm Seabrooks , SS/RHP/Closer Jordan Johnson, sophomores 1B Jason Howell, C Ayrton Gijbertha and junior Utility player Joseph Holmes II. The Panthers are set to surprise the SIAC this season and if they can start hitting early, could make a difference come conference tournament.

Biggest Strength:

Hitting, speed, relief pitching

Biggest Weakness:

Starting pitching

Concordia College

2016 Record: 4-21 .160 **Conference:** Independent **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Concordia College baseball team is undergoing a transformation, coming off a season that was by far the best since program restarted in 2011. This year’s group includes big time transfers from HBCU small school top ranked Selma University, Travis Jean, William Harris, and Keifer Kilcrease which should bring much needed leadership to the squad. Along with the returning sophomore class lead by speedster Mason Miller and pitchers Don Creecy and Derrick

Johnson, this could be the year that the Hornets push their way in to the playoffs. Both Jean and Kilcrease were Black College Nines 2016 HBCU Preseason All-Americans.

Concordia will also feature a strong freshman class that includes powerful Johnathan McKnight and home grown RHP Johnathan Allen. The mix is great and expectations are high for Concordia.

Biggest Strength:

Six transfers should have an immediate impact

Biggest Weakness:

Inclement weather

Edward Waters College

2016 Record: 31-13 .705 **Conference:** GCAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.2

In 2017 the Edward Waters College baseball program returns 21 players from the 2016 roster. Among the returners is junior SS Jordan Pontious who hits to all fields, OF Miguel Beltre, ace of the pitching staff senior LHP Fredrick Belz and senior closer RHP Richard Edwards. The Tigers added 6 key freshmen in RHP Manuel Guerra, RHP Tyler Sessions, LHP Dorion Kemp, and RHP Julio Flores from Venezuela.

The Tigers have a difficult schedule facing a number of teams that are ranked or received votes in the NAIA Top 25 pre-season coaches' poll. It is going to be a great challenge week in and week out facing ranked teams giving the Tigers an understanding on how good they really are!

Biggest Strength:

Returning 21 starters, seven starting position players, batting, fielding and experience

Biggest Weakness:

Lack of a power hitter

Florida Memorial University

2016 Record: 7-38 .156 **Conference:** FSC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

FMU welcomes Tino Burgos as the new baseball coach. The Miami native will lead the 2016-17 squad this year with the hopes of building a competitive baseball team in the Sun Conference and in the NAIA collegiate baseball world. Although the task may be a difficult one, it is a challenge that has been openly embraced by the new head coach.

Alongside returners RHP Devin Hadley and LHP Ruben Sanchez, the Lions welcome a strong class of incoming freshmen. Power hitter Raymond Rodriguez, 3B, Josuan Lopez, CF and Jose Chavez are three very talented young players. Jose turned down several NCAA DI schools to join FMU this year and stay home. "We look forward to the baseball season and shaping Lions baseball into one of the top teams in the conference and eventually the nation" - Tino Burgos.

Biggest Strength:

New head coach getting national top home grown talent

Biggest Weakness:

Powerful Sun Conference

Harris-Stowe State University

2016 Record: 18-27 .400 **Conference:** AMC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

According to Head Coach Curtis Bilbrey, "we will have many new faces this season at Harris-Stowe. We added 30 new players to the roster, 18 of which are transfers. We lost the core of our offense last season but we have added much needed depth all around the field. We are at least 2 deep at each position. We have also gotten our number one pitcher Steven Kemp back from an injury. Overall we should improve in every aspect but most importantly it will be on pitching and defense."

Key additions are SS Pernel Roberts, RHP David Flores, 3B Jared, 2B Tony Montano SS Daylen Pajimola, 1B Greg Carter, C Dylan Yankle, LHP Kendall Sheler, RHP Tyler Boles, C Dio Diaz. Key returners are RHP Steven Kemp, LHP Deon Herron, CF Tyler Schatz, LF Arsalaan Alvi. 2017 will be a break out year for Bilbrey's Hornets.

Biggest Strength:

Hitting, hitting with power, infield

Biggest Weakness:

Inexperience freshmen at the collegiate level

Huston-Tillotson University

2016 Record: 18-25 .419 **Conference:** RRAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Head Coach Alvin Moore enters the 2017 season ranked amongst the top active NAIA coaches in winning percentage. Coach Moore's 34th season at the helm of Huston-Tillotson's baseball program will see a big reliance on a good mixture of JUCO transfers and freshman players. The Rams' strength will be power hitting and good pitching. "We have a good group of freshman players who will be able to compete for a starting position", Moore stated. "We will have to find a shotstop from the freshman or transfer players, because we lost our starter from last year."

Top incoming freshman are C Rylee McGee, RPH Matt Black, RHP Dorin Jones, and 3B Gweshahgn Richards. Moore expects freshmen to have an immediate impact.

Biggest Strength:

Hitting, speed on the base path

Biggest Weakness:

Rugged Red River Athletic Conference

Jarvis Christian College

2016 Record: 27-29 .482 **Conference:** RRAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.10

Jarvis Christian will be returning 7 of 9 position players, including first team all-conference players DeAndre McGuire (OF) and Carlos Andrade (1B). McGuire looks to hold down the leadoff spot with Andrade hitting in the three hole. Both players are four year players who have produced in big ways. Offensively the Bulldogs will miss Javion Randle (second team All American, while leading the country in hitting) who is playing professional, but have freshman Chris White filling the hole.

According to head coach Mike Holochuck, "offensively look for us to be in top three again in the conference with added speed. Should be more of a complete lineup with tons of experience." Defensively on the infield Jarvis Christian will be much improved from last year with biggest question mark being outfield play. Pitching will be much improved and deeper than last season. Game one starter Emilio Griego is set to have another big season, with key additions in Matt Burrows, and Alex Guerrero. Top freshmen are Jordan Garcia RHP, Phillip Griego RHP and Chris White OF. Transfers include Matt Burrows RHP, Alex Guerrero RHP, Tyler Arnsberg RHP and Spencer Thomas OF. Coach Holochuck stated, "overall top to bottom may be most complete team we have had in 5 seasons here."

Biggest Strength:

Good offensive lineup

Biggest Weakness:

Pitching depth. Gased out in conference tournament last season

Kentucky State University

2016 Record: 12-29 .292 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Head Coach Rob Henry believes the Thorobreds have several players ready to step in and build on the positives that the 2016 team established. Junior OF Elijah Collins will serve as the leadoff man. JUCO transfer Greg Alexander and sophomore Bryan Wilson will be a two-man combination behind the plate. INF Darian Dull, Junior SS Justin Stinson, and 2B Russell Sims return to man the middle infield for the 'Breds.

The Thorobreds will be lead on the mound by senior RHP Josh Dunn, who pitched a complete game victory over Benedict in the 2016 SIAC Tournament. He will be complemented by junior Chae Butler and sophomores Joe Crisp and Joshua Owsley. They will be joined by freshman transfer with wicked stuff Ricky West, who brings tantalizing potential to the Kentucky State pitching staff. Head Baseball Coach Rob Henry is excited about this upcoming season. "Our players have worked hard on the field and in the weight room, and we've had a good approach to meeting the challenges facing us this year."

Biggest Strength:

Improved pitching staff

Biggest Weakness:

Lack of consistent hitting

Lane College

2016 Record: 1-35 .038 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The new Lane College Dragons will be a young and inexperienced group that will compete at a high level under new head coach Stanley Stubbs. Lane College will consist of 14 freshmen along with senior 2B Dante Clay, potential leadoff hitter. Although the Dragons will be inexperienced in many positions, they will be more disciplined both offensively and defensively under the new assistant coaches John Bates (infield coach) and Chase Wollett (pitching coach).

The key to Lane College's success in the tough western division of the SIAC conference will rely on a strong pitching performance from the young pitching staff. Coming off a 3-32 overall record, 0-15 in the conference, Coach Stubbs feels that this year's group of dedicated men will achieve more than they ever have before. This is the year that Lane College baseball will raise some eyebrows in the SIAC.

Biggest Strength:

Hitting

Biggest Weakness:

Inexperience

LeMoyne Owen College

2016 Record: 7-32 .179 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Head Coach Marcus Smith's goal for the LeMoyne Owen College baseball program is to make it competitive and tournament bound every year. 2016 was a clean up year working with recruits from the previous coach. Smith's first recruiting class has been a success for 2017, hauling in top incoming freshmen NCAA DII recruits Antwain Booker, John Johnson, Caleem Serrant, and Tyquavious Noland. Big returnees are Chris Conard who was ranked nationally in doubles in NCAA Division II, Dexwin Thompson ranked in games complete in the conference

and Pedro Gomez. This team consist of 6 seniors who bring leadership among the younger players.

Also there has been an huge upgrade in the pitching rotation with more speed on the bases, along with solid defense and strong bats one through nine in the line up. According to Coach Smith, "this year should be very exciting for the program as it progress toward an elite program in the SIAC. Furthermore, I like to say the alumni has been very supportive of the baseball program which is so important."

Biggest Strength:

Fielding, pitching, senior leadership

Biggest Weakness:

Pitching depth in close games

Lincoln University, PA

2016 Record: 5-33 .132 **Conference:** CIAA **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The Lincoln University Lions baseball program is ready to make a run to the CIAA Championships this year. Eight seniors who all have seen significant time return in 2017. 2B Ronald Lashley led the team last year in batting. He along with the other seniors have shown great leadership throughout the fall to help the younger players develop.

Eight sophomores saw a good amount of playing time in 2016 and will again be asked to step up in their second year. OF Julian Bradshaw along with Freshman RHP Rolando Alvarez will be a big part of the Lions rotation and OF Dominic Rheubottom will be another freshman who will see some time in the outfield. There is a strong core of players who are looking to make it to the conference tournament for the first time as a Division II program. With depth at all positions, the Lions look to make a statement this year in the CIAA.

Biggest Strength:

Solid defensively

Biggest Weakness:

Suspect pitching staff

Miles College

2016 Record: 32-17 .653 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.5

After winning a team-record 31 games and finishing third at the SIAC Baseball Championship, head coach Kenneth Hatcher took his 250-plus victories (and 94 more that were vacated) and retired after 17 seasons at the helm. He wanted to make sure the program was in good hands going forward so he groomed Ty Roberts, a former player and assistant for the Golden Bears, as his successor. Roberts signed 16 players for the 2017 season who should make up the nucleus of a team that is looking to improve on last season's historic effort in hopes of winning the SIAC title.

Roberts recruited, SS/2B Trevor Bates, RHP Will Donahoo, LHP/OF Alex Bentley, 1B Peyton Logan, 3B/C Reaves Brashear, 1B/P Tristian Montgomery, OF Lavontae LaCount, C Justin Bisharat, SS Cameron Honeycutt, SS/P Kolby Brannon, C Cody Hamilton, OF Brandon Conner, OF Colby Pate, P Ernest Frazier, C Roderick Ransom and RHP Jake Inglis. Freshmen should have an immediate impact on the mound.

Biggest Strength:

Freshmen and JUCO transfers should have an immediate impact

Biggest Weakness:

Short of quality reliever

Paine College

2016 Record: 27-20 .574 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.7

Paine returns 8 starters from last year's team that finished one game behind eventual winner, Albany State in the Eastern Division in the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SIAC) in 2016. Seniors Kendrick Elder, Adam Martin, Fentress Henderson, Jazhiel Morel, and HBCU Elite player Ricky Carvajal, return to solidify the line up offensively and defensively. SIAC Pitcher of the Year, flame thrower RHP Evan Krenz returns and is ready to pick up where he left off last season. Other juniors who join Krenz are Brad Doeblor, Jaron Johnson (coming back from season ending leg surgery) and Zach Rader, who will bring strength to the lineup.

Paine signed 12 newcomers to join the baseball family in 2017 who will play major roles this season. Transfer Hardvis Batista, freshmen Aaron Ushery, Tyler Brown, Randall Quarles and Ryan Brooks will bring power to the line up offensively. Arman Bernal, Keenen Robinson, and Matthew Wray will bring speed in the outfield and solid bats to the line up. According to head coach Kerby Marshall, "Paine will continue to be an aggressive base running and small ball team offensively. Defensively the Lions will strive to be solid in all positions and focus on making plays throughout the games." This lineup can make a run for the SIAC Conference title come May.

Biggest Strength:

Batting, fielding, pitching, starter RHP Evan Krenz

Biggest Weakness:

Finding two quality mid-week starters

Saint Augustine's University

2016 Record: 13-33 .282 **Conference:** CIAA **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Saint Augustine's return seniors RHP Ricky Rice and OF Mike Keels, as well as two juniors in RHP Marquis Johnson and INF Ruben Pinero. The Falcons should generate offense with their bats. The fielding is expected to improve from last season. Coach Whitaker is concerned though about the team's depth after losing a number of players from last season.

Coach Whitaker states "we have some good freshmen this year but unfortunately they are red shirting due to not being eligible. We haven't been good in the last few years because we are dealing with 1.5 in scholarships. We did bring in a couple transfers who should help us big time for the 2017 season. Hopefully are defense we help us win a few more games this year with the addition of a new infield and outfield."

Biggest Strength:

Infield solid defensively

Biggest Weakness:

Lack depth at all positions, pitching

Selma University

2016 Record: 27-12 .692 **Conference:** Independent **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.3

NCCAA Poll: No. 10

Despite the departure of about 14 players, Selma University is still expecting another successful baseball season in 2017. The Bulldogs are returning four everyday starters from last season and have added a nice recruiting class to fill in some key spots. The Bulldogs have added some JUCO transfers and several talented freshman who will be expected to continue the winning tradition at Selma University. This will also be Coach Adrian Holloway's first season serving as Athletic Director as well as head baseball coach. The Bulldogs are returning NCCAA leading hitter Jose Duran, 2b/SS Ricky Butts, CF Undray Lawrence Jr., SS Brandon Woodlen and 1b Marcus Hardy. Garrett Price and Reggie Vaughn are the 2 returning starting pitchers. Incoming freshman who will have an impact are OF/RHP Will Thomas, RHP Gavin Baxter, C Brian Davison and 1B Caleb Stinchcomb.

Last year's team finished third nationally in Black College Nines small school poll and tenth in National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) poll. The Bulldogs also have tough games scheduled this season with nationally ranked Faulkner University, Stillman College, Fairmount State, William Carey University, Univ of Mobile and Toccoa Falls College. 2016 marked the sixth straight NCCAA playoff appearance. Selma expect to have another great year of baseball.

Biggest Strength:

Batting, speed, pitching and fielding

Biggest Weakness:

Relief pitching

Stillman College

2016 Record: 27-24 .540 **Conferences:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.6

The Stillman Tigers were a very senior heavy team last season which went well towards experience as well as maturity. According to Head Coach Julius McDougal, "freshman want to

play, sophomores want to start, juniors want to hit, and seniors want to win!!" As a team, the Tigers will employ muscle ball and station to station on the base paths. This year McDougal feels the Tigers are more athletic and deeper as a team. Defensively they are very solid and worked hard all fall to make sure every routine play is made. "Offensively we have a lot of speed to go with some thump provided by Josh McDaniel and company. Brody Gibson will be a vital part of our teams success and as he goes most likely we go."

Key returners are OF/C Joshua McDaniel, INF Kevin Usselman (recovering from a torn labrum and rotator cuff that happened midway through last season) and starting pitcher Zack Gonzalez. Top new comers include INF/RHP Brody Gibson, LHP Cameron Kilgore and RHP Denzell Washington. The Tigers have a brutal 35 game schedule against top NAIA and HBCU ranked opponents in 2017.

Biggest Strength:

Pitching and fielding

Biggest Weakness:

Hard throwing 90+ starter out for the season RHP Kewayne McCray-Recovering from Tommy John Surgery

Talladega College

2016 Record: 21-28 .429 **Conference:** GCAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The Talladega baseball program has a new head coach at the helm. Marcos Dominguez steps in for departed Wil Ramos. Dominguez considered to be a really good recruiter has brought some top freshmen student athletics from overseas that have been cleared by the NAIA Eligibility Committee for the 2017 season. The Tornados have five returning from last season. Five JUCO transfers with a lot of baseball sense will also help the program. Talladega has a pretty good pitching program this year with 5 starters who throw about 85 to 92 mph. This pitching staff has a good control and they know they have play with the hitters mind.

The top incoming freshman are Manuel Caballero from Pamana, hard throwing heavy recruited RHP David Padilla from Mexico who throws 89-92 mph, LHP/Utility Wilkin Louis and RHP Daniel Castillo from Colombia, who has a strong arm and good control. According to coach Dominguez, "we have a good future because we did a good job recruiting in the past season." Talladega plays a top 25 NAIA schedule and one of the toughest in HBCU baseball at the small school level.

Biggest Strength:

Head Coach Marcos Dominguez, pitching, hitting and speed

Biggest Weakness:

Fielding, under .500 against top ranked opponents in 2016

Texas College

2016 Record: 5-38 .116 **Conference:** RRAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The Texas College baseball program has one simple goal going into the 2017 season- improvement. With a current roster that is bolstered by 31 freshmen and sophomores, the Steers turn to the youth to improve last season's record. With transfers Hunter Babineaux, Brandon Johnson and Justin Olivarez, the Steers infield will immediately see a boost in athleticism. Returning junior INF Kameron Davis will be the pulse. Three of the the four infielders (Babineaux, Davis and Johnson) are ready to lead the Steers to success through sound defense. Behind the plate, two underclassmen, Daniel Garcia and freshman Ryan Medrano will split time. Two transfers Cameron Phelts and Emorson Shelvin will add speed from station to station.

On the mound, the Steers have three hard throwers in sophomores, 6'5 LHP Carlos Cordero and 6'5 RHP David Ortiz, LHP Joseph Panalez and sidearm Kiwa Pecararo. TC will also benefit from incoming freshman 6'1 RHP Mark Platt. First year head coach Anthony "Happy" Macon is the Steers third head coach in three years. Macon said that he likes to challenge the team to "forget the past and embrace the present."

Biggest Strength:

New head coach, freshman Kyle Smith big bat with his 6'5 260, speedy "No Fly Zone" outfielders

Biggest Weakness:

Unproven incoming players at the collegiate level

Tougaloo College

2016 Record: 9-42 .176 **Conference:** GCAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The Tougaloo college baseball team expects to be very competitive again this year. Only losing two starters will give us some well needed experience, hopefully with a good recruiting season the Bulldogs will be able to get some pitching and eclipse the 9 wins mark of last year. They have some exciting newcomers in D'Anthony Morrow, Shaquille Hickson, Travion Evans, and Isaiah Rush. Last year they were very inconsistent offensively and hope with the maturity of the returning players are able to make adjustments at the plate during the course of a ballgame. Pitching was nonexistent for the majority of the season, between injuries and eligibility issues they still competed. Defensively not enough experience in some key areas that hurt us in those crucial moments of a lot of ball games.

Head Coach Earl Sanders said, "our goal is to continue to recruit student athletes who have a desire to receive a college degree and continue to pursue their passion of being the best college athlete he can be."

Biggest Strength:

Good recruiting class

Biggest Weakness:

Tough non-conference schedule vs. DI, DII, DIII and NAIA opponents

Tuskegee University

2016 Record: 13-29 .310 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Entering into the 2017 season, the Golden Tigers are now under the leadership of head coach Reginald Hollins, who is no stranger to Tuskegee having served as assistant for 5 years under Head Coach Montressa Kirby. Hollins is looking to get back to the historic winning traditions. The Golden Tigers are returning six starters. Three of six starters are pitchers. Tuskegee has added six true freshmen and a couple of transfers to mix in for the 2017 season.

Newcomers are INF Gabriel Selochan, true freashmen switch hitter INF Dominic Johnson, OF Trey Williams, RHP Nytorious Cooler, OF Keldric Burton, Utility/INF Jarmarcus Ezell and C Javan Wakefield. Coach Hollins states, "I am excited to have a young group of guys who have excepted the challenge to compete. The guys are aware that each year the SIAC Conference is getting more and more competitive. Our main focus is to be disciplined, fundamental, and play with heart. We feel we will have a great chance to compete for a win each game. I am looking forward to this team gaining experience and progressing as a team each game."

Biggest Strength:

Speed on the base path, middle infield

Biggest Weakness:

Starting pitching, lack middle relievers

Virginia State University

2016 Record: 8-31 .205 **Conference:** CIAA **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

After a tough 2016 campaign, the Trojans look to bounce back to winning ways in 2017. Virginia State will be led by returning seniors C David Markins and INF Julian White. Both players return to the Trojans after making All CIAA last season. Also returning in 2017 is RHP Colton Gunn, whose returns to the rotation following an injury, along with LHP Dylan Wells. Transferring from DI MEAC conference North Carolina Central are INF/RHP Jamar Hinton (SS/RHP) and INF Sisqo Scott. Hinton and Scott will most likely split time between shortstop and second base, while Hinton will also be in the starting rotation on the mound.

Other impact players for the Trojans will be transfers RHP/IF Gerald Taylor and OF/RHP Brandon Diamond (OF/RHP). Virginia State also signed JUCO All American OF Jahleel Sewer. Overall depth and speed should be the strength for the Trojans.

Biggest Strength:

Added starting and depth on the mound

Biggest Weakness:

Lack consistent power at the plate

Voorhees College

2016 Record: 14-19 .424 **Conference:** GCAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The Voorhees Tigers play a tough 42 game schedule including top HBCU opponents like Paine College, Benedict College, Stillman College, Edward Waters College, and a tough NAIA team in St. Andrews University. The Tigers are approaching this season with hopes of it being the best season in 15 years. Voorhees is led by a number of returners in all positions. Top returnees

are Brad Isaac, Rodney Goldsmith, Joshua Jordan, Jacob Cooley, Maliki Mack, Ethan Lauritzen, Troy Rosado, Justin Watts, Stephan Perez and Garrett Mack starting shortstop.

Incoming transfers are OF Landon Woody, INF/P Jonathon Mullins and C Kendall Howes. Incoming freshman include 3B Darrius England, C Jameaze McNeal, C Deuntrey Gallman and RHP Talmadge Coleman. "Our greatest improvement throughout the season has been our work ethic." Head coach Justin Thomas has high hopes coming into the 2017 season. "The amount of work each young man has put in outside of preordained practice time has reached a new level. Under coach Thomas the last few years Voorhees has increased it's winning totals. In 2017, that trend should continue.

Biggest Strength:

Depth full 25 man roster in 2017

Biggest Weakness:

Pitching, that could change if they start the season getting some wins under their belts

West Virginia State University

2016 Record: 32-15 .681 **Conference:** MEC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.1

West Virginia State, the reigning Black College Nines small school national champion returns four position starters in 1B Phillip Mandt, 2B Trayvis Patterson, SS Brandon Wright and OF Justin Graham. The Yellow Jackets will have 13 true freshmen and two redshirt freshmen to compete in the Mountain East Conference, were they finished the 2016 season with a 24-8 record. Top pitchers returning include all-conference starter senior RHP Tyler Hall and junior reliever Colby Gainer. Key additions are freshmen Jared Hunt, utility IN/OF Andrew Stone and redshirt C Aaron Neil.

The strength of the team will be head coach Sean Loyd's ability to get overall depth at each position. West Virginia State will play a tough non-conference 2017 schedule.

Biggest Strength:

Batting fielding experience

Biggest Weakness:

Lack of second and a third arm after starter RHP Tyler Hall

Wiley College

2016 Record: 16-38 .296 **Conference:** RRAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The Wiley College baseball team hopes to improve in Kendrick Biggs second season as head coach. The Wildcats are coming off a 16-34 campaign and went 11-21 in the Red River Athletic Conference. Wiley College is seeking its first trip to the postseason since 2014. Among the key players the Wildcats return are Emmanuel Pantaleon, who was Red River Athletic Conference Second Team All-Conference and Black College Nines Second Team, catcher Oswaldo Palacios, who was a RRAC First Team All-Conference selection and shortstop Trevor Spear, who was a RRAC Second Team All-Conference selection.

Biggs is excited about his 2017 recruiting class and sees some of those players contributing immediately. According to Coach Biggs, “we think Luis Santiago is really going to be good and James Richey, Kedric Boyd and Markus Garza, I think they will be able to help us out in some form.”

Biggest Strength:

Starting pitching, speed

Biggest Weakness:

Hitting consistency

Winston Salem State University

2016 Record: 31-22 .585 **Conference:** CIAA **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.4

Winston Salem State returns all-region 2B Randy Norris, 1B Landon Steiner, 3B Ivan Acuna, CF Willie McRae and C Michael McNamara for the 2017 season. With the addition of several JUCO transfers including Randal Ortiz, Brandon Ford, John Garcia, and 1st Team JUCO All-American Rashad Stewart, the 2017 team will be offensive-minded and build around speed.

Biggest Strength:

Hitting and speed, C McNamara solid bat

Biggest Weakness:

Pitching rotation, no solid arms weekend or mid-week starters

Albany State University

2016 Record: 17-35 .327 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

NO PREVIEW SUBMITTED

Morehouse College

2016 Record: 17-28 .378 **Conference:** SIAC **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

NO PREVIEW SUBMITTED

Morris College

2016 Record: 0-13 .000 **Conference:** Independent **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:**

Unranked

NO PREVIEW SUBMITTED

Rust College

2016 Record: 2-20 .091 **Conference:** Independent **BCN 2016 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:**

Unranked

NO PREVIEW SUBMITTED

Biggest Strength:**Biggest Weakness:**

