

## 2016 HBCU Team Overviews - Large School (Division I):

### Alabama A&M University

**2015 Record:** 26-31 .456 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.5

The Bulldogs have five senior returning pitchers from last year's team including Josh Burchell, the number one starter. Senior pitchers Caleb Roberts and Jordan Benford will bring a wealth of bullpen experience. Alabama A&M will have four young men coming off of redshirt seasons in Nolan Ramsey, Carlton Peppers, Cornelius Woods, and Tanner Ivey who look to make an immediate impact in 2016. Seven junior college transfers will also help the program right away. JT O'Reel and Ryan Thrasher are two players to watch offensively and defensively. Key juniors and sophomores, along with eight seniors will carry "the leadership role" according to head baseball coach Mitch Hill.

#### **Biggest Strength:**

Big sticks in the middle of the lineup

#### **Biggest Weakness:**

Effective mid-week starter

### Alabama State University

**2015 Record:** 31-19 .619 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.1

Alabama State looks to repeat as Black College Nines National Champions. With a solid core of returning starters, The Hornets have added five junior college transfers to complement their returners. Top newcomers include Austin Bizzle - RHP, Burke Echelmeier – RHP and John Roblez, whose 90 mph fast ball will add arm strength to an already stable bullpen. Returning is the pitching staff's ace, Joe Camacho, who is the two-time conference pitcher of the year. Also returning SWAC all-conference catcher Chris Biocic and Yamil Pagan, a 2015 freshman All-American infielder. "I feel that this team has all the pieces to be very strong and match the record we had last year", according to head coach Mervyl Melendez.

#### **Biggest Strength:**

Hitting, pitching and fielding

#### **Biggest Weakness:**

Under .500 vs. non-conference in 2015

### Alcorn State University

**2015 Record:** 16-39 .291 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

When Alcorn State takes the field in 2016, you can expect to see a new face leading the Braves. Brett Richardson was named Head Baseball Coach for the Braves on Aug. 20, 2015. Coach Richardson comes to Alcorn State after spending 19 years at Florida A&M University. The Braves will be very balanced offensively and defensively this season with a wealth of experience, which includes standout first basemen/outfielder Collin Carroll. Carroll returns after capping off an impressive 2015 season finishing tied for first place in homeruns in conference play with (12) and an overall batting average of (.338). Sophomore infielder Wallace Rios is the team's second leading returning

hitting (.291). Another key offensive player to watch will be Moses Charles, who is a big threat to steal. He stole 22 bases in 30 attempts last season. LaDerrick Williams will also be counted on to light up the base paths after finishing with 16 stolen bases in 18 attempts. Behind the plate the Braves return Walter Vives, who caught the bulk of last year's games. The Braves will only have to replace three positional starters. The key position will be centerfield after losing Earl Burl III to the 2015 MLB draft. The pitching staff will be a balanced, competitive mixture of young and experienced arms.

**Biggest Strength:**

Big bat in Collin Carroll, speed on base path, new coach Brett Richardson

**Biggest Weakness:**

Developing weekend pitching rotation

**Arkansas Pine-Bluff University**

**2015 Record:** 25-16 .610 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.6

Following a 25 win season in 2015 which was highlighted by a SWAC Western Division crown, head coach Carlos James figures to have a very deep, talented roster in 2016. With a solid core of returners like Skyler Henson – RHP and Jeremiah Figueroa – RHP who throws in the mid-90s as the closer, Coach James hopes to add arm strength and depth to an already stable bullpen and replace MLB Draftees Andre Davis and Kevin Walsh. The Golden Lions added top newcomers pitchers Max Kline from Arizona, Matt Schwabauer, originally committed to University of New Orleans and CJ Ludington out of Canada. According to Coach James, “UAPB will have a stronger pitching staff than last year”. Last year’s team had signature wins against nationally ranked Mississippi State, Missouri, and Big 12 foe, Kansas. Returning players will help with team depth and make UAPB a more talented team in 2016. James states, “this team is a lot deeper, has stronger role players and is learning how to win”. The Golden Lions will have to get through a tough non-conference schedule verses top rank RPI opponents North Dakota State, Texas Christian, Southeast Missouri State, Missouri, Kansas State, Arkansas State, Mississippi, and Memphis.

**Biggest Strength:**

Batting, fielding, pitching, tough 2016 schedule vs. top DI RPI opponents

**Biggest Weakness:**

Under .500 vs. non-conference in 2015, newcomers learning how to win

**Bethune-Cookman University**

**2015 Record:** 19-40 .322 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Bethune-Cookman Wildcats finished last season 19-40, missing an NCAA regional post season appearance for only the second time in ten years. 21 of B-CU’s 59 games came against teams that would eventually achieve an NCAA regional berth. The Cats finishing tied for first in the South Division (14-10) in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC). The team will have some top talent on the mound as they return five of its top six pitchers including Alex Seibold, Tyler Norris, and Clint Clymer. They are loaded at the plate returning starters Demetrius Sims, Jameel Edney, Nathan Bond and Austin Garcia. Bethune has a crop of JUCO transfers and solid core of freshmen, the biggest is Danny Rodriguez a power hitting infielder from Miami, FL. The Cats will be tested again in 2016 as they have mid-week games against Miami, Florida, Stetson, Central Florida, North Florida, South Florida, Florida International and weekend games against Florida Gulf Coast and Ohio State.

**Biggest Strength:**

Batting, fielding, pitching, brutal 2016 schedule vs. top DI RPI opponents

**Biggest Weakness:**

Under .500 vs. Non-conference in 2015

**Coppin State University**

**2015 Record:** 3-38 .073 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Coppin State will have a roster that includes 14 pitchers, of which four are Florida's top young freshman arms. The Eagles also return five starters, including leading offensive player, first baseman George Dragon and 2nd team all-conference infielder Bryant Miranda. Head Coach Sherman Reed, Sr. feels strongly that "we will compete for the Northern Division's top spot, given the key players lost by Delaware State and UMES."

**Biggest Strength:**

Pitching coach returns to coaching staff

**Biggest Weakness:**

No offensive weapons

**Delaware State University**

**2015 Record:** 16-29 .356 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Delaware State impact returnees from last year's club include senior all- MEAC SS Cameron Onderko and sophomore RHP Pitcher Lane DeLeon. According to head baseball coach JP Blandin, "we are excited about the development of our young pitching staff and the talented new position players who will bolster our 2016 Roster".

**Biggest Strength:**

Developing pitching staff

**Biggest Weakness:**

Young position players

**Florida A&M University**

**2015 Record:** 23-25 .479 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.7

Florida A&M lost key pieces from the 2015 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) Championship team, but is returning impact players. Pitching led FAMU to the NCAA Division I Regional playoffs last season and they return the entire pitching rotation. Right handed pitchers Danny Rodriguez and Sawyer Betts should make instant contributions. Offensively, the Rattlers lack potential power threats, but they added a fifth year transfer from Jacksonville University in Dylan Dillard and a power hitting catcher from Chipola College in Jackie Miles Jr. Key additions are two freshmen, infielder/pitcher Keith Stevens and outfielder Willis McDaniel. FAMU has the ingredients to be a very good team entering the 2016 season.

**Biggest Strength:**

Solid pitching rotation

**Biggest Weakness:**

Lack power hitting

**Grambling State University**

**2015 Record:** 11-39 .220 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The 2016 season looks extremely bright for the Grambling Tiger baseball program. With outfielder Diamyn Hall returning after his ACL injury and infielder Larry Barraza returning, the Tigers are really looking to be an explosive offensive ball club. "Recruiting in 2015 has been really good said, Coach Davin Pierre. We added newcomers like shortstop Wesley Drain, left-handed pitcher Tanner Raiburn, catcher Johan Moijca, third baseman Daniel Barnett, all who transferred in from some really good JUCO programs, and true freshmen Nick Wheeler from the powerhouse Chicago Mt. Carmel High School program." The Tigers also return some key arms like senior starter Dion Holbrook, a left-handed pitcher who threw a no-hitter against Prairie View last year, senior right-hander Isaac O'Bear, and senior right-hander Creighton Hoover, all who have thrown quality innings for the Tigers and are expected to lead the staff in 2016. After letting an opportunity to play in the SWAC Championship game slip away last year, the Tigers are hungry and ready to try to get back in position to right there wrong. "It's going to be hard, but we are willing to make those sacrifices", Coach James Cooper says.

**Biggest Strength:**

Good recruiting class will make some noise

**Biggest Weakness:**

Unknown variables in pitching staff

**Jackson State University**

**2015 Record:** 32-25 .561 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.3

The JSU Baseball Tigers will look to continue building on its success under tenth year head coach Omar Johnson. Johnson claimed his 300th victory during the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) Championships last season. The Tigers are coming off another 30+ win season, its eighth in nine seasons, hoping to add to that total. This season, JSU will rely on a combination of speed and athleticism offensively and sound defense to continue their success. Returnees Jesus Santana, Sam Campbell, Lamar Briggs and Bryce Brown look to pick up the slack of graduated Louisville Slugger All-American Melvin Rodriguez, while Vincent Anthonia, Jevon Jacobs, and Rene Colon provide senior experience on the mound. JSU finished in the NCAA top 20 teams statistically in stolen bases at number 14 with 100 stolen bases.

**Biggest Strength:**

Batting, fielding and speed

**Biggest Weakness:**

Lack of an incoming impact player

## **Mississippi Valley State University**

**2015 Record:** 7-31 .192 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Mississippi Valley State will build strength from nine returning student athletes. Four are three year varsity ballplayers, four others have been members of the team for two years and one is a fifth year senior. Edward Cox, the lone senior is an all-around player. MVSU will have 14 new players. The veterans will help transform the new players into the program, as this will be the strength for 2016.

### **Biggest Strength:**

Hitting, speed on the base path, speed in the outfield

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Starting pitching and bullpen

## **North Carolina A&T University**

**2015 Record:** 10-36 .217 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

NCA&T will be one of the youngest teams in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) this season. They return Louisville Freshman All-American and MEAC Rookie of the Year Adan Ordonez (.337). A recruiting class of nine players will also contribute in 2016 along with sophomore speedster, outfielder Myles Sowell (.281) and sophomore second baseman Milton Rivera (.299). A&T's biggest obstacle may be settling on a weekend rotation after losing two senior from 2015 and improve on a 10-36 season

### **Biggest Strength:**

All-American slugger Adan Ordonez

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Lack solid pitching rotation

## **Norfolk State University**

**2015 Record:** 27-16 .638 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.2

NSU figures to have a very deep, talented roster in 2016. Two-thirds of the starting pitching staff returns in Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) Pitcher of the Year Matt Outman and junior Devin Hemmerich, who threw a no-hitter last year. Any number of hard throwing right-handers who held relief roles last year in Michael Parmentier, Robbie Hiser, Alex Mauricio, Cooper Jones or Lane Ward could fill the third starting pitcher spot. The others will form the foundation for a strong bullpen. All position players return including All-MEAC players Denathan Dukes (OF), Roger Hall (IF), Angel Rosario, Mauricio (SS), Hiser (3B) and catcher Ismael Herrera. Old Dominion utility transfer, Brian Beard can play either 1B, 3B or OF and Keyshawn D'Orso OF, a JUCO transfer, will give NSU some potential impact.

### **Biggest Strength:**

Power at the plate, speed aggressive on the base paths, fielding and pitching depth

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Under .500 vs. non-conference in 2015

## **North Carolina Central University**

**2015 Record:** 19-30 .388 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No. 10

NCCU returns six pitchers, including freshman All-American Devin Sweet, and two out of three conference starters.. Two top bullpen arms in left hander Blake Morgan and right hander Andrew Vernon also return. The team will include seven of its top eight hitters from 2015. This includes junior Carlos Ortiz. He is the former MEAC Rookie of the Year, Freshman All-American and returning first team all-conference outfielder. New players include Third Team Junior College All-American Zach Marszal (OF) and junior college right handed pitcher Chris Gonnelli, who pitched in the Junior College Division II World Series last year.

### **Biggest Strength:**

All-Americans outfielder Carlos Ortiz and pitcher Devin Sweet, JUCO transfer pitcher Chris Gonnelli

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Late inning closer

## **Prairie View A&M University**

**2015 Record:** 15-36 .294 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

Newly hired head baseball coach Auntwan Riggins steps into the helm at Prairie View. The Panthers will have a new direction and attitude when the 2016 season starts with hopes to improve on its 15-36, 2015 record. Most of the offense is back, but depth will be a concern along with pitching.

### **Biggest Strength:**

Good hitting team

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Pitching main concern

## **Savannah State University**

**2015 Record:** 21-32 .396 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.9

Head Coach Carlton Hardy states "we will be a scrappy team." The team added 15 newcomers to the roster to go with 20 returnees. The availability of pitchers will be key to keep opposing hitters off of the base path. Savannah State on offense will have both speed and power in the middle of the lineup. On defense, the outfielders have average to plus speed with good arms. Catchers all have plus arms to control teams running games. The infield returns three starters who have great range and above average arms.

### **Biggest Strength:**

Batting, speed and fielding

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Inconsistency on the mound

## **Southern University**

**2015 Record:** 20-23 .465 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.8

This was the biggest recruiting class in history for Southern baseball. Impact signees include Troy Lewis, Jr. and Kyle Libtero who will play in the infield. Both are all-conference and all-regional junior college players last year. Southern also has three true freshman from Miami, Florida in Anthony Valdes, Franky Montensio, and Bryan Melendez who all will have a big impact on Jaguar baseball. Returning catcher Jose Dela Torre and second baseman Robinson Mateo will make an impact. The pitching staff will be led by Tyler Robinson, Harold Myles and J'Markus George. All three returners saw significant innings last year and the Jags are looking for big things out of these juniors.

### **Biggest Strength:**

Big innings from weekend starters and incoming freshmen

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Relief pitching needs to step up

## **Texas Southern University**

**2015 Record:** 31-19 .620 **Conference:** SWAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** No.4

Texas Southern looks to repeat as SWAC conference champions in 2016. The Tigers finished 2015 recipients of the NCAA Division I Statistical Champion Award for Most Stolen Bases per game. Head baseball coach Michael Robertson is excited about this upcoming season, "I feel our team strength will be our defense". The Tigers have several players from last year's championship campaign. They will be solid up the middle as Javy Valdez returns at the catching position, Richard Alamo will be at second base, Ryan Lazo who finished second in stolen bases last year, will be in centerfield and Horace Leblance will see action at shortstop. Newcomer Guadencio Lucca and junior, Jose Cabreja will provide depth on bench and several young players will see action including Sterling Motley 1b, Olajide Oloruntimilehin DH, Charles Guillory C, Sidney Daley CF, Andre Moore IF, and pitcher, Michael Traylor. Key players returning are Chris Scroggins-30 RBI in 2015, Ryan Lazo 34-stolen bases, Javy Valdez-30 RBI, Ryan Rios-six wins and an ERA of 2.89, Seth Oliver-57 strikeouts and Kamren Dukes.

### **Biggest Strength:**

Hitting, speedsters on the base path, super all-utility Jose Cabreja

### **Biggest Weakness:**

Team chemistry to capture second SWAC conference championship

## **University of Maryland Eastern Shore**

**2015 Record:** 16-33 .327 **Conference:** MEAC **BCN 2015 HBCU Baseball Final Poll:** Unranked

The team's 14 conference wins in 2015 was a new program record and the Hawks hope to build on that record. UMES added 11 new players, 6 true freshman and 5 junior college transfers. However, the team lost two top pitchers and a catcher. On the plus side, the Hawks return the entire infield and a right fielder. Two new members of coaching staff are looking to build on the team's 2015 success and continue to change the program around.

### **Biggest Strength:**

Stable infield

**Biggest Weakness:**

Pitching staff