



## **Second half offensive explosion propels Bears to CIAA Championship**

*Defense dominant as Bears win second-straight*

HBCSports Press Association

Durham, NC - The Shaw Bears came into the CIAA championship game match-up against Elizabeth City State with the nation's best defense and the conference's best offense. The Bears used a dominating defensive performance and a 16-point third quarter to defeat the Vikings 36-7 to win their second-straight title before a crowd of 7,542 at Durham County Stadium. It was also the third title for the Bears in five years.

Shaw's defense harassed CIAA Offensive Player of the Year quarterback Curtis Rich - led by defensive end John Smith's eight tackles and two sacks - sacking him a total of four times and limiting him to 10-of-38 for 126 yards with a touchdown and an interception. The Vikings managed 238 yards of total offense, gaining 93 of those yards after Shaw had gone up 29-7 late in the third quarter.

The Bears racked up 410 yards of total offense. Quarterback Travis Robinson completed 16-of-33 for 209 yards with 3 TDs. Running back Raymond Williams was named Shaw's MVP carrying the ball 16 times for 96 yards, 61 of those yards in the second half.

The first half was a defensive struggle as the Bears fumbled on its first possession and punted on its next three. ECSU punted on its first five possessions and was intercepted on its sixth. Daniel Mendez had his fifth punt blocked by Tyrone Bolden and recovered by Shaw's LaMichael Howell on the Vikings three yard line. But the Vikings held tough on defense forcing the Bears to score on a Caleb Reid 22-yard field goal with 2:48 remaining in the first quarter giving the Bears a 3-0 lead. Shaw continued to be opportunistic as on the ensuing possession Rich's pass was intercepted by Gerard Jones and a dose of Williams (22 yards) setup Robinson's 24-yard touchdown pass to Bolden to extended Shaw's lead to 10-0 late in the first.

But the Vikings would engineer a scoring drive of their own on the ensuing possession. Reggie Smith's 44-yard kickoff return gave ECSU great field position in Shaw territory. Four plays later, Rich found Dexter Manley for a 28-yard touchdown and the Bears lead was cut to 10-7 early in the second quarter. The Vikings missed an opportunity to take the lead and perhaps change the course of the game on their next possession when wide receiver Morrell McPhatter dropped a Rich pass at the Shaw three. The Vikings were forced to punt and that was the closest opportunity the Vikings had to scoring. Lincoln Shepherd's 43-yard field goal with five seconds remaining in the half gave Shaw the 13-7 halftime lead.

Prior to the start of the game the Bears won the toss but deferred to the second half which may have been key. On the second play from scrimmage Robinson found Lenell King who made a spectacular one-handed catch and ran the rest of the 30 yards for a 48-yard touchdown and despite Reid's extra point being blocked the Bears led 19-7. The Bears offensive line took control of the line of scrimmage, and behind the running of Williams and Aaron Ellison (14 carries, 90 yards 1 TD) would score on their next two possessions - a Reid 27-yard field goal and an Ellison two-yard touchdown run - to go ahead 29-7 late in the third.

A scary moment in the game occurred when Shaw freshman defensive lineman Alexander Self was hit hard on a kickoff by an ECSU player. He tried twice to get up and walk under his own power but fell to the ground. He was carted off the field via ambulance and taken to a local hospital where tests were negative and he was released.

**Note:** There will be most likely no post season play for either team. ECSU is currently ranked 10 in the Super Regional One poll. Shaw is not ranked. Fayetteville State is currently ranked 8 and the top 8 teams from each super region make the Division II playoffs.