

Rematch of last year's CIAA championship game highlight's weekend matchups

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NEW HAVEN, Ct. (BASN) -- A rematch of the 2008 CIAA Championship Game leads this weekend's marquee of opening HBCU football games. The Shaw Bears continued their two-year dominance in the conference after a 36-7 Championship Game victory last year over the Elizabeth City State Vikings.

However, the teams that lined up last November, will look markedly different. Gone from Shaw is two-time Defensive Player of the Year Louis Ellis, who signed with the Miami Dolphins. Also, the other top four tacklers from last year's defense were seniors.

This season, the Bears will need to outscore opponents to win games...which should be no problem with much of their vaunted offense returning. QB Travis Robinson and preseason All-CIAA RB Raymond Williams return to lead an offense that averaged a scary 40 points per contest in 2008.

ECSU looks to prove something to the champs, but must do so without three-year starter and CIAA Offensive Player of the Year Curtis Rich. Creven Powell steps in for Rich.

The Vikings return one of the nation's top receivers in WR Dexter Manley. The junior receiver, a preseason selection to the BTRC/BASN All-America Team, snagged 11 touchdowns and averaged a whopping 26.2 yards per catch.

This game does not count toward the conference standings. The game can also be heard on the Internet at 6 p.m. ET at www.classicsportsradio.com

OTHER KEY GAMES

UNC Pembroke at Fayetteville State (Two Rivers Classic, 6 p.m. ET)

The CIAA favorites return a bevy of talent and look to return to the Championship Game after a five-year absence. First, however, is a brutal non-conference stretch that begins with UNC-Pembroke. The Braves return 19 starters from last year's 9-1 squad. This will be the first-ever meeting between the I-95 neighbors only 30 miles apart.

Stillman at Kentucky State (Greek Spirit Day, 7 p.m. CT)

The L.C. Cole era at Stillman will hit the ground running (not literally) on the road against conference foe Kentucky State. Cole's previous stints at Tennessee State and Alabama State saw his teams in the upper portion of their conferences by his third season. He thinks Stillman will be on a similar timetable. As for the Thoroughbreds, Wayne Dickens will be making his KSU debut, having just taken over from Fred Farrior.

Lincoln (Pa.) at Cheyney (Wade Wilson Classic, 4 p.m. ET)

After just its third season of football in decades, the Lions look to continue to build and improve its football program. The Lions return an experienced group with 21 starters returning. This is a regional rivalry that is one of the oldest in black college football history. The rivalry between the two schools have always been exciting, especially in basketball. Now this is the first meeting between the two on the gridiron in over 40 years. The game can also be heard on the Internet at www.HSRN.com.

THURSDAY'S GAMES

Albany State 36, Chowan 21

Down 14-0 early in its season-opening game to host Chowan University, Albany State stormed back to win. Starting QB A.J. McKenna hit Demetrice Johnson for the Rams' first score, which was followed by a Daryl Carey run up the middle from two yards out to tie it up, 14-14. Recently activated kicker Patrick Cuff -- who planned to give up football and concentrate on his studies -- returned for the Rams on Thursday, kicking two PATs and a field goal from 25 yards out to put ASU ahead, 17-14. And ASU never looked back from there, outscoring Chowan 21-7 the rest of the way for the win.

East Stroudsburg 19, Virginia Union 6

Redshirt junior tailback Zach Krise rushed 26 times for 107 yards and scored a pair of touchdowns as East Stroudsburg defeated host Virginia Union in the season opener for both teams. Warriors redshirt junior quarterback Matt Marshall completed 13 of his first 14 passes and finished the game 20-for-32 for 218 yards. Marshall also ran for 48 yards and led an ESU offense that compiled 413 yards, 26 first downs and controlled the ball for 34 minutes and 35 seconds.