



*"A GOLDEN PAST, A GLORIOUS FUTURE"*

## PIONEERS IN WOMEN'S SPORTS

### Presented by Academy Sports+Outdoors

(As selected by the MEAC's Senior Woman Administrators and listed alphabetically)

- **Patricia Cage Bibbs (N.C. A&T State/Hampton)** – Won over 400 games as a head women's basketball coach, including stints at Hampton and North Carolina A&T State, where she captured five MEAC regular-season championships and four MEAC Tournament titles. Her NCAT team in March 2010 became the first, and only, HBCU team to win two games in a national postseason tournament when it beat both Wake Forest and UNC Charlotte on the road in the WNIT.
- **Vanessa Blair-Lewis (Bethune-Cookman)** – Became the first MEAC coach to win three Boxtorow National Women's Basketball Coach of the Year honors, leading the Wildcats to four regular-season MEAC titles and four postseason appearances (including the program's first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance in 2019). In her 13-year career at B-CU, her teams have been ranked in the Mid-Major Top 25 poll twice.
- **Sharon Brummell (Maryland Eastern Shore)** – In a 14-year career as the Hawks' head bowling coach, she became the first African-American and woman to win a women's bowling national championship. The 2008 championship was also the first NCAA Division I title in any sport for an HBCU program. The two-time National Coach of the Year led UMES to four additional national championships.
- **Maia Chaka (Norfolk State)** – Was hired by the National Football League on March 5, 2021 to officiate games during the 2021 season this fall, becoming the first African-American woman hired to do so.
- **Brehanna Daniels (Norfolk State)** – A former Spartan basketball student-athlete who became the only female participant in the NASCAR Drive for Diversity combine in 2016. She has recently become the first African-American female tire changer in NASCAR.
- **Veronica Dottery-Wiggins (Florida A&M)** – Won the inaugural MEAC softball championship in 1993, the first of 13 won in a 30-year career at FAMU that included 11 NCAA postseason appearances, eight NCAA Regional appearances, 13 MEAC Tournament Outstanding Coach awards and five MEAC Coach of the Year honors. She compiled a 281-90 record all-time at FAMU.

- **Corliss Fingers (Bethune-Cookman)** – One of the few female Directors of Strength and Conditioning in NCAA Division I athletics and the first African-American to be a master's strength and conditioning coach and just the second female overall to attain that status. She won the Judith Sweet Award in 2018.
- **Ken Free (MEAC)** – Served as MEAC Commissioner from 1978 to 1996 and orchestrated the introduction of women's sports into the MEAC, including the sports of basketball (1978), outdoor track & field (1980), indoor track & field (1981), cross country (1981), volleyball (1984), tennis (1986) and softball (1993).
- **Andrea Gardner (Howard)** – A Bison basketball star who scored over 1,000 points and grabbed over 1,000 rebounds during her three-year college career between 1999 and 2002. She went on to become the highest drafted player from an HBCU in WNBA history when the Utah Starzz (now the San Antonio Stars) drafted her in the second round of the 2002 WNBA Draft.
- **Theresa Gibson (Morgan State)** – Created and coordinated the very first MEAC Cheerleading Competition in 1992. She also coordinated the competitions in 1993, 1994 and 1995 and her teams at Morgan State captured conference championships 15 times, including five straight from 2011 to 2015. Ten of her cheerleaders have gone on to become cheerleaders in the NFL and the NBA.
- **Charlene Johnson (S.C. State)** – A MEAC Hall of Famer who blazed new trails by becoming the first female Director of Athletics in S.C. State history and the first woman to serve as chairperson of the MEAC's Directors of Athletics. Prior to becoming athletics director, she served as head coach of two sports – volleyball and women's tennis, winning MEAC Coach of the Year in both sports.
- **Maxine Lewis (Delaware State)** – Became the MEAC's first female Sports Information Director when she was hired to the post in 1978. She went on to hold that position for 11 years and then went on to represent DSU and the MEAC on a national scale when she hired as Senior Sports Publicist for ABC Sports in New York City. She worked for ABC Sports for 16 years, from 1981 to 2005.
- **Brenda McCoy (MEAC)** – The first Senior Woman Administrator for the MEAC and a 30-year MEAC employee who served two tenures as Interim Commissioner (1996 and 2002). She was instrumental in the creation of the Senior Woman Administrators-sponsored MEAC Professional Development Workshop. She was inducted into the MEAC Hall of Fame in 2005.
- **Lauren McCoy (Bethune-Cookman)** – A 2021 MEAC Hall of Fame inductee who made NCAA history in 2005 by helping B-CU become the first HBCU softball team to win a Super Regional after earning the MEAC's first-ever at-large bid to the NCAA tournament. She was a three-time First Team All-MEAC selection who threw five no-hitters in her career, including two perfect games.
- **Dr. Ingrid Wicker McCree (N.C. Central)** – Helped spearhead the Eagles' reclassification to NCAA Division I and membership into the MEAC after capturing CIAA titles as head softball coach and head volleyball coach. She is currently one of the few female Directors of Athletics on the NCAA FCS level. In 2020, she was named to the Executive Committee of the newly-formed Black AD Alliance.

- **Nichole Person (Coppin State)** – The Eagles’ current Associate Athletics Director and Senior Woman Administrator, she has helped to make career opportunities possible for students through her work with the NBA All-Star Weekend, the New York Urban League Football Classic, the Senior Professional Golf Association and the Summer Paralympic Games.
- **Stephanie Ready (Coppin State)** – Was the second woman in NCAA history (first in the MEAC) to serve as a men’s basketball coach in Division I when she served as an assistant at CSU in 1999. In 2002 as an assistant for the G-League’s Greenville Groove, she was the first woman to coach a men’s pro sports team. In 2015, she became the first full-time female NBA game analyst.
- **Ramona Riley-Bozier (Morgan State)** – Started the Lady Bears’ softball program, became the school’s first volleyball head coach 33 years ago and is the school’s all-time winningest coach in both sports. In volleyball, the 1997 team made history by defeating Grambling in the NCAA play-in game, becoming the very first HBCU to earn a trip to the NCAA Division I volleyball tournament.
- **Alecia Shields-Gadson (Delaware State/Coppin State)** – Serves as Deputy Athletics Director and Senior Woman Coordinator at DSU, overseeing Title IX compliance among other duties. She has twice served as Interim Director of Athletics at DSU after previously being an administrator at CSU. Has chaired three NCAA national committees, including the Woman of the Year Selection Committee.
- **Linda Spencer (Howard)** – Was a non-scholarship star on the Bison’s very first women’s basketball team, helping it become the first MEAC team to earn a berth to the NCAA Division I Tournament (1982). She later was an assistant coach for the Bison and helped Howard win 10 MEAC crowns. As head volleyball coach, she won five MEAC titles and five MEAC Coach of the Year awards.
- **Sonja Stills (MEAC)** – The first person to hold the positions of Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer, as well as Director of Esports, in the 50-year history of the MEAC. She has been an advocate for fair and equal opportunities for women and minorities in sports during an 18-year stint at the conference that has included coordinating the MEAC Professional Development Workshop for Women.
- **Dr. Dennis E. Thomas (MEAC)** – Has fostered the hiring of women in key upper-level administrative positions at the MEAC Office, as well as at member institutions. In 18 years as Commissioner, he has provided national TV exposure for regular-season and postseason women’s competitions (including on ESPN) – spearheading broadcast firsts for volleyball, softball, women’s basketball and women’s bowling – and has provided equitable resources for MEAC women’s sports as he did as AD at Hampton.
- **Sondra Norell Thomas (Howard)** – Has the distinction of being the first and only female Director of Athletics in Bison history. She was also the first female member of the committee that selected the conference’s first full-time commissioner and she was the first female to serve as a consultant to the MEAC Council of Presidents and Chancellors. She is a MEAC Hall of Fame inductee.
- **Delores Sandra Todd (N.C. A&T State)** – A former Director of Athletics at North Carolina A&T State who helped design a world-class track & field facility which resulted in the school becoming

the first HBCU to host an NCAA Division I championship on its campus (2006). She also made history by being the first female member of the NCAA Division I Baseball Committee.

- **Sanya Tyler (Howard)** – Became Howard’s first full-time women’s basketball coach in 1980 and in 1982, her Bison became the first MEAC team to participate in the NCAA Division I Women’s Tournament. The MEAC Hall of Famer was the first MEAC women’s basketball coach to notch a win over an ACC team (N.C. State) and the first to have a player drafted into the WNBA.
- **Maryland Eastern Shore 2008 Bowling Team** – With a 4-2 win over Arkansas State in Omaha, Neb. in 2008, the Lady Hawks captured the NCAA Division I National Bowling Championship, becoming the very first HBCU to win a NCAA Division I team championship. UMES head coach Sharon Brummell became the first woman and first African-American to win a national bowling title.
- **Mary Wanza (Coppin State)** – Became Coppin State’s first female Director of Athletics in 2006 and was one of the first women to hold that distinction in MEAC history. In 2007, she was one of only six African-American women to hold the title of athletics director on the NCAA Division I level and one of only 27 women overall. While AD, CSU broke ground on a new Physical Education Complex.
- **Laura Watten (Bethune-Cookman)** – The Lady Wildcat head coach who helped the softball program make history in 2005 by becoming the only HBCU to receive an at-large bid to the NCAA Division I Softball Tournament, the only HBCU to win a NCAA Regional and the only HBCU to play in a NCAA Softball Super Regional. She has coached the program to eight postseason appearances.