

2009 NFL Preseason - HBCU Report

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By Lloyd Vance

The 2009 NFL preseason is in full swing as teams are busy preparing for the NFL's opening week of regular season play (September 10th - 14th). Though some have tried to say that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are not producing the same caliber of NFL players from their heyday in the '60s and '70s, I clearly beg to differ.

There are 65 talented former HBCU football players currently on NFL Rosters and several are high-impact players including Jacksonville Jaguars former Pro Bowl corner back Rashean Mathis (Bethune-Cookman) and Green Bay Packers 11-year veteran receiver Donald Driver (Alcorn State).

Leading the way in terms of HBCU talent during the 2009 NFL preseason are the Indianapolis Colts (6), Jacksonville Jaguars (6), and Detroit Lions (5) - surprisingly the Bears, Niners, Redskins, Raiders, Patriots, and Seahawks don't have a single HBCU player on their current rosters. The Colts in fact may have the best performer from the 2009 NFL preseason on their roster in Clark- Atlanta Alum defensive end Curtis Johnson. The 2nd-year pass rusher recently terrorized the Philadelphia Eagles in the Colts' 23-15 win -- contributed 7 solo tackles and 1 sack. Johnson and fellow HBCU player Robert Mathis (Alabama A&M) are slated to be key contributors along with Pro Bowl defensive end Dwight Freeney in putting pressure on quarterbacks for head coach Jim Caldwell's squad. Also another key member of the Colts defense from the HBCU ranks is Pro Bowl Safety Antoine Bethea from Howard.

Another highlight of the preseason has been the play of Minnesota Vikings quarterback Tarvaris Jackson (Alabama State). Despite battling through a knee sprain and the team bringing in veteran quarterback Brett Favre, Jackson has continued to maintain a solid professional attitude on and off the field. In the Vikings' recent 17-13 win over the Chiefs, which was also the much ballyhooed return of Favre, it was the 4th year veteran who shined the brightest. Despite being initially booed by his "home" crowd when entering the game versus the Chiefs, Jackson -- earlier lost his starting job to Favre after it was handed to the veteran -- had a perfect passer rating finishing with passing stats of 12 for 15 for 202 yards and two touchdowns including a 13-yard touchdown strike to TE Visanthe Shiancoe (Morgan State). The performance probably further enhanced the young passer's trade value, but you would have liked to have seen Vikings head coach Brad Childress giving T-Jack a "legitimate" shot at fighting Favre for the starting position. Jackson said after the game, "Whenever you play well, you always feel good." The Vikings former playoff game starter added, "Regardless of the situation or the circumstances, it felt good. It was a long week for me. It just shows that if you just stay focused, you'll be fine."

With NFL teams cutting down their rosters soon (Sept. 1st - 75 players and Sept. 5th - final 53 players) there will be more player movement, but keep an eye on NFL game days for players from HBCUs.

Arizona Cardinals

86 Onrea Jones, WR, 6'0" 202, 12/22/1983, 1st year, Hampton

29 Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie, CB, 6'2" 185, 4/7/1986, 2nd-year, Tennessee State

32 Greg Toler, CB, 6'0" 191, 1/2/1985, rookie, St. Paul's College (VA)

Atlanta Falcons

14 Eric Weems, WR, 5'9" 194, 7/4/1985, 2nd year, Bethune-Cookman

Baltimore Ravens

96 Lamar Divens, DT, 6'3" 338, 11/12/1985, 2nd year, Tennessee State

41 Frank Walker, CB, 5'11" 200, 8/6/1981, 7th year, Tuskegee

Buffalo Bills

29 Drayton Florence, CB, 6'0" 195, 12/19/1980, 7th year, Tuskegee

Jermaine McGhee, DE, 6'3" 242, 12/31/1983, rookie, Prairie View A&M

Carolina Panthers

61 Lonnie Harvey, DT, 6'3" 342, 1/20/1987, rookie, Morgan State

22 Jamall Lee, RB, 6'1" 225 3/13/1987, rookie, Bishop

21 Dante Wesley, DB, 6'1" 210, 4/5/1979, 8th year, Arkansas-Pine Bluff

Cincinnati Bengals

79 Pernel Phillips, DT, 6'0" 311, 4/5/1985, rookie, Central State (Ohio)

24 Geoffrey Pope, CB, 6'0" 186, 6/21/1984, 2nd year, Howard

Cleveland Browns

41 Charles Ali, FB, 6'2" 255, 8/23/1984, 3Rd year, Arkansas-Pine Bluff

49 Marcus Benard, LB, 6'2" 256, 7/26/1985, rookie, Jackson State

51 Alex Hall, LB, 6'5" 250 8/17/1985 2 St. Augustine's

Dallas Cowboys

30 Alonzo Coleman, RB, 5'9" 210, 1/27/1984, 1st year, Hampton

92 Marcus Dixon, DE, 6'4" 285, 9/16/1984, 1st year, Hampton

97 Jason Hatcher, DE, 6'6" 304, 7/13/1982, 4th year, Grambling State

Denver Broncos

75 Chris Baker, DE, 6'2" 326, 10/8/1987, rookie, Hampton

40 Rashod Moulton, 5'11" 184, 11/6/1980, 1st year, Fort Valley State

51 Lee Robinson, OLB, 6'3" 245, 4/23/1987, rookie, Alcorn State

Detroit Lions

74 Damion Cook, OG, 6'5" 330, 4/16/1979, 9th year, Bethune-Cookman

91 Chartric Darby, NT, 6'0" 302, 10/22/1975, 9th year, South Carolina State

79 Sammie Lee Hill, DT, 6'4" 331, 11/8/1986, rookie, Stillman

24 Calvin Pearson, FS, 5'10" 200, 10/22/1978, 5th year, Grambling State

Green Bay Packers

36 Nick Collins, FS, 5'11" 207, 8/16/1983, 5th year, Bethune-Cookman

80 Donald Driver, WR, 6'0" 194, 2/2/1975, 11th year, Alcorn State

Houston Texans

12 Jacoby Jones, WR, 6'2" 206, 7/11/1984, 3rd year, Lane

67 Brandon Torrey, OT, 6'4" 295, 5/18/1983, 1st year, Howard

Indianapolis Colts

41 Antoine Bethea, FS, 5'11" 203, 7/7/1984, 4th year, Howard

25 Michael Coe, CB, 6'0" 190, 12/17/1983, 3rd year, Alabama State

Rudolph Hardie, DE, 6'2" 269, 10/8/1985 1st year, Howard

94 Curtis Johnson, DE, 6'3" 237, 2/16/1985, 2nd year, Clark Atlanta

98 Robert Mathis, DE, 6'2" 245, 2/26/1981, 7th year, Alabama A&M

35 Chad Simpson, RB, 5'9" 216, 8/22/1985, 2nd year, Morgan State

Jacksonville Jaguars

Don Carey, CB, 5'11" 186, 2/14/1987, rookie, Norfolk State

56 Justin Durant, OLB, 6'1" 240 9/20/1985 3 Hampton

16 Nate Hughes, WR, 6'2" 195, 1/18/1985, 1st year, Alcorn State

27 Rashean Mathis, CB, 6'1" 193, 8/27/1980, 7th year, Bethune-Cookman

64 Cecil Newton, C, 6'2" 310, 3/20/1986, rookie, Tennessee State

38 Brian Witherspoon, DB, 5'10" 180, 6/5/1985, 2nd year, Stillman

Kansas City Chiefs

22 Jackie Bates, DB, 5'10" 180, 10/12/1986, rookie, Hampton

70 Alfonso Boone, DE, 6'3" 305, 1/11/1976, 9, Central State (Ohio)

40 Javarris Williams, RB, 5'10" 223, 4/8/1986, rookie, Tennessee State

Miami Dolphins

27 Will Billingsley, CB, 5'10" 195, 4/23/1984, 1st year, North Carolina A&T

93 Louis Ellis, NT, 6'2" 315, 10/7/1985, rookie, Shaw

70 Kendall Langford, DE, 6'6" 295 1/27/1986 2 Hampton

Minnesota Vikings

7 Tarvaris Jackson, QB, 6'2" 225, 4/21/1983, 4th year, Alabama State

11 Jaymar Johnson, WR, 6'0" 176, 7/10/1984, 1st year, Jackson State

81 Visanthe Shiancoe, TE, 6'4" 250, 6/18/1980, 7th year, Morgan State

New Orleans Saints

Greg Fassitt, CB, 5'11" 186, 4/4/1985, 1st year, Grambling State

New York Giants

68 Cliff Louis, OT, 6'8" 315, 8/24/1984, 1st year, Morgan State

New York Jets

93 Marques Douglas, DE, 6'2" 290, 3/15/1977, 9th year, Howard

72 Nevin McCaskill, OT, 6'4" 300, 12/29/1983, 1st year, Hampton

Philadelphia Eagles

67 Jamaal Jackson, C, 6'4" 330, 5/8/1980, 6th year, Delaware State

17 Shaheer McBride, WR, 6'2" 205, 2/6/1985, 1st year, Delaware State (cut)

23 Dimitri Patterson, DB, 5'10" 190, 6/18/1983, 4th year, Tuskegee

54 Tracy White, LB, 6'0" 230, 4/14/1981, 7th year, Howard

Pittsburgh Steelers

33 Isaac Redman, RB, 6'0" 230, 11/10/1984, rookie, Bowie State

San Diego Chargers

24 Cletis Gordon, CB, 6'1" 205, 7/17/1982, 4th year, Jackson State

St. Louis Rams

24 Ronald Bartell, CB, 6'1" 205, 2/22/1982, 5th year, Howard

Tampa Bay Buccaneers

16 Cortez Hankton, WR, 6'0" 200, 1/20/1981, 6th year, Texas Southern

77 James Lee, OT, 6'4" 305, 8/17/1985, 2nd year, South Carolina State

Tennessee Titans

20 Nick Harper, CB, 5'10" 182, 9/10/1974, 9th year, Fort Valley State

16 Phillip Morris, WR, 6'3" 175, 7/2/1986, rookie, South Carolina State