



East Defeats West in HBCU All-Star Battle

FAMU's Vann named MVP

HBCSports Press Association

Montgomery, AL, Dec. 19 - The inaugural Russell Athletic HBCU Bowl featured some of the premier Black College football seniors in the country in an East vs. West format with players from the CIAA and the MEAC representing the East, and SIAC and SWAC players representing the West. During the course of the week players worked out for NFL scouts in a combine-like setting.

Those skills were put to the test on Saturday.

Florida A&M's LeRoy Vann was named MVP of the game after returning a 2nd-quarter punt 81 yards for a touchdown as the East defeated the West 26-21 at Cramton Bowl. Van returned three punts on the day totaling 95 yards and one kickoff for 18. The two-time Boxtorow.com/BASN All-American returned five punts during the regular season for touchdowns, 8 during his career.

"It was very special because for a very long time I didn't have a chance in the MEAC because they stopped kicking to me," Vann told the Tallahassee Democrat. "I knew everybody was out here to show their talent so they kicked me the ball. I just went all out."

Vann's teammate, QB Curtis Pulley, one of the most exciting players in the country, participated in drills during the week but did not play in the game due to a groin injury.

The game was a defensive battle with the East getting the better of the battle holding the West to 254 yards of total offense and sacking West quarterbacks four times. Eleven plays went for negative yards.

South Carolina State defensive back Phillip Adams impressed scouts all week with his press coverage ability and it paid off during the game as he intercepted a pass and broke up another. Norfolk State safety Terrell Whitehead, a Buck Buchanan Finalist and two-time Boxtorow.com/BASN All-American also had an interception and a pass break up. Florida A&M teammates Cameron Houston (3 tackles, 2 sacks) and Bryan Parker (5 tackles, 2 for loss) stayed in the West backfield throughout the game.

For the West, Alabama State LB Adrian Hardy, playing on his home field for the last time, led all tacklers with seven, two for loss. Southern LB Allan Baugh (5 tackles, 2 for loss) and Tuskegee CB Justin Hannah (1 INT, 1 pass break-up) also stood out.

Offensively, Alcorn State QB Tim Buckley accounted for 142 yards of total offense throwing two touchdowns while rushing for 60 yards. Alabama A&M's Thomas Harris (3 rec., 51 yards) and Morehouse's Achille Hendje (1 rec., 24 yards) both caught touchdown passes.

Norfolk State QB Dennis Brown played all but one possession for the East and showed plenty of leadership completing 9-of-25 passes for 117 yards with 1 TD and no interceptions. Hampton RB Lamarcus Coker showed versatility as the East's leading receiver (3 rec. 82 yards, 1 TD), while rushing for 35 yards on just 8 carries. Morgan State RB Devan James had 11 carries for 57 yards and 1 TD.

The West received the ball first and moved right down the field behind the play of Buckley, who capped the 11-play drive off with a 24-yard touchdown strike to Hendje and the West led 7-0.

The East settled for a 27-yard field goal from Norfolk State 's Justin Castellat cutting the West lead to 7-3 midway through the first quarter. Vann's punt return followed by a safety by Tennessee State 's Calvin Baker gave the East the 12-7 lead early in the 2nd quarter.

But the West would regain the lead midway through the quarter as Hannah's interception setup a short field and Albany State 's AJ McKenna found Arkansas-Pine Bluff tight end Remo Gay for a 6-yard TD and a 14-12 lead. Coker's 33-yard TD pass late in the first half would be the game-winner, at that time giving the East the 19-14 lead.

After a scoreless third, both teams scored touchdowns early in the 4th - James on a 4-yard run and Harris on a 29-yard reception from Buckley which pulled the West to within 26-21. Despite nearly seven minutes being chewed off the clock Castellat's 30-yard attempt went wide right setting up one last drive for the West. After the West rushed for 21 yards on its first two plays, Buckley's last four passes went incomplete preserving the East's victory.

"You'd think it was a championship game the way these cats were really, really competing," said West and Alabama State head coach Reggie Barlow told the Montgomery Advertiser. "That's football. It was a great thing and I was just happy to be a part of it. They competed all the way to the end. They were representing their conferences and the guys who laid the foundation before them."