

THE RATTLER REPORT

The Official Source for News and Information About FAMU Athletics

FROM ONE OF THE
HIGHEST OF SEVEN HILLS
IN FLORIDA'S CAPITAL



107 Rattlers Named to 2018 MEAC All-Academic Team



FAMU quarterback Vincent Jeffries was named to the 2018 MEAC All-Academic Team.

The Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) announced the Commissioner's All-Academic Team. With a mission of supporting our students, who happen to be athletes, we are proud of all 107 student-athletes who attained this recognition.

"We couldn't be more pleased that our student-athletes are getting it done off the field. The classroom is where real champions are built. Our young ladies and young men come to FAMU to get an education first, and this shows that they are getting it done. The biggest play they can make at FAMU is crossing that stage at graduation," said Director of Athletics John Eason, Ph.D.

There were 1,366 student-athletes from the conference's 13 member institutions who were honored, and who achieved academic success during the spring 2017 and fall 2017 semesters. The team honors student-athletes, ranging from sophomores to seniors, with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.

"I am excited to congratulate the 1,366 student-athletes who have maintained a 3.0 or better grade point average during this academic school year," said Commissioner Dennis E. Thomas.

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MEAC CHAMPS



A strong Thursday and Friday, and a late push on Saturday, propelled Florida A&M to the 2018 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) Outdoor Track & Field championship by the slimmest of margins at the Irwin Belk Track.

"I am extremely proud of how my young ladies performed. The MEAC is a very tough conference for track and field and to win this championship is a coveted position. We knew this would go down to the wire and our ladies continued to perform and do what they needed to do to bring home the championship. I'm extremely encouraged by our record-setting performances at the meet. We are proud to

represent the University as the 2018 champions of the MEAC," said FAMU Director of Track & Field, Darlene Moore Ed.D.

Moore has captured her ninth championship since coming to FAMU in 2009. The 2018 MEAC Championship was a stark comparison to her first meet as FAMU head coach.

"The first MEAC championship I coached at FAMU, we earned only one quarter of a point, finishing in a distant last place. Who knew that one half of a point would be so valuable in determining the champion. We regrouped after losing to NCA&T by 80 points last outdoor season,"

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Rattlers Unite for Fundraising Ice Cream Social



Rattler bowlers (from left to right) Monique Ragland, Bethany Noel and Destiny Williams participated in the president's "Ice Cream Social." (See Photo Gallery on Pages 4-5)

AD's Corner



Dear Rattler Fans!

I hope that you are preparing for a great summer. Exciting things have been happening with our students and staff as we wrap up the 2017-2018 fiscal year. I would like to share a few highlights about our achievements, accomplishments and ongoing initiatives.

Florida A&M University's softball team beat North Carolina A&T's team during a nationally televised game on ESPN, which was great for the Rattler family. A record number of fans turned out at the Orange and Green Spring Game to support Head Football Coach Willie Simmons and the football program. Thanks for your support of the team along with other men's and women's spring sports.

We celebrated the end of a great athletic and academic season with our Student-Athlete Celebration on April 30, where students dressed to the nines and enjoyed dancing, laughing and Rattler fellowship while reflecting on all of their accomplishments throughout the year.

We are proud of the 107 student-athletes who made the MEAC Commissioner's All-Academic list, which is composed of student-athletes with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.

In addition to honoring these students at the Student-Athlete Celebration, we honored the Women's Tennis Team with the Highest Team GPA award as well as Women's Basketball Player Taylor Darks, a junior with a cumulative GPA of 3.96. We look forward to creat-

ing additional opportunities to acknowledge our student-athletes next year and plan to introduce the Athletic Director's 4.0 Club.

Shifting gears to facilities, we continue to focus on enhancing our student-athletes' wellbeing and overall athletic experience. We recently completed portions of the renovations to the Sports Medicine Training Room and locker rooms in the Galimore-Powell Field House, which accommodates the football team and coaches. We also have completed the renovation to the volleyball locker-room, and the student-athletes were able to enjoy it during their spring training. Our staff and coaches are excited about all the enhancements we continue to provide to their programs to ensure our students are having an exceptional Division I athletic experience while they pursue their degree at Florida A&M.

In closing, I look forward to seeing the familiar faces of Rattlers and friends, and greeting new ones at upcoming events throughout the summer, including the National Alumni Association Convention in Orlando. I'll be speaking on Thursday, May 24.

Our team looks forward to spending the summer reenergizing their programs, reaching out to alumni and encouraging all of you to renew your Investing in Champions season ticket purchases as well as purchasing your Tag Bragg Flags. I always echo to my staff, coaches, alumni and student-athletes that all of us are instrumental in the future of Rattler Athletics, and we must continue to strike, and strike and strike again!

With gratitude,

John Eason, Ph.D.
Director of Athletics

MISSION STATEMENT:

FAMU Athletics will enhance the lives of student athletes, FAMU constituents and the community as a whole; through first class athletic events, student experiences, scholarship and opportunities.

VISION STATEMENT:

Create an environment where Florida A&M Athletics is a vehicle for all students, coaches, staff, faculty, alumni and community stakeholders to flourish in all facets of their lives; grounded in integrity, humility and humanity.

see MEAC page 2

Moore said.

The Lady Rattlers tallied 179.5 points, winning its third title in four years and its 12th overall, edging out the host team Aggies by half a point, as A&T finished with 179.0 points. Moore was named the meet's Outstanding Coach, and the Lady Rattlers' Taylor Gorum was named the Outstanding Field Performer.

The Lady Rattlers came into the day with a sizeable lead 113.5 to 51.5 over Bethune-Cookman after Friday's stand-out performances in the field events and distance races, scoring 105.5 points in the field events alone.

But the defending champion Aggies, who stood fourth after Friday's session with 35 points, continued their recent trend in the final day of competition, scoring 144 points on Saturday, briefly overtaking FAMU after the 200-meter dash.

However, FAMU answered immediately in the 5,000-meter run to take an insurmountable lead, 179.5 to 169 heading into the 4x400-meter relay, as the trio of Emmax Kiplagat (3rd, 17:50.78), Nancy Murgor (4th, 18:15.48) and Naomi Tanui (7th, 19:08.59) combined for 13 points. The Aggies' 4x100-meter relay squad ran a 44.38 to take gold in the final event, but it was not enough to overhaul FAMU.

FAMU's Taylor Gorum was clutch in the field scoring 23 points, winning the discus (51.69), placing second in the shot put (14.42 meters), and fourth in the hammer throw (46.87 meters).

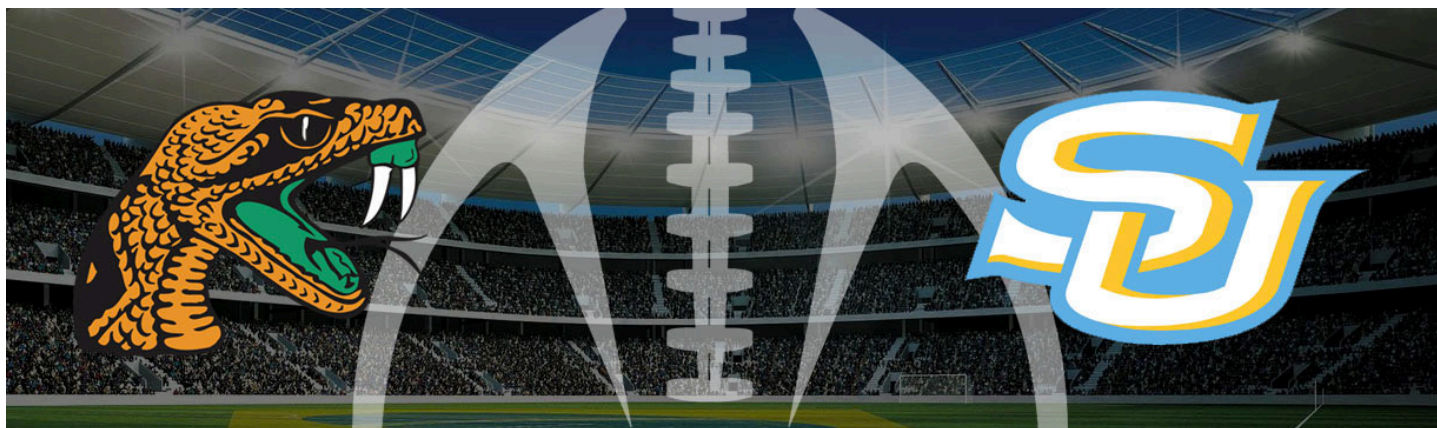
Brittany Corbett of Florida A&M won the javelin throw with a distance of 144 feet, three inches (43.96 meters).

ALL MEAC FIRST TEAM Nancy Murgor, FAMU (Steeple), Taylor Gorum, FAMU (Discus), Onnika Scott, FAMU (Hammer), Brittany Corbett, FAMU (Javelin), Ed'Quisha Alvin, FAMU (Heptathlon)

ALL MEAC SECOND TEAM Jazmyn Dennis, FAMU (Pole), Taylor Gorum, FAMU (Shotput)

ALL MEAC THIRD TEAM Emmax Kiplagat, FAMU (5,000m), Nancy Murgor, FAMU (10,000m), Ed'Quisha Alvin, FAMU (HJ), Cheyenne Brooks, FAMU (Pole Vault).

FAMU Renews Rivalry With Southern



One of the longest standing non-conference rivalries in Black college football history will be renewed in September of 2019, as the Florida A&M University (FAMU) Rattlers will take to the field against the Southern University Jaguars of Baton Rouge, Louisiana for the first time since 2012.

FAMU and Southern jointly announced the initial home-and-home agreement on earlier this month, which begins with a date in venerable Bragg Memorial Stadium in Tallahassee, Florida, on Saturday, September 21, 2019, followed by the return date at A.W. "Ace" Mumford Stadium in Baton Rouge on September 12, 2020.

FAMU and Southern have met four times on the gridiron since the yearly series was suspended in 2001, once in the MEAC-SWAC Challenge in 2007 and twice in the Atlanta Football Classic in 2011 and 2012. The last meeting between the Jaguars and the Rattlers on the schools' respective campuses occurred in 2008, when FAMU edged Southern 52-49 in a high scoring road win in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

FAMU Athletics Director John Eason, Ph.D., said, "The two-year, home-and-home agreement with Southern University is a 'win-win' for both schools. We are excited about the opportunity of playing one of the most recognized football programs

among HBCUs. It represents our efforts to ignite our fan base with games they want to see."

Southern Athletic Director Roman Banks said, "The renewal of this rivalry represents the best of both schools and will spark high interest among our respective fans. This one is a 'no-brainer.' Southern and FAMU should play each other and we're extremely excited about this development."

The two universities began their football rivalry in 1941, and while FAMU enjoys a slight edge in the meetings at 33-26-1, the record is just one part of the rich

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Taylor Darks Finds Time to Pursue Her Dreams at FAMU



Taylor Darks is a member of the Lady Rattler Basketball Team, carries a 3.94 GPA and found time to pledge Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., this semester.

Taylor Darks has done a lot since coming to FAMU. The Lady Rattler basketball player found her groove with LeDawn Gibson's team after transferring from Furman University her freshman year.

She barely spends a moment still, as she has not only excelled on the court, but

off the court as well.

"My first year here was uneventful and this year, I kind of went for everything. I wrote my first book, I became a member of Delta Sigma Theta, Sorority, Inc., I'm on my second book and being presented with an academic award at the banquet. You can

say it's been exciting," Darks said.

She was honored with two awards at the FAMU Athletics end-of-year function and recognized for another. She was recognized for making the MEAC Commissioner's All-Academic Team, which honors juniors and seniors with a 3.0 or above grade point average. In addition, she was named as one of the FAMU Athletics Director's 4.0 honorees, for all students who made a perfect grade point average last fall. She received the award for highest GPA among all of FAMU's student-athletes. Darks carries a 3.94 GPA, and is still seething about the one "B" she earned.

"When you come across a student-athlete that understands the importance of taking advantage of the learning opportunities a college scholarship has to offer, then you know that person is aware of their surroundings and is working toward greatness. We try to identify and put a premium on those student-athletes in the recruiting process," said FAMU Athletics Director John Eason, Ph.D.

see Darks page 8

PHOTO BOOTH MAY



FAMU catcher Mackenzie Woodard awaits a pitch at the Lady Rattler Softball Complex.



FAMU receiver (86) Dock Luckie celebrates his touchdown catch with quarterback (14) Ryan Stanley.



Catcher Jacky Miles, Jr. connects on a pitch against Alabama State



The Lady Rattler Tennis Team shows off the award they received at the FAMU Athletics Recognition Ceremony for having the highest cumulative GPA of all of FAMU's teams.



Members of FAMU's 16 sports teams pose with FAMU President, Larry Robinson Ph.D., athletics director John Eason Ph.D. , Associate Athletics Director for Compliance Kendra Green and Interim Vice President for University Advancement, Shawnta Friday-Stroud Ph.D.



Members of the Lady Rattler Track Team



Former Mr. FAMU Athletics Sharard Shabazz (Saddlers), throws a fist up during Spring Commencement ceremonies.



All-MEAC tennis star Noureldin Adam prepares for a return against B-CU.



Mialiniaina Rakotondrazafy hits a backhand while defeating B-CU



Members of the six-time defending MEAC Cross Country Championship Team

ACADEMICS from page 1

"I would like to commend the administrators, athletics academic support staff and personnel, coaches, institutions, and parents for their contributions to the academic success of these student-athletes."

Lady Rattlers on All-Academic Team (54) Honorees

Dicaria Alvarez (T&F), Briana Ballat (T&F), Tiara Barnes (T&F), Demetria Bethel (BWL), Cori Bostic (WBB), Mary Brooks (T&F), Shalaunda Burney-Robinson (WBB), Kierra Calhoun (CHR), Valentina Carrasco (VB), Elizabeth Clayton (TEN), Shalynn Cyprien (T&F), Taylor Darks (WBB), Lanese Davis (CHR), Whitney Farris (SB), Alelee Figueroa (T&F), Amber Fullwood (SB), Ashley Giacomucci (T&F), Alexis Gosha (VB), Amber Hannah (CHR), Akievia Hickman (CHR), Alexandria Hightower (VB), Benisha Johnson (T&F), Destiny Johnson (T&F), Shontielle Johnson (T&F), Judith Kibii (T&F), Dawn King (WBB), Caroline Kiplagat (T&F), Emmax Kiplagat (T&F), Nicole Kvitkauskas (T&F), Mia Lewis (T&F), Fridah Limo (T&F), Valeria Lopez (VB), Gina Lopez-Chavez (VB), Karen Machisa (TEN), Alexandria Marshall-Paul (T&F), Alicia McCray (WBB), Briana McCrimmon (WBB), Nancy Murgor (T&F), Victoria Nguyen (WBB), Florence Ouattara (WBB), Kenya Pereira (SB), April Polite (T&F), Evelyn Ralph (T&F), Tanzania Ralph (T&F), Arrice Robinson (TEN), Kiara Shaw (TEN), Olivia Simmons (T&F),

Tahlia Snider (SB), Naomi Tanui (T&F), Symone Townsend (TEN), Erica Tyler (T&F), Destiny Williams (BWL), Ecenur Yurdakul (WBB), Maria Yvette Garcia (VB)...

Rattlers on All-Academic Team (53) Honorees

Osman Aguilera (FB), Tarique Akbar (FB), Yahia Aly (FB), Korteece Baker (T&F), Shareek Branch (T&F), William Brooks (BSB), John Capra (BSB), Elijah Casey (FB), Marquan Cromartie (FB), Prince Cunningham (GLF), Patrick Dalton (T&F), Joshua Engram (FB), Walner Espinoza (TEN), Jalen Evans (TEN), Herandre Fair-Curry (T&F), Hunter Fillingum (BSB), Jayson Francois (T&F), Aaron Hanna (T&F), Samer Hasona (TEN), Thomas Howell (T&F), Vincent Jefferies (FB), Terry Jefferson (FB), Chase Killelte (GLF), Dock Luckie (FB), Mahindra Lutchman (GLF), Elijah Mays (MBB), Austin Michaud (BSB), Jacky Miles Jr. (BSB), Dennis Minefee (GLF), Ocatvien Moyer (BSB), Brandon Myles (MBB), Frederico Nani (TEN), Kevin Newman (FB), Desmond Noird (FB), Obinna Nwankwo (FB), Courage Okungbowa (TEN), Dallas Oliver (BSB), Shamari Pittman (FB), Michael Poole (T&F), Rodney Randers (BSB), Elijah Richardson (FB), Travis Richardson (BSB), Cameron Riley (GLF), Jacob Rios (FB), Kodi Russ (BSB), Kolton Russ (BSB), Zachary Safford (FB), Illya Skoromnyy (TEN), Nicholas Severado (MBB), Karlyn Small (TEN), Hans Supre (FB), Carlos Waitman (TEN), Garrett Wilkinson (BSB)

MEAC Softball All-Tournament

The Lady Rattlers fell short in their bid to win a fifth consecutive MEAC championship. Three were named to the All-Tournament team. From left to right: MEAC Commissioner Dennis Thomas, Alexis Day, Kyaira Brown and Hera Varma.

RENEWED from page 3

legacy that these two programs share.

Combined, the pair have won 22 Black College National Football championships, FAMU won 12 and Southern won 10. Both teams rank in the Top 20 all-time among NCAA Division I FCS programs in winning percentage, each having won more than 64 percent of their games since the 1920s.

Both schools have also produced their share of star athletes and coaches who occupy Pro Football, College Football and Black College Football Halls of Fame. The honor roll of stellar luminaries is headed by players such as FAMU's Bob Hayes, Ken Riley, and Willie Galimore, along with Southern greats Mel Blount, Isaiah "Butch" Robertson and Aeneas Williams, as well as legendary coaches A.S. "Jake" Gaither of FAMU, and Arnett "Ace" Mumford of Southern.

FAMU and Southern are also among the perennial attendance leaders in Division I FCS, with both ranking in either the Top 10 or Top 20 over the past decade or more. In fact, FAMU has ranked third in the FCS in home attendance in each of the past two seasons, while Southern has turned in a pair of Top 15 finishes in average home attendance in 2016 and 2017.

Of course this long-standing Black college rivalry would not be complete without the musical complement of two of the greatest marching bands in America – FAMU's world famous Marching "100" and Southern University's "Human Jukebox." The fan bases of both schools have longed for this rivalry to be renewed, and they will get their wish come September 21, 2019.



Four FAMU sports greats stand together at the Rattler Boosters' fundraiser in Ft. Pierce, Fla. From left: Terry Beauford, William "Chicken Shack" Wilson, Keith Miles and Billy "Shack" Wilson Jr.



FAMU safety Andrew Hines wraps up Xavier Smith after a reception.

Orange & Green Game Draws 7,622 Fans

The FAMU Orange and Green game answered several questions about this spring's 15 days of practice. The offense proved that it has picked up a good portion of Willie Simmons' offense, while the defense showed that it will be the leaders of the team with a veteran squad of players that demonstrated their ability to dominate and make plays. Though everyone came to see the game, it was the biggest formal welcome back to the Big Bend of Willie Simmons to date.

"I thought that today was a very productive one. I wanted to see the guys get out there and compete on both sides of the ball. Doing an offense versus defense scrimmage is always a little dicey with the scoring systems, so it was good seeing the game being a close, competitive game," said Simmons.

A bevy of family, friends, classmates and other associates packed together on the west side of the stadium, including Simmons' wife Shaia and their children. It was a family affair as fans of all ages congregated in Bragg Stadium.

Ryan Stanley distanced himself as the Rattlers' starting quarterback. With an offense based on options on virtually every play. Stanley has adapted well to the new freedoms the playbook offers. He wasted no time in the game, hitting Chad Hunter on a 75-yard bomb on the first play from scrimmage to ignite the 7,622 in attendance. They would connect again on another drive where Hunter made a diving catch in the end zone on a perfectly placed pass outside the reach of defenders.

Stanley was pleased with the team's ad-

aptation of the wide-open offense Simmons and staff have implemented. "It's a really fun offense to play in. It allows us to use our playmakers. Chad was doing what Chad does, which is to make plays. I think he's one of the best, not just in our conference," Stanley said. Dock Luckie also got into the act, hauling in a TD pass in the scrimmage.

While defensive standouts Terry Jefferson, Vandrick Verdier and Jabril Hazly led the defense, there was a point in the game where the defensive line totally dominated the line of scrimmage. Jefferson said their success depends on the men up front. "We can't be successful as a defense without the guys up front. The game is controlled there. They allow us to fly around and do what we need to do, but it's not possible if a team controls the line of scrimmage. It was a total team effort," Jefferson said.

A very responsive crowd was in attendance looking to see what the 2018 season might bring. The north parking lot at Bragg Stadium was filled with tailgaters and revelers hoping to get a glimpse of the Rattlers' glorious past. FAMU Sports Hall of Famer Ken Riley drove up from Bartow to deliver the pre-game speech. He and FAMU Director of Athletics John Eason played together under legendary head coach Jake Gaither. Also in attendance was former ESPN and Fox Sports anchor Fred Hickman.

While the Marching "100" was there, they conceded halftime to the greek student organizations. The "Divine 9," greek organizations performed at midfield, strolling to their theme songs.



Cameron Riley landed a summer internship with the LPGA in Daytona Beach, Fla.

FAMU Golfers Acquire Major Summer Internships

Chase Killette and Cameron Riley both have secured internships at professional golf facilities. Killette will be interning with the USGA and Riley will be with the LPGA.

"I got the internship with the USGA and got a merchandising-type internship which will allow me to go to the U.S. Open. Going to the U.S. Open is something I wanted to do since I started playing golf. I wanted to go as a player, but since I don't have that opportunity, I do have the opportunity to assist with the U.S. Open," Killette said. The U.S. Open will be played in Shinnecock Hills, NY in June.

Riley will have a different type of internship. He will be interning with the LPGA in Daytona Beach, Fla. "I will be interning as a teaching and club professional assistant. I will be assisting the club professionals with the golf course and instruction," Riley said.



Chase Killette will be working at the U.S. Open with the USGA in Shinnecock Hills, NY

DARKS from page 3

Darks has a deep sense of family and it is a big part of what drives her. "My dad always told me basketball was my ticket to the rest of my life; so even if I don't plan on playing basketball in the future, it's my ticket to a college education and the experiences I would need to be successful. I've always treated the opportunity just like that," Darks said.

While the Lady Rattlers struggled last season, partly due to injuries to starters, the team found a rhythm in the MEAC tournament and made the semifinal round.

"There's something about MEAC that just brings people together. I think there are always hills and humps in-season and you just try and work those things out as best you can. The MEAC is about who shows up to play and we gave a lot of people a run for their money because they definitely underestimated us," Darks said.

Darks seems to possess an uncanny aptitude of her place at all times.



"A slogan of mine has always been 'more than an athlete.' I have this thing with my teacher in high school where he told me, when I was getting into poetry, that I should push to be more than the labels that are placed on me. When I came to FAMU, there were too many opportunities to stay who you are, but you should take the opportunity to break out of that mold and change for the better," Darks said.



FAMU Athletics unveiled new graduation stoles for student-athletes. They were presented in a special brunch where president Larry Robinson, Ph.D. was the presenter.

FAMU 2018 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Sept. 1 | FORT VALLEY STATE
Bragg Memorial Stadium
Hall of Fame / Jake Gaither Classic |
| Sept. 8 | @Troy University
Veterans Memorial Stadium
Troy, AL |
| Sept. 15 | JACKSON STATE
Bragg Memorial Stadium
*1978 Championship Celebration |
| Sept. 22 | SAVANNAH STATE
Bragg Memorial Stadium
*1998 Championship Celebration |
| Sept. 29 | @North Carolina Central U.
O'Kelly-Riddick Stadium
Durham, NC |
| Oct. 6 | NORFOLK STATE
Bragg Memorial Stadium
*Homecoming 2018 |
| Oct. 13 | @NC A&T State
Aggie Stadium
Greensboro, NC |
| Oct. 27 | MORGAN STATE
Bragg Memorial Stadium
*Breast Cancer Awareness |
| Nov. 3 | @Howard
William H. Greene Stadium
Washington, D.C. |
| Nov. 10 | SC STATE
Bragg Memorial Stadium
*Seniors Day |
| Nov. 17 | Bethune-Cookman
@Camping World Stadium
Florida Blue Florida Classic |



SEASON TICKETS

6 HOME GAMES

SEPT. 1 FVSU 5P.M.
SEPT. 15 JSU 5P.M.
SEPT. 22 SSU 4P.M.

OCT. 6 NSU 4P.M.
OCT. 27 MSU 4P.M.
NOV. 10 SCSU 4P.M.

NEW SEASON TICKETS (WEST SIDE).....\$175
RENEWAL SEASON TICKETS (WEST SIDE)....\$115
NEW SEASON TICKETS (EAST SIDE).....\$165
RENEWAL SEASON TICKETS (EAST SIDE)....\$105
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