October 11, 2019

**Economics Group**

Special Commentary

**Tuskegee vs. Morehouse in a Classic**

**84th Installment of the Longest Running HBCU Rivalry Game**

This weekend, two of the most prominent historically black colleges will head to Columbus, Georgia for the 84th annual Tuskegee-Morehouse Classic, the longest running historically black college football rivalry series. The game is played every year in A.J. McClung Memorial Stadium, known for hosting the annual Auburn-Georgia game—“the Deep South’s Oldest Rivalry”—from 1916 until 1958. For most of that period black residents and soldiers from nearby Fort Benning were not allowed to attend, and the Tuskegee-Morehouse classic was founded in 1936 in response to create an event for the community as well as a showcase of two of the top black football programs. The Auburn-Georgia game eventually grew too big for the 15,000-seat stadium in Western Georgia, a challenge the organizers of the Tuskegee-Morehouse Classic are now facing, as stadiums with better amenities angle to lure the game away from Columbus.

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are generally defined as an institution of higher learning founded before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the primary purpose of educating African Americans. This is the second HBCU matchup we have previewed this year. For a history of HBCUs in general please see our report on the Prairie View A&M-Grambling State game. This week we feature two of the most influential HBCUs—Tuskegee, founded by Booker T. Washington and attended by the Tuskegee Airmen, and Morehouse, the alma mater of Martin Luther King Jr. and the first HBCU to produce a Rhodes Scholar.

The football programs are two of the most popular in Division II, leading in average home game attendance. The Tuskegee Golden Tigers first took the field in 1913, and have racked up over 680 wins—the most of any HBCU—and 29 Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) titles. The Morehouse Maroon Tigers kicked off their season this year playing in the inaugural Black College Hall of Fame Classic in Canton, Ohio, where they lost 35-30 to Division I Alabama A&M.

**Figure 1**

**Figure 2**

![NCAA Division II Home Attendance](image1)

**Source:** NCAA, U.S. Department of Labor and Wells Fargo Securities

**Unemployment Rate**

![Unemployment Rate](image2)

**Source:** Wells Fargo Securities

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Deep History at Tuskegee
Tuskegee was founded in 1881 by Lewis Adams, George Campbell and Booker T. Washington, a leading advocate of African American advancement through education, entrepreneurship and economic well-being. Washington led the school, originally known as the Tuskegee Institute, from 1881 until his death in 1915, a period in which the school gained academic independence and a national reputation. Washington was a prolific fundraiser, soliciting donations from major philanthropists including Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, while insisting on an all-black faculty to "develop Black leadership to the maximum extent." He believed in black self-reliance and emphasized a more practical, often agrarian education, rather than a more classical liberal arts education. George Washington Carver was instrumental as head of the Tuskegee agriculture department, where he advocated for crop rotation and the cultivation of alternative crops—most famously peanuts—as a way for impoverished farmers and sharecroppers to overcome soil depletion from the overproduction of cotton.

As mechanization, the boll weevil and the Great Migration dragged on Southern agriculture, the school’s academic programs gradually evolved. The veterinary school, which has educated roughly 75% of black veterinarians, was established in 1944, followed by engineering, architecture and eventually a full range of liberal arts, technical and professional programs.

As World War II loomed, the U.S. military remained strictly segregated, and the Army Air Corps—the predecessor to the Air Force—did not admit black pilots. After President Roosevelt authorized black enlistment in 1941, the 99th Pursuit Squadron was founded and began training black pilots on Moton Field, just a few miles from the Tuskegee campus. The 992 pilots from the training program, who were educated at Tuskegee and known as the Tuskegee Airmen, went on to see tremendous success in the skies over Europe, serving primarily as bomber escorts. The men returned to the United States victorious on the battlefield but still facing Jim Crow laws on the home front. By 1948, however, President Truman ordered the full integration of the U.S. armed forces, in no small part due to the Airmen’s exemplary service.

With so much history at Tuskegee, it is easy to forget it is still a major source of innovation to this day, particularly in agricultural sciences—continuing the legacy of George Washington Carver—advanced materials, atmospheric science, biotechnology and information security. It has over 3,000 students and is the only university campus registered as a National Historic Landmark. The city of Tuskegee is about 40 miles east of Montgomery and 20 miles west of Auburn, with a population of just around 10,000. In addition to its historical importance as the site of the Tuskegee Institute, it was home to the Tuskegee Veterans Administration Medical Center, built to provide care for thousands of black World War I veterans, who were blocked from receiving care at segregated facilities.

Figure 3

Figure 4

Source: U.S. Department of Labor and Wells Fargo Securities
Morehouse & Atlanta

Morehouse has plenty of history of its own. Founded in 1867 as a seminary for freed slaves, it moved to its present location in southwest Atlanta after the donation of a parcel of land from John D. Rockefeller. Morehouse emphasized a more rigorous, classical liberal arts education, in contrast to Booker T. Washington’s more experiential and skills-based philosophy at Tuskegee.

Today Morehouse is one of only three all-male non-religious four-year schools in the nation, along with Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia and Wabash College in Indiana. Currently Morehouse has around 3,000 students and offers 26 majors, and it has awarded bachelor’s degrees to more African American men than any other school in the United States.

Morehouse has close ties to Atlanta—alumnus Maynard Jackson was the first African American mayor of the city, and several Morehouse graduates have also gone on to distinguished careers in public service and politics. Morehouse graduates are well integrated throughout the Atlanta economy, attaining key leadership positions in the region’s financial services, healthcare, construction, entertainment and publishing industries. Morehouse is also a member of the Atlanta University Center Consortium, which consists of four HBCUs: Clark Atlanta University, Spelman College (the nation’s oldest higher education institution for black women), Morehouse and the Morehouse School of Medicine. Combined, the four institutions have 9,000 students.

The Morehouse class of 2019 made headlines when billionaire Robert F. Smith, one of the nation’s wealthiest African Americans, pledged in his commencement speech to pay off all of the class’s student loan debt, instantly becoming the largest donation to a HBCU in history. Smith did not attend Morehouse himself, but the school has a tremendously influential roster of alumni, including Martin Luther King Jr., Edwin Moses, Herman Cain, Spike Lee and Samuel L. Jackson. It was also the first HBCU to produce a Rhodes Scholar, and has since produced three more.

Football Outlook

Morehouse comes into the game 2-3, while Tuskegee has had somewhat of a rough start to the season, going 1-4 and in the midst of their first three-game losing streak since 2011. They have not lost four in a row since 2003, adding even more fuel to the fire of this rivalry game. Still, there is more to this weekend than the contest on the gridiron. Festivities surrounding the game include community-based religious services, a parade and tailgating, all meant to raise funds to provide scholarships to aspiring college students.

The game will kick off at 2 PM Eastern and will be broadcast on ESPN3. Tuskegee comfortably leads the overall series 72-28-7 and has won 20 of the last 25. The point differential the last five years has been 213-83 in favor of the Golden Tigers, but Morehouse came away victorious last year in a game that extended into triple overtime. Tuskegee is favored by four points on Saturday.
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