

Four Black Spartan football players complete eligibility and graduate

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Four Black students are among the seven members of the 2009 Spartan football team who participated in spring commencement ceremonies, conducted May 7-8 on the Michigan State University campus. The seven graduating Spartans are: linebacker Brandon Denson (criminal justice), cornerback Ashton Henderson (advertising), nose tackle Michael Jordan (criminal justice), fullback Andrew Pandy (communication), fullback Josh Rouse (interdisciplinary studies in social science – human resources), offensive tackle Mike Schmeding (interdisciplinary studies in social science – human resources) and cornerback Ross Weaver (mechanical

engineering). Rouse still has a year of eligibility remaining, so he will be listed as a fifth-year senior on the 2010 roster. A fifth Black, offensive guard Roland Martin, a four-year letterman from 2005-08, also earned his bachelor's degree in sociology. The Black athletes, Henderson, Weaver, Jordan, Denison and Martin provide ample evidence of a reversal of the historical trend of Black football players to complete their eligibility without ever completing a degree. "This has been the biggest weekend of my life, and earning a diploma from Michigan State is my biggest personal accomplishment to this point," Henderson said. "All of the hard work has certainly paid off and

honestly, the emotions I've experienced with my family this weekend rival the excitement I felt in the locker room after beating Michigan each of the last two years. "I deeply appreciate the efforts of the academic support staff in the Clara Bell Smith Student-Athlete Academic Center because they took a personal interest in me, pushed and encouraged me to take advantage of all of the available resources. All of the essential tools are provided in the Smith Center, and I'm proud to have completed my degree requirements in four years. "I'm also thankful for Coach (Mark) Dantonio, who has created a culture that stresses the importance of graduating

and preparing for life after football." In three seasons under head coach Mark Dantonio, 43 student-athletes have earned their undergraduate degrees, including 74 percent (42 of 57) of his players who have completed their eligibility. Eight additional members of the 2009 team, including two blacks, graduated last December. "Graduation is something that these guys have dreamt about for the last four or five years, and these guys are realizing their dream because they mastered the balancing act of managing their time as football players with investing the time and effort to succeed in the classroom," Dantonio said. "This degree is going to have the greatest impact in their lives. This is

why they came to college. All of their hard work has really paid off, and we're so happy for these student-athletes and their families. "We tell prospects that we will support them in their efforts to pursue excellence, both in the classroom and on the playing field. We also want to build relationships that will last well past their playing careers. So when these graduates and their families return to campus in the future, it counts just like another win in Spartan Stadium. We strive to establish life-long relationships, not simply ones that last four or five years." "Mark Dantonio and his coaching staff have made a commitment to graduating student-athletes," director of academic services Todd

Edwards said. "That commitment begins from the first minute of recruiting contact and it continues throughout the student-athlete's playing career and beyond. He rarely conducts a team meeting where that commitment to education isn't emphasized or reinforced. Coach Dantonio and his coaching staff don't pay lip service to academic success; they're truly committed to it. The student-athletes are held accountable for their work in the academic arena, and the staff provides positive reinforcement by recognizing guys for a job well done. "This is a satisfying and gratifying weekend indeed as these student-athletes achieve an important milestone in their lives."

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3RD ANNUAL BLACK MEN INC. OF GREATER LANSING DINNER/DANCE HELD AT THE MSU KELLOGG CENTER APRIL 30, 2010

Photos by Michael Jennings



2010 Members of the Black Men Inc. of Greater Lansing: front row (l-r) Bertha Tompson, Pauline Johnson-West, Founding member Dr. Robert Turpin, Key Note Speaker, Dr. George T. Rowan, Delores "Dee" Freeman, Verlecia Kelley. Center (l-r) - Richard Clements, Rowland Cornish. The 3rd row: (l-r) Sterling Armstrong, Melvin McWilliams, Joe Pruitt, Eddie Thomas, Ishmael Muhammad, Ronald Field, Fred Porter, Walker Beverly, Dave Weiner, Samuel Johnson, Robert Brown, Jr., Cleveland Henry, Jacob Jessie, Gregory P. Kelley