

2026 HBCU Football Classics Schedule

Every marquee classic · site, date & TV · road to the Celebration Bowl

15

MARQUEE CLASSICS

Aug 29

KICKOFF ON ABC

Dec 12

CELEBRATION BOWL

Atlanta

TITLE-GAME SITE

2026 Classic Schedule

DATE	CLASSIC	MATCHUP	SITE	TV
Aug 29	MEAC/SWAC Challenge	Alabama A&M vs Howard	Center Parc Stadium, Atlanta	ABC
Aug 29	John Merritt Classic	Jackson State vs Tennessee State	Nissan Stadium, Nashville	TBD
Sep 5	Pete Richardson Classic	Kentucky State vs Southern	A.W. Mumford Stadium, Baton Rouge	TBD
Sep 6	Orange Blossom Classic	Florida A&M vs South Carolina St.	Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens	TBD
Sep 6	Labor Day Classic	Prairie View A&M vs Texas Southern	Panther Stadium, Prairie View	TBD
Sep 6	Black College HOF Classic	Albany State vs Johnson C. Smith	Tom Benson HOF Stadium, Canton	TBD
Sep 12	Southern Heritage Classic	Ark.-Pine Bluff vs Alcorn State	Simmons Bank Liberty Stadium, Memphis	TBD
Sep 12	Chicago Football Classic	Lincoln (PA) vs Miss. Valley St.	Chicago, IL	TBD
Sep 26	State Fair Classic	Grambling State vs Prairie View A&M	Cotton Bowl, Dallas	TBD
Oct 3	Gulf Coast Challenge	Alabama A&M vs Jackson State	Hancock Whitney Stadium, Mobile	TBD
Oct 31	Magic City Classic	Alabama A&M vs Alabama State	Legion Field, Birmingham	ESPN*
Nov 21	Florida Classic	Florida A&M vs Bethune-Cookman	Camping World Stadium, Orlando	ESPN*
Nov 26	Turkey Day Classic	Tuskegee vs Alabama State	Cramton Bowl, Montgomery	TBD
Nov 28	Bayou Classic	Grambling State vs Southern	Caesars Superdome, New Orleans	NBC*
Dec 12	Celebration Bowl	MEAC champ vs SWAC champ	Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta	ABC

*TV network follows the recent annual pattern and is not yet officially released for 2026. Dates and kickoff times can shift for television. Circle City Classic runs as a high school showcase in 2026 (no college game).

Road to the Celebration Bowl

HBCU national championship · SWAC champion vs MEAC champion

How HBCU Classics & the Celebration Bowl Work

- The HBCU football season is built around **classics**: marquee rivalry and neutral-site games, many with parades, battles of the bands and homecoming weekends attached. Several draw national TV.
- Most classic teams compete in one of two Division I FCS conferences: the **SWAC** (Southwestern Athletic Conference) and the **MEAC** (Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference).
- The **SWAC** crowns its champion in a conference title game in early December. The **MEAC** champion is decided by regular-season conference standings.
- The two league champions meet in the **Celebration Bowl** in Atlanta, widely recognized as the **HBCU national championship**, on Sat, Dec 12, 2026 at noon ET on ABC.
- Use the tracker below to follow each conference race, then pencil in the two champions who reach Atlanta.

Track the Conference Races

SWAC CONTENDERS (FILL IN W-L)	RECORD
Jackson State	
Southern	
Alcorn State	
Prairie View A&M	
Alabama State	

SWAC Championship: **Sat, Dec 5, 2026**

MEAC CONTENDERS (FILL IN W-L)	RECORD
South Carolina State	
North Carolina Central	
Howard	
Norfolk State	
Delaware State	

MEAC title by conference standings

CELEBRATION BOWL · DEC 12, 2026 · ATLANTA

VS

SWAC CHAMPION

MEAC CHAMPION

HBCU NATIONAL CHAMPION