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## THE 2023 COACH JOHN MCLENDON AWARD

HOUSTON, TX -- Howard University's Kenny Blakeney is the recipient of the 2023 Coach John McLendon award, which is presented annually to the top collegiate head coach and includes Division I, Division II, Division III, NAIA and NJCAA.

Blakeney led Howard to an historic season. The Bison won 22 games and captured both the MEAC regular season and postseason tournament championships. It was the first appearance for Howard, in the MEAC Championship game, in 21 years and its' first trip to the NCAA Tournament since 1992.

It was also the program's first outright MEAC regular season championship since 1987.

"I don't think there are a lot of people that truly understand what Kenny Blakeney has been able to accomplish at Howard," said Angela Lento, Vice President of CollegeInsider.com. It was not that long ago that he was finding it difficult to even get an opportunity to coach. Director of Athletics Kery Davis hit a grand slam with this hire. There are a lot more wins and many more accolades in the future for Kenny Blakeney."

Under Blakeney's guidance Howard won 22 games, the most wins since the Bison finished 24-4 in 1987. They finished 11-3 in the MEAC this season. The .786 winning percentage is also the best since the 1986-87 campaign when the Bison posted a 13-1 conference record.

The 2022-23 season marked the second consecutive season that Howard had posted a winning record, the first time that had happened in over 35 years.

Fourth-year head coach Kenneth Blakeney also won the 2023 MEAC Coach of the Year.

The Coach John McLendon award named in honor of one of the greatest coaches in the history of the sport. A trailblazer and one of the true pioneers of the game, McLendon became the first African American coach to win an integrated national championship. His team went on to win the NAIA Division I Men's Tournament in 1957, 1958 and 1959, making him the first coach in history to win three consecutive NAIA championships.

In 1962 he became the first African American head coach in a major professional league (ABL) with the Cleveland Pipers. In 1966 he became the first African-American head coach of a predominantly-white university, when he took over the Cleveland State program. He led the team to their best record in school history.

In 1969, McLendon was hired by the Denver Rockets and became the first African American head coach in the American Basketball Association. After a brief stint with the Rockets, McLendon ended his 25-year professional coaching career with a winning percentage of .760 and a lifetime career average of 523 victories and 165 losses.

The recipient of the annual award is determined by a 10-member voting committee, which consists of current and former head coaches, as well as two senior staff members of [collegeinsider.com](http://collegeinsider.com).

