

## Hampton U. Pirates collect treasures at NCAA tourney

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*By Aaliyah Essex*

Starting guard **Reginald Johnson** smoothly travels into the Hampton University basketball office. Suited up in Hampton Blue, the Chicago native looks as if he is prepared to tell a satisfying story. With his confident smile and friendly laugh, it was as if Johnson had changed the nation's perception of the typical Pirate.

Quite frankly, after two consecutive years of collecting cargo labeled, "MEAC Champions," accompanied by back-to-back appearances in the NCAA Tournament, changing what it meant to be a Pirate is exactly what Johnson has done.



Using the game of basketball, the senior captain and his mates have made an impact that will set records on and off the court.

This past season, the Pirates charted their way into the NCAA Basketball Tournament where they battled No. 1 seed University of Virginia. Although Hampton did not bring back the gold after an 81-45 loss, they did not return to their home by the sea with an empty **treasure chest**.

According to University President William R. Harvey, the NCAA awarded the institution \$1 million just to **appear in the tournament**. Harvey says the institution kept half of the money while the other half was given to the MEAC. The university's Director of Athletics Eugene Marshall says, "The money is equivalent to a grant that goes towards the betterment of the institution."

The success of the seasoned team has sailed beyond financial waters. Track and Field Coach Maurice Pierce said the success of the basketball team has helped him recruit athletes. During a speech at a March 21 athletic celebration held by the university, Pierce recognizes the basketball team's impact on his program: "We recruit a lot of kids and for whatever reason they'll say 'well we don't know what Hampton is. We've never heard of Hampton.'

"I say, turn on the TV.

"So I always tell [Coach] Buck, when y'all are on TV, we recruit. You [Coach Joyner] help me."

Edward "Buck" Joyner says the team has certainly marked an 'x' on the spot at HU.

"To get the school seen in a different light or in a different type of exposure, you know, it helps all of us, not just athletics. It helps admissions. It helps any potential sponsors, you know, and anything that the university wants to

do."

The accomplishment of the men's team has entered waters beyond the university. As one of only two historically black colleges and universities to reach this spring's tournament, the team has affected their counterparts. Meanwhile, the **Southern University** Jaguars competed against the College of Holy Cross in the First Four round of the tournament. That HBCU lost a **close game**. The final score was 59-55.

Being that these predominantly African-American schools are often looked at as the lesser opponent, the Pirates and the Jaguars have certainly made a statement.

In addition to the impact that the men have made outside the team, the athletes have left an effect on the younger members of the team. Hampton freshman guard **Akim Mitchell** says he will continue the legacy that his older teammates have started: "A lot of people say that we cannot live up to the legacy that the seniors have begun. I'm not going for that. They taught us. They brought us up. So I'm not going for it. I am not accepting that." Hampton finished the season with an overall record of 21-11. They went 13-3 in the conference. During the regular season, the Pirates took two losses at home and at one point, went on an eight-game home winning streak. Joyner is quickly preparing his young team for the 2016-2017 season.

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