

MEAC/SWAC Challenge Kicks Off College Football Season

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., Sept. 5, 2012 – Nearly 20,000 football fans touched down in Central Florida during Labor Day weekend for the 8th annual MEAC/SWAC Challenge presented by Disney.

Televised live on ESPN, the gridiron battle at the Florida Citrus Bowl saw the Bethune-Cookman Wildcats (MEAC) score a 38-28 victory over the Alabama State Hornets (SWAC). With the win, Bethune-Cookman became the first team to ever win back-to-back MEAC/SWAC Challenge games.

While football is at the center of the MEAC/SWAC Challenge, it's more than just a game – it's a celebration that underscores the importance of diversity and higher education.

"We're proud to sponsor the MEAC/SWAC Challenge, which brings bowl game energy and excitement to Central Florida at the start of college football season," said Belinda Frazier, senior manager of Minority Business Development for Walt Disney World Resort. "Besides increasing spending in local venues during Labor Day weekend, this game and the events tied to it shine a national spotlight on our region and demonstrate our support of the African American community and Historically Black Colleges and Universities."

Events tied to the MEAC/SWAC Challenge range from the ESPN 101 Career Panel for high school students to the Legends Reception honoring accomplished alums from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This year, Central Florida community leaders Jack "Cy" McClairen and Rev. Canon Nelson W. Pinder were among those honored at the reception. McClairen currently works as senior associate athletic director for Bethune-Cookman. Pinder, also a B-CU graduate, has ministered around the world and recently celebrated 52 years as an Episcopal priest at Cathedral Church of St. Luke in Orlando.

A special Fan Day at Walt Disney World on Saturday set the stage for Game Day. Wildcats and Hornets fans let their competitive spirit fly, all in good fun. Bethune-Cookman head football coach Brian Jenkins kicked off festivities at the first-ever MEAC/SWAC Challenge Pep Rally at Downtown Disney, which included appearances from star football players from both schools.

Later that afternoon at Epcot, hundreds of feet kept moving to the beat as the schools' marching bands, drill teams and cheerleaders took the park by storm with parade of performances.