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#### NORTH CAROLINA A&T DOWNS GRAMBLING 21-14 IN CELEBRATION BOWL

ATLANTA, GA – North Carolina A&T State quarterback Lamar Raynard culminated a seven-play, 56-yard scoring drive with a one-yard sneak with 38 seconds remaining to lift the Aggies to a hard-fought 21-14 win over Grambling State in the third annual Celebration Bowl Saturday before a crowd of 25,873 at Mercedes Benz Stadium.

The victory gave the MEAC a 2-1 lead in the three-year old bowl, with NC A&T getting both wins. Coach Rod Broadway's team also played in the inaugural event in 2015 and came away with a 41-34 victory over the SWAC's Alcorn State.

With the win, the Aggies completed a perfect 12-0 season, while the loss dropped Grambling's final 2017 record to 11-2. The Aggies became the first MEAC team to compile a 12-0 campaign, including the postseason.

Grambling was also making its second appearance in the contest. The Tigers defeated the MEAC's North Carolina Central in 2016 by a score of 10-9.

"It was an excellent win. Let's give Grambling their dues," said Aggie head coach Rod Broadway. "There were two really good football teams out there, and usually when you get two teams like that together, it comes down to who makes the fewest mistakes and we were able to win the ball game. We made way too many mistakes and we had a lot of opportunities slip away. But I told the team prior to the last drive, this is how championships are won and we were able to go down and put the ball in the end zone to end the season 12-0, which is an unbelievable feeling."

Before getting the clincher, the Aggies earlier were in scoring position with a first-and-goal from the Tiger eight-yard line, following a Lyndemian Brooks fumble, which was recovered at the Tiger eight-yard line by Kenneth Melton with 9:54 left. However, NC A&T's Marquell Cartwright was stopped twice from the one-yard line, turning the Aggies away with the score tied at 14-all.

"We were in four-down territory. You're thinking that if you don't get it, you pin them down in a spot where you can get a short punt and get good field position," stated Broadway. "We let them out of the hole a little bit, but we were able to get it back. But we'd go for it again. You have to be able to make those plays in championship games."

Each team had two more possessions before the winning drive by NC A&T, which began at the Aggie 44-yard line with 1:42 remaining. On the first-play of the drive, it appeared the Tigers had recovered a fumbled pass by Cartwright, however, a review confirmed the call on the field as an incomplete pass. Six plays later, Raynard scored from the one, giving his team, a 21-14 edge following the extra point by Noel Ruiz and the victory. The Aggie defense made the score stand, although Grambling had one more possession, taking over with 38 seconds left, however, a third-and-nine Kincade pass attempt to Carter fell incomplete as time expired.

Grambling had used a seven-play, 80-yard drive, which only took 2:19, to level the contest at 14-14 when Tiger quarterback DeVante Kincade connected with Carter from 29 yards out for the score. Marc Orozco was true on the conversion try with 14:16 on the fourth-period clock.

Following a scoreless first period – the first in the history of the event -- both teams scored touchdowns in the final five minutes of the half to go to the locker room deadlocked at 7-7. NC A&T had a chance to add to its first-half total but a 38-yard field goal attempt by Ruiz with two seconds left in the second period was blocked by the Tigers' Anfernee Mullins as the half expired.

The home team Aggies got on the board first, taking advantage of a Tiger fumble to get into the end zone, driving just 25 yards in five plays. Cartwright took an 11-yard scoring pass from Raynard for the NC A&T touchdown. Noel Ruiz's point after touchdown staked the MEAC Champion to a 7-0 lead with 4:58 to play in the half.

Grambling used an eight-play, 70-yard march to pull even at 7-all when Kincade hooked up with Jordan Jones for a two-yard scoring pass with 43 seconds left in the half.

The Aggies regained the lead midway the third period when Cartwright raced 29 yards for a score, climaxing a seven-play, 80-yard march that took 3:50. Ruiz's PAT staked the MEAC champion to a 14-7 lead, and that's the way the third period ended.

Grambling pulled even two series later with the scoring connection of Kincade and Carter, which covered 29 yards early in the final stanza.

Raynard completed 23-of-43 attempts, with two picks, for 225 yards and a score to power the Aggie offense, which amassed 397 total yards, with 237 coming in the air. Cartwright, the Offensive MVP of the contest, led the NC A&T rushing attack with 110 yards and a score in 20 attempts. Elijah Bell had 10 catches for 95 yards to power the Aggie receivers.

Franklin "Mac" McCain III, who had four solo tackles and an interception in the end zone for the Aggies, was the Defensive MVP of the game.

Kincade connected on 19-of-36 pass attempts, with one interception, for 225 yards and two scores. The two-time SWAC Offensive Player of the Year was also Grambling's rushing leader with 93 yards on 16 attempts. Calief Samon had four catches for 53 yards to lead the Tiger receiver corps.