

## Sports

Stories by Fred Jeter

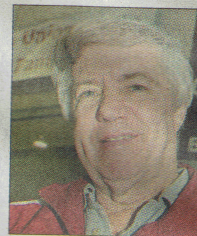
## VUU Alumni Football Foundation to host Celebrity Golf Classic

Virginia Union University's annual golf fundraiser will take place July 23 at The Crossings in Glen Allen, 800 Virginia Center Parkway.

Burning Sands Alumni Football Foundation's 9th Annual Celebrity Golf Classic, an 18-hole golf tournament, will raise funds to support Virginia Union University athletics. Dave Robbins, VUU's legendary former basketball coach, is this year's special honoree. Other special guests

include Cornell Gordon, a Norfolk native and former all-pro defensive back who played on the New York Jets' 1969 Superbowl championship team; and Stan Lewter, producer/host at Urban Sports & ESPN, who also is the "voice" of CIAA basketball.

For more information, contact Angriess Scott at (804) 840-4819, or email [sco04@henrico.us](mailto:sco04@henrico.us) To register online, please visit [www.vuu.edu](http://www.vuu.edu).



Dave Robbins

## 'It was just another game for us'

### Cornell Gordon recalls Jets iconic Super Bowl win against Colts

On Jan. 12, 1969, Cornell Gordon was on the team that shocked the football world.

As a New York Jets defensive back, Gordon contributed to arguably the greatest upset in gridiron history.

As 19.5-point underdogs to the unbeaten Baltimore Colts, the Jets (with swashbuckling quarterback Joe Namath) prevailed 16-7 in Super Bowl III at the Orange Bowl in Miami.

In so doing they disproved the general assumption that old-school NFC teams were clearly superior to the upstart AFC. The leagues merged in 1966.

Green Bay of the NFC had trounced AFC Oakland and Kansas City in the first two Super Bowls, and Baltimore appeared invincible.

Looking back, Gordon reveals the Jets' "secret weapon" in putting a lid on the Colts' explosive attack.

Defensive back Johnny Sample (from Cape Charles) had played with the Colts before joining the Jets and had the Baltimore playbook memorized.

"Johnny knew pretty much what they were going to do, what to look for. He helped us set up our defensive game plan," said Gordon.

"Then we just went out and played a ball game. It was just another game for us."

Colts' quarterback Earl Morrall and Johnny Unitas were a dysfunctional 17 for 41 and suffered four interceptions. Morrall had been NFL MVP that season

and Unitas ranks with the greatest QB's of all time.

Namath obviously knew something. Three days prior to the Super Bowl, he boldly "guaranteed" a Jets win; then he backed it up, with plenty of help from his defense.

Gordon will be in Richmond July 23 as a celebrity guest for Virginia Union University's Burning Sands golf tournament at The Crossings. It's an annual fundraiser for Panthers athletics.



Cornell Gordon

mouth.

Gordon's connection to VUU is his good friend Willie Spence, who set numerous Panthers passing records in the 1960s.

"We grew up together in Norfolk on Bolton Street," said Gordon. "I played at Booker T. (Washington High) right before Willie."

From Booker T., Gordon went to North Carolina A&T and was a two-time, All-CIAA quarterback for the Aggies.

His backup at A&T was someone who became very famous for something other than football Jesse Jackson. He had

transferred to the Greensboro school from Illinois.

"They tried Jesse at several positions, but mostly he relieved me (at QB) when we got ahead," said Gordon.

"One game Jesse actually threw a touchdown pass to me, after I'd gone to halfback."

Gordon was also Jackson's "teammate" at one of the famous Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit-Ins in the 1960s.

Since retiring from the NFL with a career total of 14 interceptions, Gordon has served as an assistant coach at Norfolk State University, helping the Spartans earn three CIAA titles.

He also coached football and girls' softball and basketball at Manor High School in Portsmouth.

While with the Jets, Gordon played with numerous athletes from HBCUs. The group includes Sample, Earl Christy and Emerson Boozer from Maryland-Eastern Shore, Winston Hill from Texas Southern and Verlon Biggs from Jackson State.

In 1968, leading up to the 1969 Super Bowl, Gordon (wearing No. 48) started 11 games, alternating between left and right cornerback, free and strong safety.

The Jets upset of all upsets is best remembered for "Broadway Joe" (Namath) predicting the outcome.

But don't forget a Jets defense (with some inside information) that never rested.