



*(Photo Courtesy of Rutgers University)*

*\*This article is part of a month long series, Black Lacrosse Stories, that highlights Black players and coaches who have made an impact on our game, but may be lesser known to many younger players today.\**

If I asked you who the most prolific passer in Rutgers lacrosse history was, a large swath of people would likely mention the name Jules Henningburg. And while Henningburg, a Black player, is one of the greatest overall players and passers in Rutgers history, especially recently, he is eighth all-time in career assists. The man sitting atop that career assist list is one of the ones who blazed the trail for players like Henningburg to play and succeed at Rutgers: James Ford.

A product of Hempstead High School on Long Island, where he was a two-time captain, earned All-South Shore honors as a senior with 118 points (62G/56A) and posted a career total of 228 points, Ford arrived at Rutgers in the fall of 1976 and began a career on the lacrosse field that would see not only break records but also barriers, becoming the first Black captain in program history as a senior in 1980.

During Ford's four seasons at Rutgers, the Scarlet Knights went 7-5 (1977), 9-4 (1978), 8-4 (1979), and 7-5 (1980). And while Rutgers never made the NCAA Tournament during Ford's career, they only fell to arch-rival Princeton once (1977). They skimmed the Tigers, 16-15, in 1979 but blew them out in 1978 (17-8) and 1980 (16-11). Ford led the way with six goals in that [1980 meeting](#).

Perhaps Ford's best two and most memorable seasons at



Rutgers were his sophomore season in 1978 and senior season in 1980. As a sophomore, Ford emerged as a leader on the offensive end and led the Scarlet Knights in assists with 51. That record still stands behind current Duke head coach John Danowski's 54 assists in 1973 as the second most assists in a single season in Rutgers history.

During that 1980 season as a senior, Ford was a captain, becoming the first Black captain in program history. And while the history he made off the field was significant, he also made history on the field, ending his career with a bang and making a mark that can still be seen in the record books to this day.

Ford tallied 73 points during that 1980 season, breaking Danowski's all-time single season points record. He was also named a Second-Team All-American after being an Honorable Mention the two years prior, and was selected for the North-South All-Star Game. Bill Naslonski broke Ford's single-season points record with 81 points three years later in 1983. The two still sit at No. 1 and No. 2 all-time in points in a single-season at Rutgers.

Ford ended his career in 1980 with a total of 201 points and 131 assists. He currently sits at No. 1 in career assists and No. 4 in career points.

The attackman was inducted into the Long Island Lacrosse Hall of Fame in 2008 and was just recently named into the Rutgers Athletic Hall of Fame in 2020.