



Southern Conference Football

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All-Southern Conference coaches football teams announced

SPARTANBURG, S.C. – The Southern Conference's nine football coaches have selected their annual all-conference teams and specialty awards for the 2022 season. Samford quarterback Michael Hiers is the Offensive Player of the Year, Chattanooga defensive lineman Jay Person is the Defensive Player of the Year and Western Carolina running back Desmond Reid is the Freshman of the Year. Samford's Chris Hatcher is the Coach of the Year and Chattanooga offensive lineman McClendon Curtis is the Jacobs Blocking Award winner.

The coaches, who could not vote for their own players or themselves, selected all-conference first and second teams and all-freshman teams on offense, defense and special teams. Due to a tie in the voting, there was one additional long snapper on the second team.

2022 Coaches All-Southern Conference Notes:

- Samford quarterback Michael Hiers (Walter Payton Award), Chattanooga defensive lineman Jay Person (Buck Buchanan Award), Western Carolina running back Desmond Reid (Jerry Rice Award) and Samford coach Chris Hatcher (Eddie Robinson Award) are all national finalists for FCS legacy awards, as are first-team All-SoCon selections Mercer wide receiver Devron Harper and Chattanooga running back Ailym Ford (Payton) and ETSU defensive back Alijah Huzzie (Buchanan).
- Entering postseason play, Samford's Hiers leads the FCS in completion percentage (.769) and completions per game (29.91). He also ranks in the top 10 in the FCS in a plethora of other categories, including third in passing touchdowns (35), points responsible for (228) and points responsible for per game (20.7); fourth in passing yards (3,290), passing yards per game (299.1) and total offense (313.7); and eighth in passing efficiency (167.0).
- Hiers has completed 329-of-428 passes with just three interceptions this season. In addition to his 35 passing TDs, he has also run for 184 yards and three scores. He accounted for five total touchdowns each in wins over No. 12/11 Chattanooga and No. 16/19 Mercer to end the regular season.
- Hiers threw for multiple touchdowns in all but one game this season, a setback at defending FBS national champion Georgia. He threw for four touchdowns in seven different contests and threw for at least 300 yards in five games, including a pair of contests over 400 yards.
- Hiers claimed SoCon Offensive Player of the Week honors five times this season and was the SoCon Offensive Player of the month in both September and October.
- Hiers is the third Samford quarterback to claim SoCon Offensive Player of the Year honors. Devlin Hodges took the distinction in three straight seasons (2016-18), while Liam Welch claimed it in the 2020-21 season.
- Chattanooga's Person has posted 52 tackles this season, a whopping 17.5 of which have gone for lost yardage, leading the SoCon. His average of 1.6 TFLs per game ranks ninth in the FCS.
- Person shares the SoCon lead with 8.0 sacks this season, ranking 23rd in the FCS with 0.73 per game.
- Against ETSU on Oct. 1, Person had 4.0 TFLs and 3.0 sacks, both career bests. He also forced a fumble and had three of his nine seasonal quarterback hurries in that contest.
- Person paced a Chattanooga defense that leads the SoCon in total defense (320.5), rushing defense (108.0) and sacks (35). The Mocs rank 17th, 12th and seventh in those categories in the FCS, respectively, in addition to ranking 22nd in the FCS in scoring defense at 20.6.

- Person's selection marks the 10th time a Chattanooga player has been named the defensive player of the year by the coaches and gives UTC winners in consecutive years, as fellow first-team All-SoCon selection Devonnsha Maxwell was last season's Defensive Player of the Year. Person is the Mocs' seventh since 2012.
- Western Carolina's Reid finished fourth in the league in rushing at 83.4 yards per game, also earning second-team All-SoCon honors from the coaches in addition to all-freshman and Freshman of the Year plaudits.
- Reid, the only SoCon finalist for the Jerry Rice Award, rushed for 826 yards on 119 carries this season, the second-most yards by a Catamount freshman tailback all-time. His average of 6.9 yards per carry is a Western Carolina freshman record. Reid posted three 100-yard games this season, including a career-best 175-yard effort against Presbyterian on Sept. 17 in which he also ran for two TDs.
- Reid also caught 21 passes for 212 yards and a TD, with that touchdown catch coming in the Catamounts' season-ending win over No. 17/15 Chattanooga.
- Reid is the fifth Catamount chosen as the freshman of the year by the coaches and the second straight, as defensive back Andreas Keaton took the honor last season.
- Curtis collects Chattanooga's sixth Jacobs Blocking Award. The Mocs have won it in three straight years, as Cole Strange shared the honor in 2020-21 before winning it outright in 2021.
- Curtis helped Chattanooga rank second in the SoCon and 17th in the FCS in sacks allowed at just 1.27 per game. He also helped clear the way for Ford, who led the league in rushing at 119.9 yards per game this season and totaled 1,199 yards overall.
- Curtis paced an offensive line that was even better in league play, allowing just 1.12 sacks per game and opening holes for Ford to rush for 134.0 yards per game.
- Samford's Hatcher is the SoCon Coach of the Year for the first time in his career. Hatcher has led Samford to a 10-1 overall record and the program's first-ever outright SoCon title at 8-0 in league play. Hatcher led Samford to just the second 10-win season in school history, while the nine-game winning streak it carries into the playoffs is a program record, as are the eight conference wins. The Bulldogs' lone loss came at the hands of defending FBS national champion Georgia, as Samford is 10-0 against FCS competition so far this season.
- Hatcher's squad is ranked No. 9 in the AFCA FCS Coaches' Top 25 and No. 8 in the Stats Perform FCS Top 25. Hatcher led Samford to the No. 6 national seed in the NCAA Division I Football Championship, its highest seed in program history.
- Hatcher is the second Bulldog coach to claim SoCon Coach of the Year honors, joining Pat Sullivan, who won in 2012. Hatcher passed Sullivan for the most wins in program history this season, as he currently has 50 in his eighth season at the helm.
- Chattanooga paced the league with 13 players earning postseason distinction. The Mocs had eight all-conference selections and five all-freshman picks. Western Carolina was second with five second-team All-SoCon selections and a league-best seven all-freshman picks.
- Furman and Mercer shared league-best honors with nine all-conference selections each. The Paladins had six first-team picks, tied with Chattanooga for most in the league. Three members of the Paladins' offensive line made the first team in Jacob Johanning, Anderson Tomlin and Pearson Toomey.
- Samford and Chattanooga had eight all-conference selections apiece, with the Bulldogs claiming a league-best seven selections.
- Mercer's Harper was a first-team selection at both wide receiver and return specialist. Harper ranked second in the league in both catches per game (7.1) and receiving yards per game (89.7), totaling 987 yards on 78 catches with 10 receiving TDs. Harper, who also had 199 yards and four TDs rushing, added TDs via kickoff return and punt return to score in four different ways this season and rank eighth in the FCS with 16 total touchdowns. He ranks fourth in the FCS in all-purpose yards per game (170.73), 10th in combined kick return yardage (692) and seventh in kickoff return average (29.1).

2022 Coaches All-Southern Conference Football Team

Offensive Player of the Year – Michael Hiers, Jr., QB, Samford
Defensive Player of the Year – Jay Person, Jr., DL, Chattanooga
Freshman of the Year – Desmond Reid, RB, Western Carolina
Jacobs Blocking Award – McClendon Curtis, Sr., OL, Chattanooga
Coach of the Year – Chris Hatcher, Samford

First team offense

QB Michael Hiers, Jr., Samford
RB Jacob Saylor, Sr., ETSU
RB Ailym Ford, Jr., Chattanooga
OL Joe Schreiber, Sr., ETSU
OL Jacob Johanning, R-Jr., Furman
OL Anderson Tomlin, R-Sr., Furman
OL Pearson Toomey, R-Jr., Furman
OL McClendon Curtis, Sr., Chattanooga
TE Ryan Miller, 5th, Furman
WR Devron Harper, Jr., Mercer
WR Ty James, R-So., Mercer

First team defense

DL Cameron Coleman, R-Sr., Furman
DL Devonsha Maxwell, Sr., Chattanooga
DL Jay Person, Jr., Chattanooga
DL Micheal Mason, Sr., Wofford
LB Chandler Martin, R-Fr., ETSU
LB Ty Boeck, Sr., Chattanooga
LB Stone Snyder, Sr., VMI
DB Alijah Huzzie, R-So., ETSU
DB Hugh Ryan, R-Jr., Furman
DB Kameron Brown, Jr., Chattanooga
DB Alex Oliver, Jr., VMI

First team special teams

PK Tyler Keltner, Jr., ETSU
P Jack Culbreath, Jr., VMI
LS Robert Soderholm, R-Sr., VMI
RS Devron Harper, Jr., Mercer

All-Freshman Offense

Tyzen Wilkerson, Mercer
Bryce Goodner, Chattanooga
Sam Phillips, Chattanooga
Javin Whatley, Chattanooga
Isaiah Lemmond, VMI
Cole Gonzales, Western Carolina
Censere Lee, Western Carolina
Desmond Reid, Western Carolina
Neyland Walker, Western Carolina
Dylan Djete, Wofford
Kyle Parsons, Wofford

All-Freshman Special Teams

Trace Kelley, ETSU
AJ Colombo, Western Carolina
Bridger Jones, Wofford
Kyle Parsons, Wofford

Second team offense

QB Fred Payton, Sr., Mercer
RB Dominic Roberto, R-Jr., Furman
RB Desmond Reid, Fr., Western Carolina
OL Tereis Drayton, Jr., The Citadel
OL John Thomas, Jr., Mercer
OL Jabari Brooks, Jr., Samford
OL Gavin Orr, Gr., Samford
OL Tyler Smith, R-Jr., Western Carolina
TE Drake Starks, Gr., Mercer
WR Chandler Smith, Sr., Samford
WR Kendall Watson, Gr., Samford

Second team defense

DL Solomon Zubairu, Sr., Mercer
DL Ben Brewton, Jr., Chattanooga
DL Marlon Taylor, R-So., Chattanooga
DL KJ Milner, Sr., Western Carolina
LB Hasan Black, Jr., The Citadel
LB Isaac Dowling, So., Mercer
LB Nathan East, Gr., Samford
DB Travis Blackshear, R-Sr., Furman
DB Lance Wise, Sr., Mercer
DB Hakeem Johnson, Gr., Samford
DB Andreas Keaton, So., Western Carolina

Second team special teams

PK Colby Kintner, So., The Citadel
P Bradley Porcellato, Gr., Samford
LS Steele Judy, Jr., The Citadel
LS Kevin Thompson, Jr., Western Carolina
RS Wayne Anderson Jr., R-Jr., Furman

All-Freshman Defense

Davion Hood, ETSU
Alex Maier, Furman
Caleb Williams, Furman
Christian Hanson, Mercer
Josh Battle, Chattanooga
Alex Mitchell, Chattanooga
Jahleel Porter, VMI
Geoffrey Speight, VMI
Samaurie Dukes, Western Carolina
Hayward McQueen, Western Carolina
Jalen Marshall, Wofford