

ASU Lands Three on Buchanan Watch List

Written by Mike Flynn
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Appalachian State University defensive back Mark LeGree (Columbus, Ga./Pacelli Catholic), linebacker D.J. Smith (Charlotte, N.C./Independence) and defensive end Jabari Fletcher (Atlanta, Ga./Grady) are among the 20 players on the official watch list for the 2010 Buck Buchanan Award, The Sports Network announced on Monday.

The Buchanan Award is given annually to the nation's top NCAA Division I FCS defensive player.

LeGree is already a two-time Buchanan Award finalist, having finished third in voting for the 2008 award and fifth last season. The 6-0, 200-pound safety has 17 interceptions over the past two seasons, leading the Southern Conference both years and topping the nation with 10 as a sophomore in '08. He is a two-time consensus first-team All-American and, for the second year in a row, is the only FCS representative on the official watch list for the Bronko Nagurski Award, which is presented to the top defensive player in all of college football.

A three-year starter at linebacker, Smith enters his senior campaign on pace to join two-time Buchanan Award winner Dexter Coakley as the only players in ASU history to amass 500 career tackles. He has tallied at least 120 tackles in each of his first three collegiate campaigns, including 137 a year ago, en route to first-team all-America recognition. His 381 career tackles are the second-most among all active FCS players going into this season, behind only 386 for Scott Lewis from St. Francis (Pa.).

One of the nation's top pass rushers, Fletcher has racked up 12.5 sacks over the last two seasons to anchor Appalachian's defensive front. He totaled 63 tackles with 10.5 for loss and 6.5 sacks a year ago, en route to earning all-conference recognition for the second-straight season.

Appalachian joins Richmond as the only squads with three representatives on the initial Buchanan watch list. Southern Illinois is the only other program with multiple players recognized (2). The list will be revised on Oct. 4 and Oct. 25 and the winner will be announced on Jan. 6, 2011 in Frisco, Texas.

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Last week, The Sports Network announced that ASU running back Devon Moore (Mebane, N.C./Cedar Ridge) is on the official watch list for the Walter Payton Award, which honors the nation's top FCS player.