Armanti Edwards became the first two-time winner in the 23-year history of the Walter Payton Award Thursday night in Chattanooga.

It was a fitting end to a brilliant college career. Edwards received 55 first-place votes and easily outdistanced his competition. Wide receiver Terrell Huggins of Elon was a distant second with 16 first-place votes. Southern Illinois running back Deji Karim finished third.

Edwards, who was also the Southern Conference Offensive Player of the Year, amassed nearly 4,000 yard of total offense this past season, including a school-record 3,291 passing yards. He also scored 18 rushing touchdowns and threw 12 touchdown passes. The all-time leader in every offensive catergory in Southern Conference history, Edwards also finished second in career total yards behind the late Steve McNair at the FCS level; and he was second all-time for post-season victories for a starting quarterback with 11.

"It was an honor, a real honor to win it last year, Edwards said. "But words can't describe what it's like to win it twice. I want to thank everyone here, my family and Appalachian State for recruiting me and making this possible."

Edwards, who graduated Sunday and completed his degree in 3 1/2 years, majored in Graphic Arts. He was also named first team All-America by the Walter Camp Football Foundation and the Associated Press. Those honors make him Appalachian State's first four-time All-American.

And by winning the Payton Award for the second time in a row, he joins Dexter Coakley as the only time winner for player of the year honors. Coakley, who played 12 years in the National Football League with the Dallas Cowboys and the St. Louis Rams, won the Buck Buchanan Award (which goes to the best defensive player in the country at the FCS level) in back-to-back years (1995-96). Defensive back Mark LeGree finished fifth in the balloting for the Buchanan Award this season. He finished third last season. Defensive end Arthur Moats of James Madison picked up the award; and ASU coach Jerry Moore finished 14th in balloting for the

Eddie Robinson National Coach of the Year Award. Henry Frazier III of Prairie View won the award.