

SoCon Concludes Spring Meetings

Written by SoCon Sports
Friday, 01 June 2012 19:34

The Southern Conference completed its annual Spring Meetings on Friday (June 1). The four-day meetings were attended by each of the member institutions' President or Chancellor, Athletics Director, Senior Woman Administrator and Faculty Athletics Representative. The league's football and men's and women's basketball coaches also held

meetings.

"We held a very productive session in Asheville this week," said Southern Conference Commissioner John Iamarino. "These meetings gave us an opportunity to reinforce the strengths and unique characteristics of this league which have enabled this conference to have success for over 90 years. There were a lot of positive conversations surrounding the long term strategies and opportunities to strengthen our affiliation as a conference."

As part of the meetings, the league's administrators voted to change the seeding process for the men's basketball tournament, giving only the two division winners guaranteed byes in the first round of the tournament. The two additional first-round byes will now go to the two teams with the best conference records, a change which will begin in 2013. The previous format gave the top two teams in each division a guaranteed bye. The SoCon has also elected to move from its current 18-game league schedule to a 16-game conference slate, beginning with the 2013-14 season.

Additionally, the membership approved the creation of a men's basketball coordinator position. This individual, reporting to the Commissioner, will address issues designed to improve the league's performance in areas such as non-conference scheduling, participation in exempt events, and marketing opportunities and general promotion of the league's basketball tournament.

The league announced future sites for conference championships in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. Appalachian State was awarded the 2014 Women's Soccer Championship, after hosting the men's tournament semifinals and final last fall. Georgia Southern was selected to host the 2015 Men's and Women's Tennis Championships, while Elon was tabbed to host the league's softball tournament in 2015.

The Conference announced a change in the locations for the men's soccer tournament semifinals and finals in future years. The WakeMed Complex in Cary, N.C., has been chosen to serve as the host site in 2012 and 2014. Furman University will host the semifinals and championship match in 2013, with UNCG serving as host in 2015. The Paladins were originally chosen to host in 2012 with UNCG to follow in 2013.

In other business, the Council of Presidents reaffirmed the league's automatic suspension policy for any unsportsmanlike ejection and reviewed progress on the conference's strategic plan enacted last June. Dr. Andrew Westmoreland of Samford was voted chairman of the Council of Presidents for 2012-13 while Dr. George Benson of College of Charleston was elected to serve as the vice chairman. Wednesday night's annual Southern Conference Honors Dinner recognized the league's award-winners from the 2011-12 season. Among those recognized were Appalachian State's Austin Trotman (Bob Waters Male Athlete of the Year) and Chattanooga's Michelle Fuzzard (Female Athlete of the Year).

Appalachian State was recognized for winning the Commissioner's Cup, presented to the top

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overall men's athletics program, while College of Charleston claimed the Germann Cup, which is awarded to the conference's top women's athletics program.

Davidson College was awarded the Barrett-Bonner Award which recognizes the school with the highest percentage of student-athletes on the league's Honor Roll. Davidson placed 65 percent of its student-athletes on the SoCon Honor Roll. The Wildcats also earned the league's Graduation Rate Award which is presented to the school with the highest graduation rates of its student athletes over the last five years. Davidson won the award by graduating 91 percent of its student-athletes over the five-year cohort.

Samford earned the D.S. McAlister Award which is presented annually to the school judged by the league's administrators and head coaches to have exhibited the highest degree of sportsmanship. The award is named after Colonel D.S. McAllister of The Citadel, who served as the conference's secretary treasurer for 38 years.