

Four Tar Heels Named Preseason All-ACC

Written by Kevin Best
Wednesday, 25 July 2012 20:31

Florida State, Clemson and North Carolina led all Atlantic Coast Conference schools each with four players selected to the 2012 Preseason All-ACC Football team in voting conducted by the media at the annual ACC Football Kickoff, which was held July 22-23 at the Grandover Resort in Greensboro. In all, 19 of the 25 honorees on the team earned first or second-

team All-ACC honors last fall, with eight having been selected to the All-ACC first team. Four of the selections are returning first-team or second-team 2012 All-Americans. One of those returning All-America selections, Clemson wide receiver Sammy Watkins (Fort Myers, Fla.), who was named by the media as the ACC preseason Player of the Year on Monday, was the only unanimous selection on the team, being named on all 68 ballots. North Carolina had four players chosen preseason All-ACC in running back Giovani Bernard (Davie, Fla.), offensive tackle James Hurst (Plainfield, Ind.), offensive guard Jonathan Cooper (Wilmington, N.C.) and linebacker Kevin Reddick (New Bern, N.C.).

Florida State, tabbed by the media at the ACC Football Kickoff to win its first ACC Football title since 2005, was represented by defensive end Brandon Jenkins (Tallahassee, Fla.), safety Lamarcus Joyner (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.), placekicker Dustin Hopkins (Houston, Texas) and cornerback Greg Reid (Valdosta, Ga.), who was named as the specialist for his abilities as a punt and kickoff returner.

Clemson, which captured the 2011 ACC Championship and was selected by the media at the Kickoff to finish second to the Seminoles in the Atlantic Division, also had four players selected in Watkins, quarterback Tajh Boyd (Hampton, Va.), center Dalton Freeman (Pelion, S.C.) and running back Andre Ellington (Moncks Corner, S.C.). Bernard, who ran for 1,253 yards, the third-best in ACC history for a freshman, has been named to the preseason watch lists for the Maxwell and Doak Walker Awards. Cooper and Hurst have both been named to the watch lists for the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award. Reddick has been named to four preseason watch lists (Nagurski, Bednarik, Butkus, Lombardi).

Those chosen first-team All-ACC last fall included Sammy Watkins, Tajh Boyd and Dalton Freeman of Clemson; Dustin Hopkins of Florida State; Omoregie Uzzi of Georgia Tech, Joe Vellano of Maryland, Giovani Bernard of North Carolina and David Amerson of NC State. The 11 selections who were named to the second team 2011 All-ACC squad were Conner Vernon of Duke, Brandon Jenkins and Lamarcus Joyner of Florida State; Andre Ellington of Clemson; James Hurst and Jonathan Cooper of North Carolina; Oday Aboushi and Steve Greer of Virginia, James Gayle and Kyle Fuller of Virginia Tech and Nikita Whitlock of Wake Forest. Two members of the pre-season All-ACC team were actually high school teammates. Florida State safety Lamarcus Joyner and North Carolina tailback Giovani Bernard played for St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Bernard, who ran for 1,253 yards in 2011 was the winner of the ACC Brian Piccolo Award for Courage last fall. The Award's namesake, Piccolo, played his high school football at Central Catholic High in Ft. Lauderdale, the predecessor of St. Thomas Aquinas.

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2012 Atlantic Coast Conference Preseason Team

Offense

Pos. Name (Votes) Ht Wt Class Hometown

WR Conner Vernon, Duke (41) 6-2 195 Senior Miami, Fla.

WR Sammy Watkins, Clemson (68) 6-1 200 Sophomore Fort Myers, Fla.

TE Matt Furstenburg, Maryland (35) 6-4 245 Senior Flemington, N.J.

T James Hurst, North Carolina (48) 6-7 300 Junior Plainfield, Ind.

T Oday Aboushi, Virginia (29) 6-6 310 Senior Brooklyn, N.Y.

G Omoregie Uzzi, Georgia Tech (57) 6-3 300 Senior Lithonia, Ga.

G Jonathan Cooper, North Carolina (55) 6-3 295 Senior Wilmington, N.C.

C Dalton Freeman, Clemson (58) 6-3 285 Senior Pelion, S.C.

QB Tajh Boyd, Clemson (29) 6-1 225 Junior Hampton, Va.

RB Giovanni Bernard, North Carolina (60) 5-10 205 Sophomore Davie, Fla.

RB Andre Ellington, Clemson (53) 5-10 190 Senior Moncks Corner, S.C.

Defense

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Pos. Name (Votes) Ht Wt Class Hometown

DE Brandon Jenkins, Florida State (59) 6-3 265 Senior Tallahassee, Fla.

DE James Gayle, Virginia Tech (31) 6-4 250 Junior Hampton, Va.

DT Joe Vellano, Maryland (58) 6-1 285 Senior Rexford, N.Y.

DT Nikita Whitlock, Wake Forest (33) 5-11 260 Junior Wylie, Texas

LB Kevin Reddick, North Carolina (49) 6-3 240 Senior New Bern, N.C.

LB Bruce Taylor, Virginia Tech (42) 6-2 253 Senior Riceboro, Ga.

LB Steve Greer, Virginia (32) 6-2 225 Senior Solon, Ohio

CB David Amerson, NC State (63) 6-3 194 Junior Greensboro, N.C.

CB Kyle Fuller, Virginia Tech (25) 6-0 181 Junior Baltimore, Md.

S Lamarcus Joyner, Florida State (45) 5-8 204 Junior Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

S Earl Wolff, NC State (30) 6-0 207 Senior Raeford, N.C.

Specialists

Pos. Name (Votes) Ht Wt Class Hometown

PK Dustin Hopkins, Florida State (54) 6-2 190 Senior Houston, Texas

P Dalton Botts, Miami (65) 6-3 198 Senior Taft, Calif.

SP Greg Reid, Florida State (35) 5-8 186 Senior Valdosta, Ga.

Photo courtesy: Giovanni Bernard, UNC Athletics