

SoCon Coaches Select All-Conference Team

Written by Phil Perry
Monday, 19 May 2014 11:55

Davidson's Forrest Brandt and Elon's Casey Jones have been voted Southern Conference Co-Players of the Year, Georgia Southern's Josh Wirsu the Pitcher

of the Year, Samford's Heath Quinn the Freshman of the Year and Davidson's Dick Cooke the Coach of the Year in voting of the league's 10 head coaches.

The coaches also selected two all-conference teams and an all-freshman squad. Due to several ties in the voting, the first team was comprised of 14 members and the second team and all-freshman team had 13 members each. Regular-season champion Western Carolina and runner-up Davidson shared league-best honors with five All-SoCon selections each.

The Catamounts put a league-high four on the first team, while the Wildcats had three first-team picks. Brandt is in the top 10 in several offensive categories in the SoCon, highlighted by his .362 average (sixth) and .638 slugging percentage (second).

The senior from Raleigh, N.C., is fourth in the conference with a .454 on-base percentage, fourth with 47 runs scored and sixth with 49 RBIs. He is also third in the SoCon with a team-best 12 home runs. Brandt earned SoCon player of the week honors on March 10 after hitting .471 with eight RBIs as the Wildcats went 4-1 that week.

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Brandt is Davidson's first Player of the Year since Jay Heafner in 2005 and the third overall. Jones leads the SoCon in several offensive statistics, including batting average (.422), slugging percentage (.661), on-base percentage (.504), hits (81), doubles (20) and total bases (127). The junior from Midlothian, Va., who was also the Southern Conference Sports Media Association's pick for Player of the Year, had a career-best 26-game hitting streak and has recorded hits in all but six games this season.

Jones was recently named to the watch list for the Gregg Olson Award, which goes to the nation's breakout player of the year. He is the Phoenix's second straight Player of the Year and third overall. Wirsu is tied for second in the league in wins with a 9-3 record this year. The junior right-hander from Harlem, Ga., also sports a 2.36 ERA and is holding opposing batters to a league-low .201 average.

Wirsu has struck out 80 batters on the season, tied for second in the SoCon, and has allowed two earned runs or fewer in 11 of his 13 starts this year. He twice struck out 13 batters, doing so in a win over Davidson on March 29 and matching that total in a win over The Citadel the following week. Wirsu was named the SoCon pitcher of the week on April 7 after his complete game against the Bulldogs. Quinn became Samford's first-ever SoCon Freshman of the Year after hitting .316 with 17 doubles, nine home runs and 45 RBIs during his rookie campaign.

Also a second-team all-conference selection, the Birmingham, Ala., native has started 55 of Samford's 56 games so far this year. His doubles total is good for third in the league, while his nine homers tie him for ninth. Quinn hit .714 in Samford's first series of the season, earning SoCon player of the week honors on Feb. 17 after notching at least three hits in each of the Bulldogs' three games against Valparaiso.

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Cooke led the Wildcats to a second-place league finish after Davidson was picked 10th in the preseason poll. The 24th-year Wildcat skipper had his squad in contention for its first league title since 1985 right up until the final day of the regular season and garnered its highest SoCon finish since a second-place showing in the South Division in 1987.

The Wildcats won eight of their nine league series on the year and finished the regular season with a 28-17 overall mark and a 17-8 SoCon record. The 28 wins match the Wildcats' single-season school record. Winning its second straight regular-season title, Western Carolina placed starting pitcher Jordan Smith, catcher Adam Martin, first baseman Jacob Hoyle and second baseman Bradley Strong on the all-conference first team. Davidson landed outfielders Brandt and Lee Miller on the first team, along with designated hitter Ryan Lowe.

Quinn highlighted the all-freshman team, which featured three players each from Samford and Appalachian State. Elon and Georgia Southern had two all-freshman picks apiece. Coaches were not permitted to vote for their own players or themselves in the voting process.

2014 SoCon Baseball All-Southern Conference Team

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Co-Player of the Year – Forrest Brandt, Sr., OF, Davidson

Co-Player of the Year – Casey Jones, Jr., OF, Elon

Pitcher of the Year – Josh Wirsu, Jr., RHP, Georgia Southern

Freshman of the Year – Heath Quinn, OF, Samford

Coach of the Year – Dick Cooke, Davidson

First Team

SP Josh Wirsu, Georgia Southern

SP Jordan Smith, Western Carolina

RP Andres Gracia, Samford

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C Adam Martin, Western Carolina

1B Jacob Hoyle, Western Carolina

2B Hunter King, UNCG

2B Bradley Strong, Western Carolina

SS Dillon Dobson, Appalachian State

SS Hunter Burton, Furman

3B Sean Guite, UNCG

OF Forrest Brandt, Davidson

OF Lee Miller, Davidson

OF Casey Jones, Elon

DH Ryan Lowe, Davidson

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Second Team

SP Danny Mooney, Davidson

SP Jeremy Null, Western Carolina

RP Jason Richman, Georgia Southern

C Drew McWhorter, Samford

1B Greg Harrison, Furman

2B Michael Pierson, Appalachian State

SS Jordan McDonald, UNCG

3B Chris Ohmstede, Furman

OF Drew DeKerlegand, The Citadel

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OF Nathan Becker, Davidson

OF Eric Kalbfleisch, UNCG

OF Heath Quinn, Samford

DH Bo Thompson, The Citadel

All-Freshman Team

Matt Brill, Appalachian State

Dallas DeVrieze, Appalachian State

Tyler Stroup, Appalachian State

Garrett Chapman, Georgia Southern

Ryan Cleveland, Georgia Southern

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Matt Harris, Elon

Nick Zammarelli, Elon

Carter Grote, Furman

Adam Swim, UNCG

Jared Brasher, Samford

T.J. Dixon, Samford

Heath Quinn, Samford

Bryan Sammons, Western Carolina

Photo Courtesy: Dillon Dobson, App State Athletics