

Bears Voted Second In SAC Coaches Poll

Written by Staff Reports

Tuesday, 05 August 2014 21:56

The Lenoir-Rhyne Football Team was picked to finish second in the league standings this year as voted on by the South Atlantic Conference Coaches while eight players garnered 2014 All-SAC Preseason accolades.

The Bears, the three-time defending conference champions, received four first-place votes and 45 points. Carson-Newman also picked up four first-place votes but edged out Lenoir-Rhyne with 46 total points.

Lenoir-Rhyne finished the year with a 13-2 record and a perfect 7-0 mark in conference action last fall and played in the NCAA Division II Championship game.

The Bears fell to Northwest Missouri State, 43-28, in the finals last December in Florence, Ala. The Bears defeated the Eagles (10-3) twice last year including a 27-20 victory in the second round of the playoffs.

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Eight Bears also earned All-South Atlantic Conference Preseason honors including six on the first team.

On offense, the first-teamers for the Bears include senior halfback Jarrod Spears (Bunnlevel, N.C.), senior fullback Isaiah Whitaker (Salisbury, N.C.) and junior offensive lineman Joe Ray (Atlanta, Ga.).

Spears, a two-time First-Team All-SAC honoree (2012-13), led the Bears with 984 rushing yards to go along with seven touchdowns on the ground last year and was the team's top kickoff return man. Spears averaged 23.2 yards per return including a 98-yarder for a score.

Whitaker added 912 yards on the ground with a team-high 11 touchdowns last fall en route to All-American accolades for the second straight years as a fullback. In addition, Whitaker (2,601 career yards) has moved into the top ten on the Bears' all-time career rushing yards list.

Ray was an All-American as well in 2013 and won the Jacobs Blocking Trophy, given annually to the top offensive lineman in the South Atlantic Conference. The trio helped Lenoir-Rhyne rush for an all-time NCAA single-season record 5,563 yards last season.

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On the first-team all-league defense, the Bears are led by a pair of All-Americans: senior defensive lineman Blake Baker (Bethlehem, N.C.) and senior linebacker Tanner Botts (Lawrenceville, Ga.).

Baker set a school record for quarterback sacks (14.5) to go along with 56 tackles (22 for a loss) while Botts led the team in takedowns (134) for the second straight year.

Senior defensive back O'neil Blake (Kissimmee, Fla.) was a second-team all-league pick last year after finishing with 76 tackles, 12 pass break-ups and three interceptions.

Lenoir-Rhyne also placed two players on the All-South Atlantic Conference Preseason Second Team: sophomore linebacker Rodney Singleton (Hawthorne, Fla.) and senior defensive back Joe Anderson (Lilburn, Ga.).

Singleton was the SAC Defensive Freshman Of The Year in 2013 after tallying 70 tackles while Anderson totaled 78 takedowns, six pass break-ups and an interception. Anderson was also a 2013 Capital One Academic All-American.

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Lenoir-Rhyne, under first-year Head Coach Ian Shields, opens the season on Saturday, September 6, at home against Point. Kickoff at Moretz Stadium is set for 7:00 p.m.

2014 South Atlantic Conference

Football Preseason Coaches Poll

1. Carson-Newman (4) 46

2. Lenoir-Rhyne (4) 45

3. Newberry 36

4. Wingate 31

5. Mars Hill 25

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6. Catawba 21

7. Tusculum 13

8. Brevard 7

2014 All-South Atlantic Conference

Preseason Football Teams

FIRST TEAM OFFENSE

QB - W.T. Murden, Newberry

RB - Shaikel Davis, Mars Hill

RB - Jarrod Spears, Lenoir-Rhyne

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RB - Isaiah Whitaker, Lenoir-Rhyne

WR - Dimitri Holmes, Mars Hill

WR - Justin Houston, Tusculum

WR - Deon Hicks, Tusculum

OL - Denzell Goode, Mars Hill

OL - Joe Ray, Lenoir-Rhyne

OL - Taylor Fender, Catawba

OL - Will Poteat, Wingate

OL - Nick Allison, Mars Hill

TE - Wesley Powell, Tusculum

LS - Dusty Nance, Carson-Newman

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P - Kyle Clark, Newberry

PK - Patrick Smith, Wingate

FIRST TEAM DEFENSE

DL - Blake Baker, Lenoir-Rhyne

DL - Javaris Neal, Carson-Newman

DL - Nick Napolitano, Wingate

DL - Jonathan Jean, Catawba

LB - Tanner Botts, Lenoir-Rhyne

LB - Edmond Robinson, Newberry

LB - Michael Gruber, Brevard

LB - Jason Taylor, Catawba

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DB - Eien Jacob, Carson-Newman

DB - O'neil Blake, Lenoir-Rhyne

DB - Jon Jimenez, Wingate

DB - Dante Thomas, Carson-Newman

RS - Andre Overholt, Brevard

SECOND TEAM OFFENSE

QB - De'Andre Thomas, Carson-Newman

RB - Kelvin Jeter, Brevard

RB - Andy Hibbett, Carson-Newman

RB - Cary Littlejohn, Catawba

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WR - Jordan Berry, Wingate

WR - Anthony Eubanks, Carson-Newman

WR - Byron Dickerson, Newberry

OL - Landon Martin, Newberry

OL - Robbie Ignagni, Carson-Newman

OL - Evan Sobocinski, Newberry

OL - Billy Munker, Tusculum

OL - Mathu Gibson, Wingate

TE - Brandon Ellington, Wingate

LS - Andrew Smith, Newberry

P - Charlie Ray, Carson-Newman

PK - Kyle Clark, Newberry

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SECOND TEAM DEFENSE

DL - William Alderman, Carson-Newman

DL - Johnny Maxey, Mars Hill

DL - Alstevis Squirewell, Newberry

DL - Steven Jacobs, Wingate

LB - Rodney Singleton, Lenoir-Rhyne

LB - Jasper Mason, Mars Hill

LB - Taylor McDonnell, Newberry

LB - Wayne Soliai, Tusculum

DB - Joe Anderson, Lenoir-Rhyne

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DB - Jakeem Polk, Wingate

DB - LiRonta Archie, Tusculum

DB - Lance Richardson, Newberry

RS - TraShaun Ward, Carson-Newman

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