

Colonial Conference

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James Madison Favored To Win CAA Football Championship In 2021

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Rob Washburn

RICHMOND, Va. (July 27, 2021) – James Madison, which is coming off a 7-1 season and its fourth trip to the semifinals of the FCS playoffs in five years, is favored to capture the CAA Football title in 2021 according to a vote of the league’s head coaches and media relations directors.

The Dukes, who were ranked No. 3 nationally last spring, got 15 first-place votes and 231 points in the poll. Delaware, which also went 7-1 last season and advanced to the semifinals of the FCS playoffs for the first time since 2010, received seven first-place votes and finished second with 222 points. Villanova placed third with 194 points, and Richmond, which picked up two first-place tallies, was fourth with 169 points. New Hampshire finished fifth in the poll, followed by Rhode Island, Towson, UAlbany, Maine, Stony Brook, William & Mary and Elon.

JMU returns most of its top performers offensively, including quarterback Cole Johnson, All-America running back Percy Agyei-Obese and leading receivers Kris Thornton and Antwane Wells, Jr. On defense, the Dukes feature All-America defensive end Mike Greene, leading tackler Kelvin Azanama and All-CAA safety MJ Hampton. Also back is senior kicker Ethan Ratke, who already owns the conference record for made field goals with 72 and is three field goals shy of the FCS all-time mark.

Delaware was ranked No. 4 in last spring’s final FCS national polls and is coming off its best campaign in a decade. Back to lead the offense are quarterback Nolan Henderson, running back Dejour Lee and wide receiver Thyrick Pitts, who all earned first-team all-conference accolades in 2020. The Blue Hens were among the nation’s top teams defensively last season and return three first-team All-CAA performers in safety Kedrick Whitehead, cornerback Nijuel Hill and linebacker Johnny Buchanan.

Villanova finished last spring with a 2-2 mark and a No. 16 national ranking. The Wildcats have plenty of experience returning on offense with quarterback Daniel Smith, running back Justin Covington and receivers Jaaron Hayek and Rayjoun Pringle. Villanova's defense features a trio of first-team all-conference performers in defensive tackle Malik Fisher, linebacker Forrest Rhyne and cornerback Christian Benford.

Richmond was ranked No. 14 nationally after completing its spring campaign with a 3-1 mark. Quarterback Joe Mancuso returns to direct the Spiders' offense, which also includes running back Aaron Dykes and All-CAA tight end John Fitzgerald. Richmond's defense features All-America defensive tackle Kobie Turner and a pair of first-team All-CAA linebackers in Tyler Dressler and Tristan Wheeler.

CAA Football is looking to continue its tradition of success in 2021. The conference has had a team in the FCS championship game 11 times since 2003, a squad in the semifinals of the playoffs for the past eight seasons and a team in the quarterfinals every year since 1991. Eleven of the CAA's 12 teams have participated in the FCS playoffs since 2015, a feat unmatched by any other conference.

CAA Football also announced its preseason all-conference team. Delaware led all schools with eight players honored while JMU had seven. JMU's Percy Agyei-Obese was named the preseason Offensive Player of the Year, and the Dukes' Mike Greene was chosen as the preseason Defensive Player of the Year.

2021 CAA FOOTBALL PRESEASON ALL-CONFERENCE TEAM

(Selected by a vote of Head Coaches and Media Relations Directors)

OFFENSE

<u>Name, School</u>	<u>Cl.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Wt.</u>
Nolan Henderson, Delaware	Jr.	QB	6-1	195
Percy Agyei-Obese, James Madison	Sr.	RB	6-0	204
Dejoun Lee, Delaware	Sr.	RB	5-7	185
Karl Mofor, UAlbany	Sr.	RB	5-9	225
Joey Kenny, Rhode Island	Sr.	FB	6-2	253
Andre Miller, Maine	Gr.	WR	6-2	220
Thyrick Pitts, Delaware	Jr.	WR	6-3	200
Kris Thornton, James Madison	Jr.	WR	5-8	179
John Fitzgerald, Richmond	Gr.	TE	6-4	250
Michael Corbi, Villanova	Jr.	OL	6-3	295
Liam Fornadel, James Madison	Sr.	OL	6-5	310
David Kroll, Delaware	Sr.	OL	6-7	315
Clayton McConnell, Richmond	Sr.	OL	6-4	290
Kyle Nunez, Stony Brook	Sr.	OL	6-2	340

DEFENSE

<u>Name, School</u>	<u>Cl.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Wt.</u>
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Malik Fisher, Villanova	Sr.	DL	6-4	255
Mike Greene, James Madison	Sr.	DL	6-3	285
Chase McGowan, Delaware	So.	DL	6-1	240
Kobie Turner, Richmond	Sr.	DL	6-3	285
Johnny Buchanan, Delaware	Jr.	LB	6-0	230
Tyler Dressler, Richmond	Gr.	LB	6-3	245
Forrest Rhyne, Villanova	Sr.	LB	6-1	225
Tristan Wheeler, Richmond	So.	LB	6-2	228
MJ Hampton, James Madison	Sr.	S	6-0	196
Evan Horn, New Hampshire	Sr.	S	6-0	220
Kedrick Whitehead, Delaware	Jr.	S	5-11	195
Christian Benford, Villanova	Jr.	CB	6-1	190
Nijuel Hill, Delaware	Sr.	CB	5-10	185

SPECIAL TEAMS

<u>Name, School</u>	<u>Cl.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Wt.</u>
D'Ago Hunter, Towson	Jr.	KR	5-8	160
Tre'Von Jones, Elon	So.	PR	6-0	166
Bronson Yoder, William & Mary	Jr.	PR	5-11	190
Ethan Ratke, James Madison	Sr.	PK	5-10	178
Harry O'Kelly, James Madison	Sr.	P	6-1	180
Anthony Del Negro, Stony Brook	Sr.	SPEC	6-2	230

CAA FOOTBALL PRESEASON OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Percy Agyei-Obese, RB, James Madison

CAA FOOTBALL PRESEASON DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Mike Greene, DL, James Madison

Honorable mention: Davis Cheek, QB, Elon; Daniel Smith, QB, Villanova; Jeff Undercuffler, QB, UAlbany; Justin Covington, RB, Villanova; Gene Coleman II, WR, Delaware; Ivory Frimpong, WR, Rhode Island; Antwane Wells, Jr., WR, James Madison; Bryce DeMaille, TE, Delaware; Andrew Trainer, OL, William & Mary; Will Kiely, DL, William & Mary; Niko Kvietkus, DL, New Hampshire; Jared Verse, DL, UAlbany; Kelvin Azanama, LB, James Madison; Danny Damico, LB, UAlbany; Christian Dixon, LB, Towson; Cole Coleman, S, Elon; Aaron Dykes, KR, Richmond; Shane McDonough, P, Towson; Bryce Colee, SPEC, Maine

2021 CAA FOOTBALL PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

(Selected by a vote of Head Coaches and Media Relations Directors)

1. James Madison (15) 231
2. Delaware (7) 222
3. Villanova 194
4. Richmond (2) 169

5. New Hampshire 135
6. Rhode Island 121
7. Towson 115
8. UAlbany 114
9. Maine 99
10. Stony Brook 73
11. William & Mary 61
12. Elon 50