

SOUTHLAND CONFERENCE

Southeastern Voted to Top Spot in 2021 Football Preseason Poll

FRISCO, Texas – Southeastern is the preseason favorite for the 2021 Southland Conference football season, the league announced Thursday. The Lions received eight first-place votes and 48 total points to garner the top spot in the poll, presented by [Jostens](#).

Nicholls follows closely in second with four first-place votes and 43 points. UIW was voted to the third spot with 32 points, and McNeese earned 26 spots in the poll to come in at fourth. Northwestern State (21) and Houston Baptist (10) round out the predicted order of finish.

The Lions led the way with 16 total selections on the preseason all-conference teams, including senior quarterback and reigning Walter Payton award winner, Cole Kelley. Despite finishing No. 20/21 in the polls, SLU (4-3, 4-2 SLC) just missed out on back-to-back FCS playoff appearances after the field was cut to 16 teams because of the pandemic.

The Colonels grabbed 11 preseason all-conference honors and five on the first-team offense, including two-time defending Southland Offensive Lineman of the Year PJ Burkhalter and fellow linemen Jair Joseph and Evan Roussel. Nicholls ranked third nationally in rushing (263.4) and second in tackles for loss allowed per game (3.71) last season.

Among the Cardinals' 15 preseason all-conference nods is quarterback Cameron Ward, who became the first Southland student-athlete to win the Jerry Rice Award as the FCS freshman of the year in 2020, as well as All-American running back Kevin Brown. UIW returns all but two starters from last season.

Set for their first full fall season under head coach Frank Wilson, the Cowboys look to right the ship and return to the FCS playoffs for the first time since 2015. Defensive end Isaiah Chambers returns after finishing fourth in the voting for the Buck Buchanan Award and leading the league in sacks (7.5) and TFL (14.0).

The Demons are coming off a 1-5 campaign this spring with four of their losses coming by eight points or less, and the Huskies are tasked with filling the shoes of quarterback Bailey Zappe, who topped 10,000 yards and threw for 78 touchdowns in four years as the starter.

The Southland Conference preseason poll is voted on by each head coach and football sports information director. Each voter ranks their predicted order of regular season finish, not including their own team. First-place votes are worth five points, second-place votes are worth four and so on to one point for fifth place.

2021 Southland Conference Football Preseason Poll

Team (First-place votes)	Total
1. Southeastern (8)	48
2. Nicholls (4)	43
3. UIW	32
4. McNeese	26
5. Northwestern State	21
6. Houston Baptist	10

Southland Announces 2021 Preseason All-Conference Football Teams

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FRISCO, Texas – Southeastern quarterback Cole Kelley and UIW quarterback Cameron Ward, the reigning Walter Payton and Jerry Rice Award winners, respectively, headline the 2021 Southland Conference Football Preseason All-Conference Teams, announced on Thursday. The preseason all-conference teams are presented by [Ready®](#).

The Lions lead the way with 16 total selections, followed closely by the Cardinals with 15. Nicholls earns 11 preseason all-league nods, and Northwestern State garners nine slots. Houston Baptist and McNeese each accounted for six spots.

The third Southland quarterback to take home the Walter Payton Award as the FCS offensive player of the year, Kelley finished second nationally in passing yards (2,662) and points responsible for (164) and tied for third among quarterbacks with seven rushing touchdowns. Named first-team all-America by HERO Sports and Stats Perform, he also ranked fourth in completion percentage (.689) and completions per game (30).

Becoming the first Southland student-athlete to win the Jerry Rice Award as the FCS freshman of the year, Ward led FCS signal-callers in passing touchdowns (24) and points responsible for per game (26.3) and ranked third nationally in completions per game (30.5) and passing yards per game (376.7). The West Columbia, Texas, native was crowned the Southland Spring Freshman of the Year and was twice named Stats Perform FCS National Freshman of the Week.

The vast group of returning talent also includes Nicholls' PJ Burkhalter, the two-time defending Southland Offensive Lineman of the Year, and McNeese defensive end Isaiah Chambers, who finished fourth in Buck Buchanan Award voting. Both were tabbed consensus all-America this past season.

The list of Spring All-Americans on the teams also includes UIW running back Kevin Brown, Southeastern defensive back Ferlando Jordan and Northwestern State linebacker Jomard Valsin.

Returning all-conference selections from the previous season are automatically named to the preseason all-conference teams and may advance to higher team slots if they are vacated by non-returning players. Open positions are nominated and voted upon by the league's head coaches.

The preseason poll will be revealed next Thursday, July 22, to kick off the 2021 Southland Conference Football Media Day Presented by Levy Recognition and Ready®.

First Team All-Conference Offense

Pos.	Name	School	Class	Hometown
QB	Cole Kelley*	Southeastern	Sr.	Lafayette, La.
RB	Kevin Brown*	UIW		Mount Pleasant, S.C.
RB	Scooter Adams*	Northwestern State	Jr.	Hallettsville, Texas
TE/HB	David Mosley*	Nicholls	Sr.	New Orleans, La.
WR	Dai'Jean Dixon*	Nicholls	Sr.	New Orleans, La.
WR	CJ Turner*	Southeastern	R-Jr.	LaPlace, La.
WR	Robert Ferrel*	UIW	Sr.	Sparks, Nev.
OL	PJ Burkhalter*	Nicholls	Sr.	Franklinton, La.
OL	Christian Hood*	Houston Baptist	So.	Marshall, Texas
OL	Jair Joseph*	Nicholls	Sr.	Belle Rose, La.
OL	Jalen Bell*	Southeastern	Jr.	Amory, Miss.
OL	Evan Roussel*	Nicholls	So.	Gramercy, La.
PK	Mateo Rengifo*	Southeastern	So.	Lawrenceville, Ga.
P	Austin Dunlap*	Southeastern	So.	Slidell, La.

First Team All-Conference Defense

Pos.	Name	School	Class	Hometown
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DL	Isaiah Chambers*	McNeese	Gr.	Houston, Texas
DL	Mason Kinsey*	McNeese	R-Jr.	Mansfield, Texas
DL	Cameron Preston*	UIW	Sr.	Crowley, Texas
DL	Darrius Harry*	Southeastern	R-Fr.	New Orleans, La.
LB	Kelechi Anyalebechi*	UIW	Sr.	Pearland, Texas
LB	Jomard Valsin*	Northwestern State	Jr.	Port Arthur, Texas
LB	Alexis Ramos*	Southeastern	Sr.	Salinas, Calif.
DB	Patrick Wolfe*	Houston Baptist	Sr.	St. Amant, La.
DB	Ferlando Jordan*	Southeastern	R-Jr.	Atlanta, Ga.
DB	Kevin Moore III*	Nicholls	Sr.	Lafayette, La.
DB	Andre Sam*	McNeese	Sr.	Iowa, La.
DB	Donnell Ward-McGee*	Southeastern	Jr.	New Orleans, La.
KR	Ce'Cori Tolds*	UIW	Sr.	Houston, Texas
PR	Robert Ferrel*	UIW	Sr.	Sparks, Nev.

Second Team All-Conference Offense

Pos.	Name	School	Class	Hometown
QB	Cameron Ward*	UIW	So.	West Columbia, Texas
RB	Julien Gums*	Nicholls	Sr.	New Orleans, La.
RB	Dreshawn Minnieweather	Houston Baptist	Sr.	Mesquite, Texas
TE/HB	Damien Dawson*	Southeastern	R-Sr.	Franklinton, La.
WR	Austin Mitchell*	Southeastern	R-Sr.	Plaquemine, La.
WR	KJ Franklin*	Nicholls	Jr.	Prairieville, La.
WR	Josh Matthews*	McNeese	Sr.	Baton Rouge, La.
OL	Ethan McMullan*	Southeastern	Sr.	Decatur, Miss.
OL	Caleb Johnson*	UIW	Sr.	Mount Pleasant, Texas
OL	Khalil Corbett-Canada*	Northwestern State	Sr.	Harker Heights, Texas
OL	Rendon Miles-Character*	Southeastern	Sr.	New Orleans, La.
OL	Drew Jones*	Southeastern	Sr.	Des Allemands, La.
OL	Nash Jones*	UIW	So.	Nacogdoches, Texas
OL	Jakob Sell*	Northwestern State	Jr.	Dallas, Texas
OL	Reid Francis*	UIW	R-Fr.	College Station, Texas
PK	Carson Mohr*	UIW	Jr.	The Woodlands, Texas
P	Scotty Roblow*	Northwestern State	R-So.	Shreveport, La.

Second Team All-Conference Defense

Pos.	Name	School	Class	Hometown
DL	Blaine Hoover*	UIW	R-Sr.	Bedias, Texas
DL	Perry Ganci	Nicholls	So.	New Orleans, La.
DL	Segun Ijiyera	Houston Baptist	Jr.	Corinth, Texas

DL	Philip Ossai	Houston Baptist	So.	Conroe, Texas
LB	Isaiah Paul*	UIW	R-So.	San Antonio, Texas
LB	Herman Christophe*	Southeastern	So.	Plaquemine, La.
LB	Ja'Quay Pough	Northwestern State	Sr.	Sherman, Texas
LB	Hayden Shaheen	Nicholls	Fr.	Baton Rouge, La.
LB	Brennan Young	Houston Baptist	Jr.	Conroe, Texas
DB	Chris Joyce*	McNeese	Jr.	Hampton, Ga.
DB	Shawn Holton*	UIW	Jr.	Fort Worth, Texas
DB	Jack Henderson*	Southeastern	Fr.	Mandeville, La.
DB	P.J. Herrington*	Northwestern State	Jr.	Natchez, Miss.
DB	Elliott Davison*	UIW	So.	Flint, Texas
DB	William Hooper*	Northwestern State	Jr.	Montgomery, Ala.
KR	Donovan Duvernay*	Northwestern State	Sr.	Garland, Texas
KR	Dontaze Costly*	Nicholls	Sr.	Vacherie, La.
PR	Mason Pierce	McNeese	R-So.	Pearland, Texas