



CONFERENCE USA 5201 N. O'Connor Blvd., Suite 300, Irving, TX 75039 (214) 774-1300

For Immediate Release

July 17, 2018

Contact: Russell Anderson (rdanderson@c-usa.org)

## *C-USA ANNOUNCES 2018 PRESEASON MEDIA FOOTBALL POLL*

IRVING, Texas – Florida Atlantic and North Texas each made their first Conference USA Championship Game appearance last season and the league's media are forecasting a rematch this December, as the defending champion Owls were picked to win their second straight East Division title, while North Texas was selected to repeat as West Division champions in a preseason vote conducted by a panel of media members that cover C-USA schools.

Florida Atlantic will enter this season seeking to become the third program in Conference USA history to win back-to-back C-USA Championship Games. The Owls begin the season with nation's second longest winning streak at 10 games and welcome back 15 starters of offense and defense. Leading the way on offense is junior RB **Devin Singletary**, the preseason Offensive Player of the Year and 2017 C-USA MVP. Last season, Singletary ran for 1,920 yards and led the nation with a C-USA-record 33 touchdowns (32 rushing). He became the first FAU player to be named an Associated Press All-American, earning third-team honors. On the other side of the ball, preseason Defensive Player of the Year **Azeez Al-Shaair** leads an experience unit. The linebacker finished fifth in the nation with 147 tackles last season, adding 11 tackles for loss, 2.5 sacks, four passes defended and one forced fumble.

North Texas returns nine offense and eight defensive starters from its 2017 West Division Champion team. Included in that group is junior QB **Mason Fine**, last season's C-USA Offensive Player of the Year. He set single-season program records in passing yards (4,052), passing touchdowns (31), completions (324) and pass attempts (511). Among his targets are last year's C-USA co-Newcomer of the Year WR **Jalen Guyton**, who caught 49 passes for 775 yards and nine touchdowns. Senior LB **E.J. Ejiya**, who led the team with 109 tackles, spearheads the returning defensive regulars.

Marshall, armed with 19 combined returning starters on offense and defense, including senior WR **Tyre Brady** (62 catches for 942 yards and eight touchdowns) and senior LB **Chase Hancock** (128 tackles), was picked second in the East, followed by Middle Tennessee and senior QB **Brent Stockstill**, owner of virtually every Blue Raider passing record. Rounding out the media picks in the East are FIU, WKU, Old Dominion, and Charlotte.

Louisiana Tech, coming off the program's fourth straight bowl victory and featuring 2016 Conference USA co-Newcomer of the Year WR **Teddy Veal** (74 catches, 950 yards, seven TDs) on offense and senior DE **Jaylon Ferguson** (27.5 career sacks) on defense, was selected second, followed by UAB and sophomore RB **Spencer Brown** (1,459 yards, 19 total TDs), last year's C-USA Freshman of the Year, picked third. Closing out the media picks in the West Division are Southern Miss, UTSA, and then Rice and UTEP tied, respectively.

The 14th annual Conference USA Football Championship Game, pitting the champions of the East and West Divisions, will be held Saturday, Dec. 1. The 2018 C-USA Football season kicks off Thursday, Aug. 30.

## C-USA MEDIA MEMBERS PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

### EAST DIVISION

1. Florida Atlantic (22)
2. Marshall (4)
3. Middle Tennessee
4. FIU
5. WKU
6. Old Dominion
7. Charlotte

### WEST DIVISION

1. North Texas (18)
2. Louisiana Tech (4)
3. UAB (3)
4. Southern Miss (1)
5. UTSA
6. Rice
- UTEP

(first place votes in parentheses)