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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Gainesville, Fla. (December 19, 2024)** – The Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) named three finalists for the Steve Spurrier First-Year Coach Award. The award, which is presented by Chris Doering Mortgage, honors the best first-year coach in the FBS. The recipient will be celebrated at a **special reception on Feb. 24, 2025, at Spurrier's Gridiron Grille in Gainesville, Florida**. The finalists demonstrated excellence in their first seasons at their respective schools.

The three finalists, listed in alphabetical order, are as follows:

#### **Fran Brown, Syracuse**

*Record: 9-3, 5-3 ACC*

Brown inherited an average Syracuse program and transformed it into a contender. He is just the second first-year head coach in program history to record at least nine regular seasons wins — three of which were ranked. Syracuse's biggest win came in Week 14 when it played the role of spoiler with a four-point victory over then-No. 6 Miami.

Brown, who was named the No. 1 recruiter by 247 Sports, continued his success with Syracuse. He brought in former Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord, and the New Jersey native led the nation with 4,326 yards passing. McCord and the offense scored at least 30 points in nine of Syracuse's 12 games, and the Orange will shoot for their first 10-win season since 2018 on Dec. 27 against Washington State in the Holiday Bowl.

#### **Spencer Danielson, Boise State**

*Record: 12-1, 7-0 Mountain West*

Danielson's Boise State team was arguably one of the biggest surprises of the 2024 season. He won his second-consecutive Mountain West title — and first without the “interim head coach” tag — and secured a first-round bye in the College Football Playoff.

Danielson constructed a well-balanced team that finished fourth in the FBS for points per game while allowing less than 22 per game. He produced the program's first Heisman finalist since 2010 in Ashton Jeanty, who finished with 2,497 yards rushing. Boise State will look to extend its historical season against the winner of SMU-Penn State on Dec. 31 in the Fiesta Bowl.

### **Manny Diaz, Duke**

*Record: 9-3, 5-3 ACC*

Diaz proved to be a formidable replacement for Mike Elko, leading Duke to its eighth nine-win season in program history. He won behind Duke's defense, which finished first in the ACC with an average of less than 200 yards passing allowed per game. The Blue Devils also surrendered just 22.2 points per game, which was the second-fewest in the conference.

Diaz's team was just the fourth since 1941 to win nine games but did not record any ranked wins. Its losses came to Georgia Tech, SMU and Miami. Duke can secure its first 10-win season since 2013 with a victory over No. 14 Ole Miss on Jan. 2 in the Gator Bowl.

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### **Past FWAA/Spurrier First-Year Coach winners:**

2023: Jamey Chadwell, Liberty College

2022: Sonny Dykes, TCU

2021: Shane Beamer South Carolina; Josh Heupel, Tennessee

2020: Karl Dorrell, Colorado

2019: Ryan Day, Ohio State

2018: Josh Heupel, UCF

2017: Lincoln Riley, Oklahoma

2016: Justin Fuente, Virginia Tech; Clay Helton, USC

2015: Tom Herman, Houston

2014: Bryan Harsin, Boise State

2013: Gus Malzahn, Auburn

2012: Urban Meyer, Ohio State

2011: Dana Holgorsen, West Virginia

2010: Jimbo Fisher, Florida State

2009: Chip Kelly, Oregon

2008: Paul Johnson, Georgia Tech

2007: Jeff Jagodziński, Boston College

2006: Chris Petersen, Boise State

2005: Steve Spurrier, South Carolina

2004: Mike Price, UTEP

2003: Steve Kragthorpe, Tulsa

2002: Tyrone Willingham, Notre Dame

For more information on attending or sponsoring the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual reception at Spurrier's Gridiron Grille for the Steve Spurrier First-Year and Legend Coach plus Freshman Player of the Year awards on Monday, Feb. 24, 2025, please contact **Tricia Garzon of the JAG Agency** at 352-214-2331.

**Chris Doering Mortgage**, based in Gainesville, FL, was established in April 2007 as a residential lending company providing mortgage products including conventional, FHA, USDA, and VA loans. The branch is a division of MortgageAdvisors.com – 3940 NW 16th Blvd., Suite A, Gainesville, FL 32605 – NMLS 70168/1937321. FHA Lender ID 2631500094. For more information, visit [ChrisDoeringMortgage.com](http://ChrisDoeringMortgage.com). ESPN/SEC Network College football analyst Chris Doering, a former wide receiver for Coach Spurrier both in college and the NFL, serves as the branch manager.

Founded in 1941, the **Football Writers Association of America** consists of journalists, broadcasters, publicists, photographers, and key executives in all areas of college football. The FWAA works to govern media access and gameday operations while presenting awards and honors, including an annual All-America team. For more information about the FWAA and its programs and initiatives, contact Executive Director Steve Richardson at (214) 870-6516 or [tiger@fwa.com](mailto:tiger@fwa.com).