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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Gainesville, Fla. (December 18, 2024)** – The Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) announced the finalists for the Freshman Offensive, Defensive and Special Teams Player of the Year. The awards, which are presented by Chris Doering Mortgage, honor college football’s top freshmen throughout the 2024 season. The winners will be announced in January and honored during a **ceremony on Feb. 24, 2025 at Spurrier's Gridiron Grille in Gainesville, Florida.**

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

### **OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS**

**LaNorris Sellers, QB, South Carolina (6-3, 242, Florence, S.C.)** Sellers took the SEC by storm in his first season under center, leading the Gamecocks to their first top-15 ranking in 10 years. His 655 yards rushing was the third-most among SEC quarterbacks, while his seven rushing touchdowns tied for second. The dual threat quarterback was also efficient through the air, completing nearly 65% of his passes for 2,274 yards. Sellers looks to close out his impressive freshman season on Dec. 31 against Illinois in the Citrus Bowl.

**Jeremiah Smith, WR, Ohio State (6-3, 215, Miami Gardens, Fla.)** The class of 2024’s No. 1 ranked recruit lived up to expectations during his first season in Columbus, Ohio. Smith led the Buckeyes with 934 yards receiving and 10 touchdowns, with another score through the ground. He effortlessly filled the gap left by Marvin Harrison Jr. as a versatile player with speed that makes him a vertical threat. He finished with at least 100 yards receiving in three of Ohio State’s 12 games this season and was held under 70 yards just three times. Ohio State will look to get Smith the ball on Dec. 21 against Tennessee in its first-round playoff matchup.

**Bryson Washington, RB, Baylor (6-0, 203, Franklin, Texas)** Baylor's offense began with Washington in 2024, as he led the team with 170 carries, 12 touchdowns and over 1,000 yards from scrimmage. The redshirt freshman's best statistical performance came in a Week 10 win over TCU, where he ran for 196 yards with four scores. He has rushed for over 100 yards in four-straight games and looks to keep the streak alive on Dec. 31 against LSU in the Texas Bowl.

#### **DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS**

**Leonard Moore, CB, Notre Dame (6-2, 191, Round Rock, Texas)** Moore's versatility proved invaluable during his first season in the secondary. He stepped in and played both on the boundary and in the field corner for Notre Dame, as the Fighting Irish nursed injuries. Moore co-led the team with eight pass deflections and recorded two interceptions. His next challenge will come against Indiana on Dec. 21 in the playoffs.

**Colin Simmons, EDGE, Texas (6-3, 245, Dallas, Texas)** The former five-star prospect dominated in his first collegiate season. Simmons was a part of a Texas defensive unit that finished third in the FBS with an average of 249.8 yards per game allowed. The true freshman led the Longhorns with eight sacks and recorded 38 total tackles, as the Longhorns finished second in the SEC. Simmons can continue wreaking havoc when Texas hosts Clemson on Dec. 21 in the first round of the College Football Playoff.

**Josiah Trotter, LB, West Virginia (6-2, 242, Philadelphia, Pa.)** Trotter's consistency made him arguably the best freshman linebacker in the country. The redshirt freshman finished second on the team with 93 total tackles and grabbed an interception. He bounced back from a season-ending injury to play in every game for West Virginia and recorded at least six tackles in nine of them. Trotter delivered up in big moments with 10 tackles against Penn State and 12 against Iowa State. He transferred to Missouri on Dec. 17.

#### **SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS**

**Rhys Dakin, P, Iowa (6-4, 225, Melbourne, Australia)** Dakin frequently saw the field for Iowa with 60 punt attempts that finished only behind Purdue for most in the Big Ten. The Australia native flipped the field for the Hawkeyes with 27 punts landing inside the 20-yard line and 16 traveling at least 50 yards. Iowa will continue to rely on Dakin and field position when it faces a stout Missouri defense on Dec. 30 in the Music City Bowl.

**Nolan Hauser, PK, Clemson (6-1, 190, Cornelius, N.C.)** Hauser delivered under pressure for Clemson in 2024, connecting on 17 of 23 field goal attempts and drilling 56 of 57 extra points. His biggest kick came against SMU in the ACC championship game, when he connected from 56 yards to give Clemson the win and a berth in the College Football Playoff. The Tigers will face Texas on Dec. 21 in the first round.

**Kam Shanks, PR, UAB (5-8, 180, Prattville, Ala.)** Shanks was a dynamic punt returner with the potential to breakaway on every attempt. The redshirt freshman led FBS with an average of over

20 yards per return, 329 total punt return yards and two scores. Shanks transferred to Arkansas on Dec. 17.

**Past Freshman Player of the Year winners include:**

2023: Noah Fifita, QB Arizona (Offensive); Dillon Thieneman DB, Purdue (Defensive)

2022: Drake Maye, QB North Carolina

2021: Brock Bowers, TE Georgia \*\*INAUGURAL

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 Players 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).

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