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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2024 Steve Spurrier First-Year Coach and Freshman Players of the Year Winners Announced

Gainesville, Fla. (Jan. 16, 2025) – The Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) is excited to announce Syracuse Head Coach Fran Brown as the Steve Spurrier First-Year Coach of the Year and South Carolina’s LaNorris Sellers, Notre Dame’s Leonard Moore and Clemson’s Nolan Hauser as the Freshman Players of the Year.

The awards are presented by Chris Doering Mortgage and will take place at a special reception on **Feb. 24, 2025, at Spurrier's Gridiron Grille in Gainesville, Fla.**, hosted by Spurrier and ESPN college football analyst Chris Doering.

“We're looking forward to having them all down here in Gainesville next month to recognize their outstanding achievements this season,” Steve Spurrier said.

Chris Doering responded, “I’m honored to once again be able to present an award reception that celebrates the hard work and dedication put in by first-year coaches and players in Coach Spurrier’s name.”

FIRST-YEAR COACH OF THE YEAR WINNER

Fran Brown, Syracuse (Record: 10-3, 5-3 ACC) Brown inherited an average Syracuse program and transformed it into a contender. He utilized the transfer portal to build an offense headlined by former Ohio State quarterback Kyle McCord, who led the nation with 4,779 yards passing. The New Jersey native also set new program marks for yards passing, passing touchdowns, yards per game and total offense.

Syracuse's 10 wins tied for the third-most victories in program history, and Brown matched Paul Pasqualoni for the most by a first-year Syracuse head coach. His biggest win came in Week 14 when Syracuse played the role of spoiler with a four-point victory over then-No. 6 Miami. It marked one of three ranked wins for Brown — the most for Syracuse since 1998 — and secured a 7-2 record in one-score games. Brown's team followed up the win with a victory over Washington State in the Holiday Bowl.

"I personally can't wait to meet Fran Brown in person," said Doering. "He has this energy that's truly inspiring. Every first-year coach we honor is exceptional in inheriting a program and achieving success, and Coach Brown is no exception. In his first season at Syracuse, he made the team believe in themselves."

"Take their quarterback, McCord, for example," continued Doering. "He's clearly a talented athlete who struggled to find success in Columbus (OH), but Coach Brown transformed him into one of the top QB's in the nation. He was able to bring out the absolute best in this team, which perfectly embodies the spirit of the Spurrier First-Year Coach Award."

"What he did at Syracuse was outstanding," Spurrier said. "To win 10 games first year at Syracuse, that's quite an accomplishment. We're thrilled to have him come down, and he's certainly very deserving."

Chris Doering on the freshman players of the year — "The way college football has changed in recent years, it's imperative to get contributions from freshmen," Doering said. "There's a lot of pressure on these players transitioning from high school to college or from redshirt to their freshman year. These honorees have handled that transition—and the pressure—with grace, contributing from day one. They deserve to be celebrated for their maturity and accomplishments, which are truly remarkable."

FRESHMAN OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR WINNER

LaNorris Sellers, QB, South Carolina (6-3, 242, Florence, S.C.) Sellers started under center for a South Carolina team that earned its first top-15 ranking in 10 years with three ranked wins. His 674 yards rushing was the third-most among SEC quarterbacks, while his seven rushing touchdowns finished fifth. Sellers was also accurate through the air, completing nearly 66% of his passes for 2,534 yards.

"LaNorris certainly led the Gamecocks to an outstanding season," Spurrier said. "The win over Clemson — if that had happened in the middle of the year, he would've been the leading Heisman candidate at that time because he was fantastic in that game. And he's also a big reason they won nine games this year and had a chance to actually win a few more."

FRESHMAN DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR WINNER

Leonard Moore, CB, Notre Dame (6-2, 191, Round Rock, Texas) Moore's versatility proved invaluable during his first season in the secondary. The true freshman stepped in and played both on the boundary and in the field corner for Notre Dame, as the Fighting Irish advanced to the College Football Playoff national championship. Moore recorded two interceptions — against Virginia and then-No. 24 Navy — and he currently leads the Fighting Irish with 10 pass deflections in nine starts.

"Everybody knows Notre Dame is in the finals playing for the national championship," Spurrier said. "And mainly because of their defense. Their passing game has been adequate, but their defense has been outstanding."

FRESHMAN SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER OF THE YEAR WINNER

Nolan Hauser, PK, Clemson (6-1, 190, Cornelius, N.C.) Hauser entered his first collegiate season as the national high school record-holder for career field goals, and he delivered under pressure for Clemson. The North Carolina native connected on 18 of 24 field goal attempts and drilled 59 of 60 extra points. His biggest kick came against SMU in the ACC championship game, when he connected from 56 yards — the longest in ACC championship game history — to give Clemson the win and a berth in the College Football Playoff.

"He made the big field goal that beat SMU for the conference championship," Spurrier said. "That one kick earned him the special teams player of the year, no question about it."

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

ABOUT AWARDS RECEPTION

The award recipients will be honored at a special reception on Monday, February 24, 2025 at Spurrier's Gridiron Grille and Celebration Pointe in Gainesville, Fla. hosted by Chris Doering Mortgage. The event will celebrate the achievements of these exceptional individuals and their contributions to college football. For information on attending or sponsoring the reception, contact Tricia Garzon of the JAG Agency at (352) 214-2331 or tricia@jagagency.com.

ABOUT CHRIS DOERING MORTGAGE

Chris Doering Mortgage, based in Gainesville, Fla., 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 MyGatorMortgage.com. CFB Analyst Chris Doering, former player for Coach Spurrier both in college and professionally, serves as the branch manager.

ABOUT FOOTBALL WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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@fwaa.com.

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