



## **JAMES MADISON PICKED TO CAPTURE CAA FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP IN 2019**

BALTIMORE, Md. (July 23, 2019) – James Madison, which returns 19 of 22 starters from last season’s 9-4 team that earned a FCS playoff berth for the fifth consecutive year, was the overwhelming choice to capture the CAA Football title in 2019 according to a vote of the league’s head coaches and media relations directors. The announcement was made on Tuesday morning as the conference conducted its annual Media Day from M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore.

Towson, which is coming off its first FCS playoff appearance since 2013, was picked second in the poll, while defending CAA Football champion Maine placed third. Elon, Delaware and Stony Brook, which all received FCS playoff berths in 2018, took the next three spots in the preseason poll. New Hampshire was seventh, followed by Rhode Island, Villanova, Richmond, William & Mary and UAlbany.

JMU, which begins its first season under head coach Curt Cignetti, finished second (6-2) in the CAA a year ago after capturing three straight conference titles from 2015-17. Nine starters are back for a Dukes’ offense that averaged 33.9 points per game, including 3<sup>rd</sup>-team All-CAA quarterback Ben DiNucci, three wide receivers who combined to make 147 catches, and four veteran offensive linemen. Ten starters return from a defense that ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in FCS in scoring (14.6 ppg) and total (289.5 ypg) defense. Among the returnees are 1<sup>st</sup> team All-CAA standouts Ron’Dell Carter and Adam Smith and leading tackler Dimitri Holloway. All-America cornerback Rashad Robinson is also back after missing last year due to injury.

Towson welcomes back 15 starters from last year’s 7-5 squad that finished tied for third in the CAA. Senior quarterback Tom Flacco (3,251 yds, 28 TD’s passing/742 yds, 4 TD’s rushing), the 2018 CAA Offensive Player of the Year, triggers an offense that averaged a league-best 465.0 yards and 34.5 points per game. He’s joined by running back Shane Simpson (711 yds, 6 TD’s rushing/356 yds, 5 TD’s receiving) and wide receiver Shane Leatherbury (67 rec., 885 yds, 7 TD’s), who both made the All-CAA first team. Defensively, 2<sup>nd</sup>-team All-CAA linebacker Robert Heyward (team-high 98 tackles) is among seven regulars returning.

Maine is riding the momentum from a historic 2018 campaign in which it went 10-4 overall, claimed its first CAA Football title since 2013 and advanced to the semifinals of the FCS playoffs for the first time in school history. First-year head coach Nick Charlton has eight starters back from a defense that ranked No. 1 in FCS against the run (79.2 ypg). All-conference honorees Manny Patterson, Kayon Whitaker, Charles Mitchell and Deshawn Stevens lead the unit. Junior quarterback Chris Ferguson returns to run the Black Bears’ offense and he has two of his top targets back in receivers Earnest Edwards and Jaquan Blair.

Head coach Tony Trisciani takes over an Elon squad that has made back-to-back FCS playoff appearances. Quarterback Davis Cheek, leading rusher Jaylan Thomas and top receiver Kortez Weeks are among seven returning starters on offense. All-conference performers Greg Liggs, Jr. and Marcus Willoughby lead a group of seven starters back defensively.

Delaware returned to the FCS playoffs for the first time since 2010. The Blue Hens have 14 starters back, including quarterback Pat Kehoe and defensive lineman Cam Kitchen.

Stony Brook has earned two consecutive FCS playoff appearances. The Seawolves' defense has eight returning starters, including All-CAA standouts Sam Kamara, Gavin Heslop and TJ Morrison.

CAA Football made history in 2018 with six teams making the 24-team FCS playoff field. The conference has had a team in the FCS championship game 10 times since 2003, a squad in the semifinals for the past six seasons and a team in the quarterfinals every year since 1991.

CAA Football also announced its preseason all-conference team. JMU and Maine each had six players honored while Towson had five. Towson's Flacco was named the preseason Offensive Player of the Year, while Richmond senior defensive end Maurice Jackson (46 tackles, 15.0 TFL, 10 sacks, 4 FF) was chosen as the preseason Defensive Player of the Year.

**2019 CAA FOOTBALL PRESEASON ALL-CONFERENCE TEAM**  
(Selected by a vote of Head Coaches and Media Relations Directors)

**OFFENSE**

<u>Name, School</u>	<u>Cl.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Wt.</u>	<u>Hometown/High School</u>
Tom Flacco, Towson	Sr.	QB	6-1	208	Voorhees, N.J./Eastern
Shane Simpson, Towson	Sr.	RB	5-9	200	Easton, Pa./Easton
Jaylan Thomas, Elon	So.	RB	5-10	190	Carrollton, Ga./Carrollton
Tyler Crist, William & Mary	Jr.	FB	6-0	225	Hampton, Va./Kecoughtan
Earnest Edwards, Maine	Sr.	WR	5-10	175	Rochester, N.Y./Aquinas Institute
Shane Leatherbury, Towson	Sr.	WR	5-10	183	Salisbury, Md./Delmar
Aaron Parker, Rhode Island	Sr.	WR	6-3	191	Prince George's Co., Md./Gwynn Park
Matt Foster, Elon	Sr.	TE	6-3	242	Williamsville, N.Y./Williamsville South
Liam Dobson, Maine	Jr.	OL	6-2	330	Ottawa, Ontario/Canada Prep Acad.
Mario Farinella, Delaware	Gr.	OL	6-2	300	Bloomfield, N.J./Bergen Catholic
Liam Fornadel, James Madison	Jr.	OL	6-4	307	Wyckoff, N.J./Don Bosco Prep
Kyle Murphy, Rhode Island	Sr.	OL	6-4	312	Attleboro, Mass./Attleboro
Kyle Nunez, Stony Brook	So.	OL	6-2	345	East Islip, N.Y./East Islip

**DEFENSE**

<u>Name, School</u>	<u>Cl.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Wt.</u>	<u>Hometown/High School</u>
Ron'Dell Carter, James Madison	Sr.	DL	6-3	273	Baltimore, Md./Long Reach
Maurice Jackson, Richmond	Sr.	DL	6-2	265	Levittown, Pa./Truman
Sam Kamara, Stony Brook	Sr.	DL	6-2	295	Carteret, N.J./Carteret
Kayon Whitaker, Maine	Sr.	DL	6-2	255	Washington, D.C./Friendship Collegiate
Robert Heyward, Towson	Sr.	LB	5-10	227	Savannah, Ga./Calvary Day School
Dimitri Holloway, James Madison	Sr.	LB	6-1	215	Newport News, Va./Heritage
Taji Lowe, Maine	Sr.	LB	6-1	235	Stewartsville, N.J./Phillipsburg
Deshawn Stevens, Maine	Jr.	LB	6-1	250	Toronto, Ontario/Kent School
Pop Lacey, New Hampshire	Sr.	S	6-0	199	Reading, Pa./Berks Catholic
Isaiah Laster, William & Mary	Sr.	S	6-1	210	Cary, N.C./Panther Creek
Adam Smith, James Madison	Sr.	S	6-1	179	Charlotte, N.C./Hough
Manny Patterson, Maine	Sr.	CB	5-10	180	Baltimore, Md./Mount St. Joseph
Rashad Robinson, James Madison	Sr.	CB	5-11	185	Richmond, Va./Hermitage

## SPECIAL TEAMS

<u>Name, School</u>	<u>Cl.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Ht.</u>	<u>Wt.</u>	<u>Hometown/High School</u>
Earnest Edwards, Maine	Sr.	KR	5-10	175	Rochester, N.Y./Aquinas Institute
D'Angelo Amos, James Madison	Jr.	PR	6-1	186	Richmond, Va./Meadowbrook
Aidan O'Neill, Towson	Sr.	PK	6-1	199	New Paltz, N.Y./New Paltz
Nick Pritchard, Delaware	Sr.	P	5-10	210	New Egypt, N.J./New Egypt
Isaiah White, Stony Brook	Sr.	SPEC	5-11	215	Gordon Heights, N.Y./Longwood

**CAA FOOTBALL PRESEASON OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR:** Tom Flacco, QB, Towson

**CAA FOOTBALL PRESEASON DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR:** Maurice Jackson, DL, Richmond

**Honorable mention:** **Davis Cheek**, QB, Elon; **Chris Ferguson**, QB, Maine; **Dejoun Lee**, RB, Delaware; **Carlos Washington**, RB, New Hampshire; **Joey Kenny**, FB, Rhode Island; **Owen Tyler**, FB, Delaware; **Jabari Allen**, WR, Towson; **Dev Holmes**, WR, UAlbany; **Simon Bengelis**, TE, Villanova; **Aaron Grzymkowski**, OL, Towson; **Mac Patrick**, OL, James Madison; **Mark Williamson**, OL, William & Mary; **Bryce Carter**, DL, Towson; **John Daka**, DL, James Madison; **Brandon Ginnetti**, DL, Rhode Island; **Charles Mitchell**, DL, Maine; **Bill Murray**, DL, William & Mary; **Levi Metheny**, LB, UAlbany; **Keon Paye**, LB, Towson; **Drew Wiley**, LB, Villanova; **Augie Contressa**, S, Stony Brook; **Daniel Jones**, S, Richmond; **Corey Parker**, S, William & Mary; **Jaquan Amos**, CB, Villanova; **Gavin Heslop**, CB, Stony Brook; **Greg Liggs**, CB, Elon; **Ahmere Dorsey**, KR/PR, Rhode Island; **Drew Sanborn**, P, New Hampshire; **Eli Mencer**, SPEC, UAlbany

### 2019 CAA FOOTBALL PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH (Selected by a vote of Head Coaches and Media Relations Directors)

1. James Madison (20 first-place votes)	238
2. Towson (3 first-place votes)	217
3. Maine (1 first-place vote)	201
4. Elon	164
5. Delaware	162
6. Stony Brook	151
7. New Hampshire	109
8. Rhode Island	104
9. Villanova	84
10. Richmond	62
11. William & Mary	58
12. UAlbany	34