

Byard on National All-Freshman Team

Seven others on Steel's All-SBC Team

December 12, 2012 · @MTAthletics

MURFREESBORO - Safety

Kevin Byard made Phil Steele's National Postseason All-Freshman Team and seven other Raiders made his All-Sun Belt squad as announced by the publication on Tuesday.

Byard, a redshirt freshman from Lithonia, Ga., was a first team pick on defense and the only Sun Belt player chosen on either the first or second teams. Byard came up with numerous plays for the Blue Raiders all year. In a win at



Memphis he returned an interception 68 yards for a touchdown and provided the game-winning score against Troy with a pick he brought back 77 yards for a touchdown. For the year, Byard collected 74 tackles, led the team with four interceptions, and forced two fumbles.

Steele's All-SBC team included three Raiders on the first team, four on the second team, and one third team selection.

First team accolades went to wide receiver Anthony Amos, center Micah James, and return specialist Reggie Whatley, while second team honors were garnered by running back Benny Cunningham, offensive lineman Josh Walker, defensive end Omar McLendon, and Byard. True freshman Jordan Parker was on the third team.

Amos enjoyed a career year with 72 catches for 992 yards and nine touchdowns, falling just shy of becoming only the second 1,000-yard receiver in school history. The senior from Fayetteville, NC, had the highlight play of the year with his one-handed touchdown grab in the win over Georgia Tech.

James, a senior from Landover, MD, started all 12 games and anchored a unit that ranked third nationally in fewest sacks allowed.

Whatley, a sophomore out of Rome, GA, proved to be quite the weapon returning kicks in 2012. He led the league and ranked fourth nationally with a 30.5-yard average, which was also a new school record. In a win at WKU, Whatley had a 96-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and a school record 222 kickoff return yards. Whatley is the first returner for MT to earn first team honors since Damon Nickson in 2006.

Despite playing just two conference games, Cunningham impressed enough early to take home second team honors. Cunningham, who led the upset at Georgia Tech with 217 yards rushing and five touchdowns, also topped the 200-yard mark in a win at FIU with 230 yards.

Walker, a junior, led all linemen with 885 snaps in starting all 12 games. The Spring City, Tenn., product also tallied 78 knockdowns and did not allow a sack all season.

McLendon, an honorable mention pick last year, led an improved Raider defense with 34 tackles, 5.0 TFLs, two sacks, and four quarterback hurries.

Parker, who took over for Cunningham in game seven, ended the year with a Middle Tennessee freshman record of 851 rushing yards. He put together four 100-yard rushing games and averaged 106 yards a game on the ground after Cunningham's season came to an end.

Printed on July 25, 2014

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/64550>