

Alexander named HCAC Co-Freshman of the Year

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, November 16, 2012 2:00 PM -

BLUFFTON — Standout TB and KR Calib Alexander (Ocala, Fla./St. John Lutheran) was one of 12 Bluffton University football players to be named All-Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference for the 2012 season.

In addition to Alexander, Bluffton placed four players on the first team, four on the second team and three honorable mention.

Alexander became just the second player in Bluffton history to earn Freshman of the Year in the HCAC, the first on the offensive side of the ball (Ryan Christy, a defensive back from Snellville, Ga., won in 2004). The freshman hauled in a 43-yard scoring strike from Tyler Wright (Troy) against Kenyon in his first collegiate game and never slowed down. He went for 445 yards on 117 carries with three rushing touchdowns, caught 10 passes for 189 yards (team-high 18.9 yards per catch) and averaged 25.2 yards per kick return.

Senior Justin Hahn (Rocky River) earned his second straight all-conference honor. Hahn, an honorable mention selection as a junior, was named first team after wrapping up the opposition with 44 total tackles, including 28 solos. The 4-year starter at safety broke up six passes, forced a fumble, recovered one, tallied 2.5 tackles-for-loss, one sack and two interceptions. For his career, Hahn moved up to 13th on the all-time list with 171 tackles, including 103 solos. Hahn broke up 13 passes, picked off five, forced two fumbles, recovered four and 9.5 career TFLs. In addition, Hahn blocked a kick, recorded a safety and had a quarterback hurry on his resume.

Linebacker Ben Kaufman (Ottawa/Ottawa-Glandorf) spearheaded the stout Bluffton defense, earning first-team honors in his final campaign. He finished second on the team with 88 total tackles, including 31 solos, picked off a pair of passes and broke up two more. Following the RHIT 3-OT win, Kaufman was named the Ohio College Football and HCAC Defensive Player of the Week thanks to a 16-tackle performance. He forced a fumble, recovered one and finished with 3.5 TFLs for a loss of 19 yards. The senior finished his career with 147 tackles, nine TFLs and forced three fumbles.

Doing the heavy lifting up front for the Beavers was first-team OT Thomas Gingrich (Goshen, Ind./Goshen). Gingrich, an Academic All-HCAC honoree the past two seasons, was recently named First-Team Academic All-District by CoSida. He provided protection for an offense that sported the fifth-best passing numbers in the HCAC (181.5 yards per game). Gingrich has been

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a huge part of Bluffton going from an 0-10 record during his freshman season to a 6-4 mark as a senior.

Versatile WR Shawn Frost (Edison/Mt. Gilead) came away with his first all-conference award following a standout junior campaign. He led the receiving corps with 34 receptions for 498 yards and scored three touchdowns. Frost also showed his mettle on special teams, racking up 134 yards on 18 punt returns. The junior captain has 56 career catches for 698 yards with five touchdowns heading into his final season. His 36 punt returns are tied for second all-time, while his 279 return yards rank third.

Senior David Mango (Fishers, Ind./Fishers) earned the second All-HCAC honor of his career. The second-team selection was honorable mention following his sophomore campaign. Mango has been a mainstay on Bluffton's offensive line during his four years, helping pave the way for Alexander and Airic Steagall (Hillsboro) to rush for over 1,000 yards this season.

Defensive lineman Preston "Huddy" Huddleston (Benton Harbor, Mich./Eau Claire) put together his best season as a Beaver to earn second team. He tallied 49 tackles, including 6.0 TFLs, wrapping up his time at Bluffton with 88 tackles and 10.5 TFLs.

Senior Dominique Chester (Mansfield/Madison) took home second-team honors after a fine final season, tallying 43 tackles, including 31 solos. Chester broke up five passes from his cornerback position, picked off a pass and forced a fumble. For his career, Chester finished with 104 stops to go along with five interceptions and 12 breakups.

Junior Josh Runda (Lima/Bath) moved into a starting position following an injury and took the conference by storm, pacing the Beavers with 98 tackles, including 49 unassisted, placing him fourth in the conference. Runda also led Bluffton with 12.0 TFLs for 47 yards. He broke up two passes, forced two fumbles and recovered two others en route to being named second team. With one more year to play, Runda is up to 156 tackles, 21 TFLs and six sacks.

Directing the Bluffton offense was junior signal-caller Tyler Wright (Troy), who completed 109 of his 174 passing attempts for 1,443 yards and eight touchdowns, adding 96 yards and three scores on the ground. The honorable-mention pick is currently ninth all-time on the total offense list with 3,886 yards. His 2,786 passing yards are seventh all-time, his 17 TDs and 245 completions place him sixth and his .622 completion percentage is second behind Joel Parrett.

Senior captain Ryan Sabin (Canal Winchester) hauled in a team-high 541 receiving yards on 32 receptions. The honorable-mention selection added three TDs. For his career, Sabin finished

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with 40 catches for 672 yards and five touchdowns.

Mike Johnson (Browns, Mills, NJ/Pemberton) continued Bluffton's tradition of standout linebackers in his senior season. The honorable-mention selection finished third on the team with 70 tackles, 40 unassisted. He tallied six breakups and 4.5 TFLs. He wrapped up his career with 92 tackles and seven pass breakups.

The HCAC also announced its Sportsmanship Team for the fall of 2012. Senior Eric Wilfer (Bloomville/Buckeye Central) was selected. Members of the All-HCAC Sportsmanship team are selected by the coaches and their teammates as individuals who demonstrate the ideals of positive sportsmanship both on and off the field/court of competition.

Bluffton finished 6-4 overall and 5-3 in the conference for the Beavers' first winning season since 2000. The Beavers finished in fourth place after knocking off Mount St. Joseph for the first time in 11 tries. It marks only the third time in school history that Bluffton has won five games in the HCAC: 2000 and 2011 when BU tied for second in the conference. Bluffton played in and won its first ever 3-OT game at RHIT and capped the season with a 2-overtime victory over rival Defiance on Senior Day.