



CONFERENCE USA

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C-USA MEN'S SOCCER PRESEASON TEAM & POLL ANNOUNCED

IRVING, Texas – Defending Conference USA Regular-Season Champion FIU has been voted the preseason favorite by the league's nine head coaches. Panthers' senior forward **Santiago Patino** was selected as the C-USA Preseason Offensive Player of the Year. Charlotte senior defender **Callum Montgomery** was tabbed as the C-USA Preseason Defensive Player of the Year.

The Panthers enter the 2018 season fresh off one of the best seasons in program history, finishing 12-1-4 (6-0-2) and as regular-season champions for the first time since joining C-USA in 2005. FIU ranked 20th in the final United Soccer Coaches' Poll and made it to the second round of the NCAA Tournament. Representing the Panthers on the preseason squad is Patino and junior midfielder **Joris Ahlinvi**, who started all 15 games last campaign and tallied two game-winning goals.

Patino led the conference in total goals (15) and points (35) and garnered numerous accolades during the 2017 season, including C-USA Player of the Year, C-USA Offensive MVP and the conference's Golden Boot Award. The forward was also an All-C-USA First Team selection. Nationally, the Orlando, Florida, native was named to the United Soccer Coaches All-America First Team and was a semifinalist for the Hermann Trophy.

In 2017, Montgomery led a 49ers' defensive front that recorded five shutouts and held 14 opponents to one goal or less. His accomplishments on the field earned him a place on the All-C-USA First Team and the United Soccer Coaches All-Southeast Region Second Team. The Victoria, British Columbia native was also a CoSIDA Academic All-America Second Team selection.

The top seven teams at the end of the regular season will compete in the 2018 Conference USA Championship, hosted by Charlotte, Nov. 7-11. The league's 24th season begins Friday, Aug. 24.

2018 C-USA Men's Soccer Preseason Team

Daniel Bruce, Charlotte, R-Sr., F
Tommy Madden, Charlotte, Sr., MF
^Callum Montgomery, Charlotte, Sr., D
Joris Ahlinvi, FIU, Jr., MF
*Santiago Patino, FIU, Sr., F
Enrique Facusse, Kentucky, So., GK
Tom Smart, New Mexico, R-Jr., D
Mertcan Akar, Old Dominion, Jr., GK
Niko Klosterhalfen, Old Dominion, Sr., MF
Luca Mayr, South Carolina, Jr., MF/F
Mathieu Laurent, UAB, R-Sr., D

**Preseason Offensive Player of the Year*

^Preseason Defensive Player of the Year

2018 C-USA Men's Soccer Preseason Poll (First-Place Votes)

1. FIU (4)
2. Charlotte (2)
3. Old Dominion
4. Kentucky
5. New Mexico (1)
6. Marshall (1)
7. South Carolina
8. UAB (1)
9. Florida Atlantic