



For Immediate Release
July 27, 2021
Mike Kern

Illinois State • Indiana State • Missouri State • North Dakota • North Dakota State • Northern Iowa
South Dakota • South Dakota State • Southern Illinois • Western Illinois • Youngstown State

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South Dakota State Picked To Win Missouri Valley Football Crown

For the first time since joining the Missouri Valley Football Conference for the 2008 season, South Dakota State has been tabbed as the league pre-season favorite in a poll conducted by league coaches, media and sports information directors. South Dakota State returns 10 offensive starters and 10 defensive starters from its Spring 2021 team, which reached the FCS title game and earned a share of the MVFC crown.

SDSU received 24 first-place votes and 454 total points to edge North Dakota State, which earned 435 points and had 18 first-place tallies. North Dakota and Southern Illinois were third and fourth with 357 and 345 total points, respectively. UNI, which received the remaining first-place vote, had 311 points to finish fifth. And defending tri-champ Missouri State was picked sixth with 256 points. Illinois State (196), South Dakota (163), Youngstown State (126), Indiana State (112) and Western Illinois (83) rounded out the voting.

Collectively, the league returns 88 percent (212 of 242 student-athletes) of its starting lineups to this year's fall rosters (from Spring 2021, and for Indiana State Fall 2019). UNI, notably, is slated to return all 11 starters on both sides of the ball.

Although the 2020-21 season did not yield a national championship, the season may have been one of the most successful in league history as the Conference and its member schools navigated through a season that was shifted from the fall to the spring. Despite cancelled games due to COVID-19 which also led to multiple league teams who became unable to compete or complete the season, five MVFC teams made a playoff field that was limited to only 16 total participants. Three schools shared the league title (Missouri State, North Dakota, and South Dakota State), marking just the second time in league history that the Conference had tri-champions. Those three schools were joined in the playoff field by North Dakota State and Southern Illinois. Four teams advanced to the quarterfinals, and South Dakota State reached its first title game.

SIU, which snapped NDSU's FCS- and league-record 39-game winning streak, was making its first playoff appearance since 2009; Missouri State earned its first league title and first playoff appearance since 1990; UND reached the playoffs in its first year as an MVFC member; and NDSU and SDSU extended their streaks of consecutive playoff trips to 11 and nine-straight years, respectively.

In 2020-21, five MVFC teams were ranked in the Top 13 of the final Stats Perform Top 25 poll, led by SDSU's No. 2 ranking. The league had an FCS-best 16 student-athletes on the FCS Stats Perform All-America team, and the MVFC had a league-record five players taken in the 2021 NFL Draft, highlighted by QB Trey Lance of NDSU who was the third overall pick.

In terms of post-season success, a league school has now reached the title game 11 times since 2011 (North Dakota State-8, Illinois State-1, South Dakota State-1, Youngstown State-1). South Dakota State extended the league's FCS-record streak of having at least one MVFC team in the finals to 10-straight years as the Jackrabbits reached the FCS Championship in the Spring of 2021, falling to second-seeded Sam Houston State in the final seconds.

The 2021 season will mark the seventh in an agreement with ESPN to distribute all 44 league games on ESPN3 (or ESPN+), while the league has implemented other initiatives to promote its institutions, student-athletes and coaches, including a weekly podcast series ("First and Goal"), and video segments that review ("Two-Minute Drill") and preview ("The Extra Point") each week's contests throughout the season. The MVFC and other FCS leagues have partnered in the production of a weekly "FCS ALL IN" special which will air 15 times on Saturdays throughout the season on a dedicated YouTube channel, beginning Aug. 21.

A pre-season favorite has claimed the league crown 22 times (in 35 previous polls).

In addition to today's team rankings, the Conference has announced its preseason team, voted on by coaches, sports information directors, and a media panel. All 11 teams have at least one honoree, topped by Southern Illinois with 13 total selections.

Team	Points
1. South Dakota State (24).....	454
2. North Dakota State (18).....	435
3. North Dakota.....	357
4. Southern Illinois.....	345
5. UNI (1).....	311
6. Missouri State.....	256
7. Illinois State.....	196
8. South Dakota.....	163
9. Youngstown State.....	126
10. Indiana State.....	112
11. Western Illinois.....	83



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2021 Missouri Valley Football Preseason Team

FIRST TEAM	SECOND TEAM	HONORABLE MENTION
QB Tommy Schuster, R-So., North Dakota	QB Stone Labanowitz, Sr., Southern Illinois	QB Will McElvain, Jr., UNI
RB Pierre Strong Jr., Jr., South Dakota State	RB Isaiah Davis, Fr., South Dakota State	Connor Sampson, Sr., Western Illinois
Otis Weah, R-Jr., North Dakota	Jaleel McLaughlin, Sr., Youngstown State	RB Tyler Hoosman, Sr., UNI
FB Hunter Luepke, Jr., North Dakota State	FB Jacob Garrett, Jr., Southern Illinois	FB Tim McCloyn, Sr., Illinois State
TE Zach Heins, So., South Dakota State	TE Noah Gindorff, Sr., North Dakota State	TE Josh Babicz, Sr., North Dakota State
WR Avante Cox, Jr., Southern Illinois	WR Jaxon Janke, So., South Dakota State	WR Dante Hendrix, R-Jr., Indiana State
Dennis Houston, Sr., Western Illinois	Tony Tate, Sr., Western Illinois	Isaiah Weston, Sr., UNI
Christian Watson, Sr., North Dakota State	Caleb Vander Esch, Sr., South Dakota	OL Isaiah Edwards, R-Sr., Indiana State
OL ZeVeyon Furcron, Sr., Southern Illinois	OL Landon Bebee, Jr., Missouri State	Mason Scheidegger, Sr., South Dakota
Garret Greenfield, So., South Dakota St.	Dan Becker, Youngstown State, Sr.	William Waddell, Sr., Western Illinois
Cody Mauch, Sr., North Dakota State	Wes Genant, Sr., South Dakota State	DL James Jackson, Sr., Youngstown State
Cordell Volson, Sr., North Dakota State	Mason McCormick, So., South Dakota St.	Jacob Matthew, Sr., South Dakota
Matt Waletzko, Sr., North Dakota	Trevor Penning, Sr., UNI	Inoke Moala, R-Sr., Indiana State
DL Jordan Berner, Sr., Southern Illinois	DL Kevin Ellis, Sr., Missouri State	Reece Winkelman, Jr., South Dakota St.
Jared Brinkman, Gr., UNI	Eric Johnson, Sr., Missouri State	LB Jack Cochrane, Sr., South Dakota
Caleb Sanders, Jr., South Dakota State	Anthony Knighton, Sr., Southern Illinois	Jaxson Turner, 5th Year, North Dakota
Spencer Waege, Sr., North Dakota State	Eli Mostaert, So., North Dakota State	DB Jordan Canady, 5th Year, North Dakota
LB Logan Backhaus, Sr., South Dakota State	LB Devon Krzanowski, Sr., North Dakota	Myles Harden, Fr., South Dakota
Spencer Cuvelier, Sr., UNI	Brock Mogensen, So., South Dakota	Benny Sapp III, Sr., UNI
Grant Dixon, Youngstown State, Sr.	Bryson Strong, Jr., Southern Illinois	P Adam Fellner, Sr., Western Illinois
James Kaczor, Sr., North Dakota State	Tylar Wiltz, Sr., Missouri State	PK Nico Gualdoni, Sr., Southern Illinois
DB Montrae Braswell, So., Missouri State	DB Omar Brown, Jr., UNI	LS Dan Heilbron, Jr., Southern Illinois
Qua Brown, Sr., Southern Illinois	Austin Evans, Gr., UNI	AP Christian Turner, Sr., Youngstown State
James Ceasar, Sr., Southern Illinois	Evan Holm, 5th Year, North Dakota	RS Luke Skokna, Jr., North Dakota
Don Gardner, Sr., South Dakota State	Zaire Jones, Sr., Youngstown State	
Michael Tutsie, Sr., North Dakota State	Kyriq McDonald, Sr., Missouri State	
P Brady Schutt, Sr., South Dakota	P Jack Colquhoun, Sr., Southern Illinois	
PK Matthew Cook, Jr., UNI	PK Jose Pizano, Jr., Missouri State	
LS Dalton Godfrey, Jr., South Dakota	LS Bradey Sorenson, Sr., South Dakota State	
AP Javon Williams Jr., So., Southern Illinois	AP Deion McShane, Sr., UNI	
RS Christian Watson, Sr., North Dakota State	RS Tony Tate, Sr., Western Illinois	

Total picks, includes honorable mentions, by school:

Illinois State – 1; Indiana State – 4; Missouri State – 7; North Dakota – 8; North Dakota State – 10 (Christian Watson a duplicate honoree)
UNI – 11; South Dakota – 8; South Dakota State - 12; Southern Illinois - 13; Western Illinois – 5 (Tony Tate a duplicate honoree)
Youngstown State - 6

PREVIOUS YEAR VALLEY FOOTBALL PRESEASON POLLS

1986

1. UNI (12)	90	t2nd
2. Eastern Illinois (1)	67	1st
3. Illinois State	53	4th
4. Southern Illinois	52	t2nd
5. Indiana State	42	t6th
6. Western Illinois	40	5th
7. Missouri State	20	t6th

1987

1. UNI (13)	96	1st
2. Southern Illinois	82	t5th
3. Illinois State	68	7th
4. Western Illinois (1)	43	2nd
5. Eastern Illinois	40	t3rd
6. Indiana State	38	t5th
7. Missouri State	25	t3rd

1988

1. UNI (10)	87	4th
2. Missouri State (2)	82	t2nd
3. Western Illinois (1)	64.5	1st
4. Eastern Illinois	51.5	t5th
5. Indiana State	40	t2nd
6. Southern Illinois	34	t5th
7. Illinois State	22	7th

1989

1. Missouri State (5)	86	1st
2. Indiana State (3)	81	5th
3. Western Illinois (5)	80	t6th
4. Eastern Illinois (1)	51	t2nd
5. UNI	43	t2nd
6. Southern Illinois	29	t6th
7. Illinois State	22	t2nd

1990

1. Missouri State (5)	85.5	t1st
2. Eastern Illinois (3)	73	t3rd
3. Illinois State (2)	72.5	t3rd
4. UNI (4)	70	t1st
5. Indiana State	35	t6th
6. Western Illinois	28	t3rd
7. Southern Illinois	28	t6th

1991

1. UNI (10)	93.5	1st
2. Missouri State (3)	79.5	4th
3. Illinois State	61.5	7th
4. Eastern Illinois (1)	56	t5th
5. Indiana State	43.5	t5th
6. Western Illinois	29	t2nd
7. Southern Illinois	29	t2nd

1992

1. UNI (25)	191	1st
2. Missouri State	131	t2nd
3. Western Illinois (2)	122	t2nd
4. Southern Illinois (1)	109	t4th
5. Illinois State	98	t4th
6. Eastern Illinois	85	t4th
7. Indiana State	48	t4th

1993

1. UNI (16)	184	1st
2. Missouri State (7)	160	t2nd
3. Western Illinois (2)	133	t2nd
4. Eastern Illinois (2)	105	t4th
5. Illinois State (1)	87	t4th
6. Indiana State	69	6th
7. Southern Illinois	51	7th

1994

1. UNI (20)	173	1st
2. Illinois State (4)	145	4th
3. Missouri State	120	t5th
4. Western Illinois (2)	108	t2nd
5. Eastern Illinois	79	t2nd
6. Indiana State	74	t5th
7. Southern Illinois	29	7th

1995

1. UNI (18)	184	t1st
2. Illinois State (3)	144	t3rd
3. Western Illinois (6)	141	t5th
4. Missouri State	105	7th
5. Eastern Illinois (1)	93	t1st
6. Indiana State	81	t3rd
7. Southern Illinois	36	t5th

1996

1. UNI (18)	128	1st
2. Missouri State	91	t2nd
3. Indiana State (1)	82	t2nd
4. Western Illinois (2)	64	t2nd
5. Illinois State (1)	52	6th
6. Southern Illinois	45	5th

1997

1. UNI (10)	155	2nd
2. Western Illinois (8)	139	1st
3. Youngstown State (6)	137	3rd
4. Missouri State (1)	115	4th
5. Indiana State	68	5th
6. Illinois State	56	7th
7. Southern Illinois	30	6th

1998

1. Youngstown State (14)	161	t3rd
2. UNI (6)	148	t3rd
3. Western Illinois (5)	138	1st
4. Missouri State	92	t3rd
5. Indiana State	61	6th
6. Illinois State	57	2nd
7. Southern Illinois	43	7th

1999

1. Illinois State (15)	160	1st
2. UNI (8)	154	3rd
3. Youngstown State (1)	133	2nd
4. Western Illinois (2)	94	t4th
5. Missouri State	85	t4th
6. Indiana State	73	t4th
7. Southern Illinois	29	7th

2000

1. Illinois State (17)	172	t2nd
2. UNI (6)	144	4th
3. Youngstown State (2)	143	t2nd
4. Missouri State (2)	114	t5th
5. Western Illinois	88	1st
6. Indiana State	48	7th
7. Southern Illinois	47	t5th

2001

1. W. Kentucky (14)	213	t2nd
2. Youngstown St. (12)	202	t2nd
3. Western Illinois (1)	166	4th
4. Illinois State (1)	139	t6th
5. UNI	127	1st
6. Missouri State (1)	110	5th
7. Southern Illinois	51	8th
8. Indiana State	36	t6th

2002

1. UNI (24)	242	t6th
2. Youngstown St. (5)	213	t3rd
3. W. Kentucky (2)	191	t1st
4. Western Illinois	160	t1st
5. Missouri State (1)	132	8th
6. Illinois State	91	t3rd
7. Indiana State	68	5th
8. Southern Illinois	55	t6th

2003

1. Western Illinois (24)	247	t3rd
2. W Kentucky (6)	218	t3rd
3. Youngstown State	171	6th
4. UNI (1)	139	t1st
5. Illinois State	131	5th
6. Southern Illinois	130	t1st
7. Missouri State (1)	74	7th
8. Indiana State	42	8th

2004

1. Southern Illinois (25)	244	1st
2. UNI (6)	212	3rd
3. W. Kentucky (1)	186	2nd
4. Western Illinois	174	t5th
5. Illinois State	110	t5th
6. Youngstown State	102	t5th
7. Missouri State	81	4th
8. Indiana State	43	8th

2005

1. Southern Illinois (18)	237	t1st
2. W. Kentucky (9)	223	t4th
3. UNI (5)	206	t1st
4. Western Illinois	124	6th
5. Missouri State	119	7th
6. Youngstown State	104	t1st
7. Illinois State	91	4th
8. Indiana State	48	8th

2006

1. UNI (22)	239	t2nd
2. Youngstown St. (7)	208	1st
3. Illinois State (2)	190	t2nd
4. Southern Illinois	160	t4th
5. W. Kentucky (1)	141	t4th
6. Western Illinois	103	6th
7. Missouri State	79	t7th
8. Indiana State	32	t7th

2007

1. UNI (11)	166	1st
2. Illinois State (7)	160	t5th
3. Youngstown St. (9)	159	t3rd
4. Southern Illinois (1)	127	2nd
5. Western Illinois	82	t3rd
6. Missouri State	55	t5th
7. Indiana State	35	7th

2008

1. North Dakota St. (13)	289	t4th
2. UNI (15)	275	t1st
3. Youngstown St. (1)	209	t6th
4. Western Illinois (4)	202	t4th
5. Southern Illinois (2)	201	t1st
6. South Dakota State	149	3rd
7. Missouri State	105	t6th
8. Illinois State	104	8th
9. Indiana State	41	9th

2009

1. UNI (26)	314	t3rd
2. Southern Illinois (9)	281	1st
3. South Dakota St.	231	2nd
4. North Dakota St. (1)	206	7th
5. Western Illinois	174	9th
6. Youngstown State	171	t5th
7. Missouri State	111	t5th
8. Illinois State	90	t3rd
9. Indiana State	42	8th

2010

1. Southern Illinois (30)	313	t3rd
2. South Dakota St. (2)	252	t3rd
3. Illinois State (3)	249	t3rd
4. Northern Iowa (1)	244	1st
5. Missouri State	164	t3rd
6. North Dakota State	151	t3rd
7. Youngstown State	130	9th
8. Western Illinois	70	2nd
9. Indiana State	47	t3rd

2011

1. UNI (29)	316	t1st
2. North Dakota St. (6)	275	t1st
3. Southern Illinois (1)	207	t7th
4. South Dakota State	172	t4th
5. Illinois State	169	3rd
6. Indiana State	168	t4th
7. Western Illinois	151	9th
8. Youngstown State	88	t4th
9. Missouri State	74	t7th

2012

1. North Dakota St. (37)	379	1st
2. UNI	300	t6th
3. Youngstown State	291	t6th
4. Illinois State (1)	287	t3rd
5. Indiana State	228	t3rd
6. South Dakota State	182	2nd
7. Southern Illinois	167	t3rd
8. South Dakota	97	10th
9. Western Illinois	90	9th
10. Missouri State	69	8th

2013

1. North Dakota St. (39)	390	1st
2. South Dakota St.	323	t2nd
3. UNI	269	t7th
4. Illinois State	264	6th
5. Youngstown State	253	t2nd
6. Indiana State	197	10th
7. Southern Illinois	188	t2nd
8. Missouri State	123	t2nd
9. Western Illinois	77	9th
10. South Dakota	61	t7th

2014

1. North Dakota St. (24)	370	t1st
2. South Dakota St. (8)	330	4th
3. UNI (7)	324	3rd
4. Youngstown State	240	t5th
5. Southern Illinois	237	t7th
6. Illinois State	197	t1st
7. Missouri State	180	9th
8. South Dakota	121	10th
9. Western Illinois	96	t7th
10. Indiana State	50	t5th

2015

1. North Dakota St. (32)	389	t1st
2. Illinois State (8)	366	t1st
3. UNI	300	t3rd
4. Youngstown State	265	t6th
5. South Dakota State	251	t3rd
6. Indiana State	190	t6th
7. Southern Illinois	143	9th
8. Western Illinois	139	t3rd
9. Missouri State	91	10th
10. South Dakota	66	t6th

2016

1. North Dakota St. (37)	388	t1st
2. UNI (2)	343	t4th
3. South Dakota State	284	t1st
4. Illinois State	274	t4th
5. Youngstown State	254	3rd
6. Western Illinois	176	t6th
7. South Dakota	146	t6th
8. Southern Illinois	124	t8th
9. Indiana State	115	t8th
10. Missouri State	41	t8th

2017

1. North Dakota St. (21)	380	1st
2. South Dakota St. (19)	379	t2nd
3. Youngstown State	290	t5th
4. UNI	255	t2nd
5. Illinois State	246	t5th
6. Western Illinois	188	4th
7. South Dakota	182	t5th
8. Southern Illinois	132	t8th
9. Missouri State	81	t8th
10. Indiana State	67	10th

2018

1. North Dakota St. (39)	390	1st
2. South Dakota St.	340	2nd
3. UNI	270	t3rd
4. Youngstown State	258	t6th
5. Illinois State	248	t6th
6. South Dakota	206	t6th
7. Western Illinois	163	5th
8. Southern Illinois	139	10th
9. Missouri State	90	9th
10. Indiana State	41	t3rd

2019

1. North Dakota St. (32)	392	1st
2. South Dakota St. (4)	348	t3rd
3. Illinois State (3)	289	t3rd
4. Indiana State (1)	279	7th
5. UNI	266	2nd
6. South Dakota	176	6th
7. Youngstown State	153	8th
8. Western Illinois	128	t9th
9. Southern Illinois	89	t3rd
10. Missouri State	80	t9th

2020 (Spring 2021)

1. North Dakota State	101	4th
2. UNI	92	6th
3. South Dakota State	91	t1st
4. Illinois State	80	t7th
5. Southern Illinois	68	5th
6. South Dakota	52	t7th
7. North Dakota	39	t1st
8. Youngstown State	36	10th
9. Missouri State	23	t1st
9. Western Illinois	23	9th

Indiana State opted out

Column at far right indicates ultimate finish in the league standings for that season. No preseason poll conducted for the first season (1985).