

FOR RELEASE  
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## *San Diego narrowly picked to win 2013 Pioneer Football League race*

ST. LOUIS – The University of San Diego, which has won a share of the last two Pioneer Football League regular season titles, was picked to win the 2013 PFL crown in a preseason vote of the league’s coaches.

The upcoming 2013 season marks the 21st year for the Pioneer Football League – the nation’s only non-scholarship, football-only NCAA Football Championship Subdivision conference. The league expands to 12 members for the upcoming campaign, Mercer and Stetson restarting their football programs and joining the league. In addition, the league’s regular-season champion will receive an automatic bid into the now 24-team 2013 NCAA Division I Football Championship.

Last season, the PFL race ended in a three-way tie with San Diego, Butler and Drake each claiming a share of the crown with identical 7-1 league marks. The league’s coaches see another tight race in 2013 with four teams claiming at least one first-place vote and those four team’s separated by just 12 points.

San Diego received five of a possible 12 first-place votes and 111 of a maximum 121 points as coaches were not allowed to vote for their own team in the poll. Butler was ranked second by one point after receiving four first-place votes. Drake and Jacksonville were picked to finish tied for third with 99 points, receiving one and two first-place votes, respectively.

Dayton was picked to finish fifth with 85 points followed by Marist which rounded out the poll’s top half with 67 points for sixth place. Morehead State starts the bottom half of the poll, but with 65 points was just two points behind Marist.

Campbell (8th, 49 points), Davidson (9th, 42) and Valparaiso (10th, 32) occupy the poll’s next three spots. Newcomers Mercer (11th, 20) and Stetson (12th, 13) round out the 12-team poll.

The league will announce its preseason All-PFL teams, Wednesday, followed by a preseason coaches teleconference, Thursday.

**San Diego** earned a share of its fifth PFL title with a 7-1 league mark last season. First-year head coach Dale Lindsey inherits a team that will have 11 starters returning, including six on offense. That offense returns senior quarterback Mason Mills (252-360, 3,106 yards, 20 touchdowns) who will not only have his top three wide receivers to choose from but also has the option to hand the ball off to one of three running backs that each posted 400-plus yards in 2012. Defensively, the Toreros lost three of their top four tacklers from last season. However, linebacker Zach Devaney (62 tackles) and senior defensive end Blake Oliaro (39 tackles, 7 sacks) return to anchor the unit.

**Butler** made a four-game improvement last season, improving to 7-1 and a share of the league title after posting a 3-5 mark the year prior. Senior quarterback Matt Lancaster, the 2012 PFL Offensive Player of the Year, returns after leading the league’s quarterbacks with 408 rushing yards as part of 3,146 total offensive yards. Eighth-year head coach Jeff Voris also will have the option of turning to senior running back Trae Heeter, the league’s leading rusher (1,103 yards) last season. The Bulldogs did lose Jordan Ridley, their leading tackler, but he was the only defensive player they lost that finished the season ranked among the league’s top 25 tacklers. They return senior defensive backs Sean Grady (84

### **Pioneer Football League 2013 Preseason Coaches’ Poll**

<i>Team</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. San Diego (5)	111
2. Butler (4)	110
3. Jacksonville (2) Drake (1)	99 99
5. Dayton	85
6. Marist	67
7. Morehead State	65
8. Campbell	49
9. Davidson	42
10. Valparaiso	32
11. Mercer	20
12. Stetson	13

- First-place votes in parentheses.
- 11 points awarded for a first-place vote, with one point less for each succeeding place. (Maximum score = 121)
- Coaches were not allowed to vote for their own team.



tackles) and Jayme Szafranski (81 tackles) as well as senior defensive lineman Jeremy Stephens (14 tackles for loss, 8½ sacks).

**Jacksonville** finished 5-3 and tied for fourth last season, each of its three losses coming to a league co-champion. Head coach Kerwin Bell looks forward to his seventh season seeking more stability after an injury-plagued 2012 campaign. Sophomore quarterback Kade Bell returns after seeing his redshirt-freshman campaign cut short due to injury but not before posting 1,401 yards and 12 touchdowns in eight games. The Dolphins also return each of their top three wideouts, including junior D'Andre Randle who caught six touchdown passes last season. Senior defensive lineman Juan Pimienta returns after posting eight sacks last season, fifth among PFL pass rushers, and he will be joined by senior defensive back Jordan Dewhirst (57 tackles) to anchor the JU defense.

**Drake** claimed a share of its sixth PFL title with a second straight 7-1 mark, but sixth-year head coach Chris Creighton will have a significant task ahead of him with the loss of quarterback Mike Piatkowski and linebacker Tyler Moorehead – the 2012 PFL Defensive Player of the Year. Seven players are listed at quarterback on the Bulldogs preseason roster, including junior Andy Rice, who made nine pass attempts last season. All is not lost offensively, as sophomore running back Gary Scott (152 carries, 616 yards) and senior wide receiver Nick Rosa (54 receipts, 804 yards) return after leading the team at their respective positions last season. Sophomore linebacker John Hugunin (99 tackles) and senior linebacker Travis Merritt (98 tackles), the team's top two tacklers from 2012, return to lead the defense this season.

Any discussion about **Dayton** will inevitably focus on the team's defense, which has been ranked among the league's top three in fewest total yards allowed each of the last six seasons. Fifth-year head coach Rich Chamberlin, an All-American linebacker when he played for the Flyers, will turn to fifth-year linebacker Colin Monnier (92 tackles), senior defensive end Pat Dowd (8½ sacks) and fifth-year cornerback Kyle Sebetic (an FCS-best 18 passes defended) to lead Dayton. Offensively, it was the Will Bardo show, the now senior quarterback accounting for 2,092 of the team's 3,989 total offensive yards in 2012. Behind his effort, the Flyers finished tied for fourth with a 5-3 mark. Supporting Bardo will be a pair of returning running backs -- sophomore Connor Kacsor (419 yards) and senior Robert Washington (454 yards), who joined Bardo with 400-plus rushing yards last season.

**Marist** begins Year Five in the PFL looking to improve on consecutive 3-5 campaigns. Head coach Jim Parady, who enters his 22nd season in Poughkeepsie, has plenty of questions on both sides of the ball. However, he can lean on senior defensive lineman Terrence Fede (64 tackles, PFL-best nine sacks), who has been a preseason candidate as the league's top defensive player by Phil Steele's magazine, to anchor the defense. Senior quarterback Chuckie Looney returns but will have a vastly new cast of characters around him as his leading receiver (Mike Rios) and leading rusher (Calvin McCoy) have departed.

Longtime assistant coach Rob Tenyer took over the reins at **Morehead State** during the offseason and will look to lead his team to a winning PFL mark for the first time since 2007, a streak that includes last season's 3-5 mark. The league's top offensive unit (PFL leading 38.4 points per game and 471.5 yards per game) lost both quarterback Zach Lewis (2,955 passing yards) and wide receiver Donte Sawyer (1,024 receiving yards), leaving a lot of questions. Junior running back Rees Macshara (1,013 rushing yards) is the veteran on offense. The defensive unit see three of its top five tacklers return, including junior linebacker Jordan Hendrix (123 tackles), who led the league's tacklers.

**Campbell** is another program under new leadership as Mike Minter begins his tenure in Buies Creek. He will have senior quarterback Dakota Wolf back under center after leading all PFL signal callers – and finishing third among all rushers – with 617 rushing yards last season (1,418 total offensive yards). Defensively, nine members of the Fighting Camels finished 2012 ranked among the PFL's Top 50 in tackles. Seven of those players return in 2013, including junior defensive lineman Isaac Scott (60 tackles, 12.0 TFL and 5.5 sacks).

During the offseason, **Davidson** turned to alumnus Paul Nichols to lead its program after a 2-6 mark in 2012. He inherits senior quarterback Jonathan Carkhuff (3,146 passing yards) and senior tight end Reese Williams (51 receipts, 522 yards). However, the Wildcats were effectively a pass-only team, finishing the year ranked 119th among FCS teams with 59.3 rushing yards per game. Davidson's defense lost linebacker Patrick Moynahan (122 tackles), who was second among PFL tacklers last season.

Will a young **Valparaiso** squad take another step forward in 2013? Head coach Dale Carlson, who begins his fourth year with the Crusaders, had the league's breakout player of the year – running back Jake Hutson who was named the PFL's Freshman Offensive Player of the Year after finishing with fifth among all-purpose runners (1,216 yards). Junior quarterback Eric Hoffman (1,943 passing yards) also returns to lead the Crusader effort.

**Mercer** and **Stetson** join the PFL this season after restarting long-dormant programs. Mercer head coach Bobby Lamb will rely on a roster full of freshmen and sophomores with no transfers into the program. Stetson head coach Roger Hughes brought in four transfers to bolster a young squad, including junior quarterback Blake Plattsmier who joins the program from the College of San Mateo.

Five PFL squads will kickoff the 2013 campaign on opening day, Thursday, August 29, followed by the seven remaining teams kicking off Saturday.

The 21st season of PFL regular-season action gets underway when Morehead State travels to Jacksonville for a Saturday, Sept. 14 contest. The 2013 championship race begins in earnest two weeks later when all 12 teams square off in PFL action, Sept. 28. Each league member will play eight games within the conference schedule.

**-PFL-**