

College Football's Most Efficient Play Callers Recognized as 2023 Graphite Award Winners

RII Sports Technology announced its annual 2023 Graphite Award winners recognizing the most efficient offensive play caller in each DI football conference.

PARKER, COLORADO, UNITED STATES, July 2, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [RII Sports Technology](#)

“

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announced its annual 2023 Graphite Award winners recognizing the most efficient offensive play caller in each Division I football conference. Each year RII Sports Technology analyzes play-by-play data for all Division I FBS and FCS football programs and assesses the degree to which offensive play callers made decisions that best aligned their team's strengths with their opponent's weaknesses. This assessment is quantified in a Play Calling Efficiency Ratio (PCER) – a measure of how frequently a play caller put their team in advantageous strength-on-weakness positions while minimizing the number of times they operated from a disadvantage.

Tom Woods, RII Sports Technology's founder, explained - “This award is about recognizing the coaches that are getting the most out of what they've got, not wasting plays, knowing well their opponents, and being smart in the creation and application of their gameplans. Some of the best play callers aren't necessarily associated with the highest-ranked offensive teams, but they are the ones that didn't hold their teams back, the ones that helped their offenses maximize their potential in ways that few other play callers were able to do last season.”

The Graphite Award's name is a nod to RII Sports Technology's deep engineering roots in the Aerospace & Defense industry; graphite is a highly efficient engineering material – with a very low coefficient of friction and high electrical conductivity – and embodies the spirit of the play calling efficiency demonstrated by this year's winners:

FBS

ACC: Shannon Dawson, University of Miami

AAC: Tim Cramsey, University of Memphis

BIG10: Barry Lunney, University of Illinois

BIG12: Aaron Roderick, Brigham Young University

C-USA: Dana Dimel, University of Texas El Paso
Independents: Gerad Parker, Notre Dame
MAC: Billy Fessler, Akron University
MWC: Mike Thiessen, US Air Force Academy
PAC12: Ryan Grubb, University of Washington
SEC: Mike Denbrock, Louisiana State University
Sun Belt: Tim Leger, Louisiana University

FCS

Big Sky: Bobby Fresques, Sacramento State University
Big South-OVC: Dusty Hovorka, Lindenwood University
CAA: Chris Boden, Villanova University
Ivy League: Dan Swanstrom, University of Pennsylvania
MEAC: Matt Leone, North Carolina Central University
MVFC: Danny Freund, University of North Dakota
NEC: Stephen Matos, Wagner College
Patriot: Art Asselta, Fordham University
Pioneer: Jake Landry, University of St. Thomas
SoCon: Kade Bell, Western Carolina University
Southland: Connor McQueen, University of the Incarnate Word
SWAC: Joseph Henry, Florida A&M University
UAC: Ken Collums, University of Central Arkansas

The importance of operating from strength-on-weakness positions when calling plays may seem intuitively obvious, but when quantified the impact is striking. Last year when the average DI football team operated from a strength-on-weakness play calling position they were successful 64% of the time and averaged 8.5 yards per play. But when they operated from a weakness-on-strength position they were successful just 43% of the time and only averaged 5.5 yards per play. And when you consider that the typical team only called roughly 40% of their plays from a strength-on-weakness position, there's plenty of room for improvement for most offenses. "Being in the right type of call at the right time is key, and it's something that play callers can see in data well before game time. These play callers did it better than anyone else in their conference last year", says Woods.

There are 2 coaches from this year's winners that also won the 2022 Graphite Award. Coach Shannon Dawson, currently Offensive Coordinator University of Miami, won last year as the Offensive Coordinator of University of Houston. In addition, Dusty Hovorka, Offensive Coordinator Lindenwood University, won the Graphite award in 2022 and 2023. The 2023 play calling reports for all Division I FBS and FCS football programs are available to any coaches of their respective staffs. Those interested are encouraged to contact RII Sports Technology to request their team's information.

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