



For Immediate Release

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Virginia Sports Hall of Fame Announces 2026 Sports Person of the Year

53rd Induction Weekend events to be held April 25 in Henrico

Henrico, VA - The Board of Directors of the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame is proud to announce that the entire **2025 James Madison University football team** will receive the prestigious **Sportsperson of the Year Award** during the Hall's 2026 Induction Weekend, April 24–25, presented by the Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority.

The Dukes transformed a breakthrough season into one of the most historic campaigns in Virginia sports history. In just their fourth year competing at the FBS level, James Madison surged to a 12–2 record, captured the Sun Belt Conference Championship, and earned the program's first-ever berth in the College Football Playoff — becoming the first Sun Belt program and the first team in Virginia sports history to reach college football's biggest stage.

“Traditionally, this award honors an outstanding individual,” said VSHF Executive Director Bruce Rader. “But the extraordinary accomplishments of the 2025 James Madison team rose above every other performance in Virginia sports this year.”

Under head coach Bob Chesney, JMU paired an explosive offense with a relentless defense and unwavering resilience. The Dukes went undefeated in conference play, delivered signature nationally televised victories, and produced multiple Sun Belt award winners — a testament to the depth, discipline, and unity of a complete team effort.

Beyond the championships and milestones, the 2025 Dukes galvanized a statewide fan base, elevated the national profile of Virginia football, and embodied the highest ideals of teamwork, leadership, and perseverance. For a season that inspired the Commonwealth and redefined what is possible, the entire 2025 James Madison football team stands as a deserving recipient of the **Virginia Sports Hall of Fame Sportsperson of the Year Award**.

The Dukes will be honored alongside members of the Class of 2026: Tony Bennett, Grant Hill, Marcellus “Boo” Williams, Michael Vick, Wally Walker, Kristy Toliver, Terry Driscoll, and Roland Lazenby. In addition, former University of Richmond basketball standout and longtime business and community leader Bobby Ukrop will receive the Distinguished Virginian Award.

Induction Weekend events will take place at the Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa/Short Pump on Saturday, April 25. Public events include the Saturday morning **“Breakfast with Champions”** a conversational program and autograph session, followed by the **Hall of Fame Reception and Induction Ceremony** that evening.

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available at vasportshof.com/2026-induction-weekend-event-info. Tickets are expected to sell out.