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COBB IN DIVISION I: National magazines highlight Murphy, Ojulari

By Joi Palmore MDJ Sports Writer
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Myles Murphy



BJ Ojulari

As the calendar hits the Fourth of July weekend and begins its push toward the college football season, now is the time many check out what the national magazines are saying about what's to come in 2022.

Two of the most popular publications, Lindy's and Athlon Sports, are bullish on a pair of Cobb County products — Clemson's Myles Murphy and LSU's BJ Ojulari.

Murphy, a former Hillgrove High School standout, is considered an All-American by both publications. The 6-foot-5, 275-pound junior defensive lineman is a first team selection by Lindy's and a second-team selection by Athlon.

The all-Atlantic Coast Conference performer had 37 tackles and seven sacks in 2021 while moving around on the Tigers' defensive line. With the return of defensive tackle Bryan Bresee from injury, Murphy is expected to have an even bigger season in 2022.

Lindy's lists Ojulari, a Marietta product, seventh of 10 top potential NFL talents. The 6-3, 245-pound defensive end had a team-best seven sacks last season to go along with 55 tackles and 11.5 tackles for loss.

Athlon had Ojulari on its all-Southeastern Conference second-team defense.

Murphy and Ojulari will both be eligible to leave for the NFL draft after the 2022 season if they wish. Another player who could also make that move is former Marietta star Arik Gilbert.

The 6-5, 248-pound tight end is part of a crowded position group at Georgia, but he showed a glimpse of what he could do during his freshman season at LSU. After a year away from the game, it appeared as if he was bigger, faster and stronger when he starred in the Georgia G-Day game this spring.

Lindy's has Murphy, Ojulari and Gilbert at or near the top of their lists as best potential players at their positions for next year's draft.

Another player who could join them if he has a big year is Florida's Rashad Torrence. The 6-foot, 202-pound safety from Marietta had a breakout season with 87 tackles, three interceptions and five pass breakups a year ago, and Lindy's has him as a preseason third-team all-SEC selection.

While neither player made their preseason all-conference teams, a couple of other former Marietta Blue Devils have both magazines saying there is a reason to keep an eye on UNLV this season.

The Rebels added former Tennessee quarterback Harrison Bailey and Michigan State wide receiver Ricky White as transfers, with the hopes of them revitalizing the offense.

Both magazines see Bailey earning the starting job, and with former leading receiver Steve Jenkins in the transfer portal, both see White as becoming Bailey's favorite target again at UNLV.

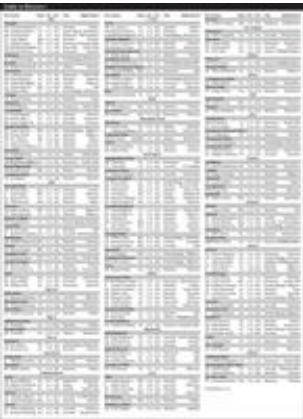
Bailey, a former four-star recruit, is the highest-rated player to attend UNLV in more than two decades.

Kennesaw State's quarterback Xavier Shepherd has also received plenty of buzz from the national publications. He is Lindy's Preseason all-Football Championship Subdivision first-team quarterback, as well as its FCS most valuable player for 2022. Athlon has him listed on its FCS All-America team, too.

Shepherd was last year's Big South Conference Offensive Player of the Year after totaling an FCS-best 23 rushing touchdowns for Kennesaw State. He also threw for 15 touchdowns.

In all, the publications recognized more than 40 players from the county as potential starters or top-tier recruits. Among the other potential starters include Boston College receiver Taji Johnson (Marietta), Georgia Tech defensive back Derrik Allen (Lassiter), Tennessee safety Jaylen McCollough (Hillgrove), Troy running back Kimani Vidal (Marietta), Arkansas State defensive lineman Thurman Geathers (North Cobb) and Liberty linebacker Aakil Washington (Wheeler).

Among the top newcomers are Memphis running back Sutton Smith (Walton), North Carolina defensive back Marcus Allen (Walton), Ohio State tight end Bennett Christian (Allatoona), Rice wide receiver Rawson MacNeill (Walton), UAB defensive back AJ Brown (Walton), Texas A&M defensive back Marquis Groves-Killebrew (North Cobb) and Georgia receiver De'Nylon Morrisette (North Cobb).

A thumbnail image of a large table listing 2022 Cobb in Division I players. The table is organized into columns for player names, positions, and other statistics. It appears to be a comprehensive list of players from various schools and conferences.

2022 Cobb in Division I players.pdf
Updated Jul 1, 2022

A thumbnail image of a table titled "COBB IN DIVISION I CONFERENCES". The table lists various conferences and the number of players from each conference who are in Division I. The conferences are listed in descending order of player count.

Conference	Count
SEC	28
Sun Belt	20
Southern	19
ACC	17
C-USA	17
ASUN	10
Independent	7
Big South	7
CAA	7
Ohio Valley	6
Pioneer	6
Patriot	5
Mountain West	5
Big 12	4
Big 10	4
Big 12	3
Big 12	2
Big 12	2
American	2
MAC	2
MAC	2
Midwest	2
Midwest	2
Northeast	2

In Conferences.pdf
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A thumbnail image of a table titled "COBB IN DIVISION I BY HIGH SCHOOL". The table lists various high schools and the number of players from each high school who are in Division I. The schools are listed in descending order of player count.

High School	Count
Harrison	22
North Cobb	18
Walton	18
Marietta	15
Hillgrove	14
McEachern	13
Alatonsa	11
Kell	11
Sprayberry	7
Wheeler	6
Whitefield	5
Kennesaw Mountain	5
Lanier	4
Walker	3
Poklatonok	3
Mount Paran	3
Walker	3
Osborne	2
Pope	2
South Cobb	1
Campbell	1

By High School.pdf
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