

HEAVY METAL: THE NCFAA NEWSLETTER (JAN. 7, 2021)

Tune into *The Home Depot College Football Awards* tonight at 7 p.m. ET on ESPN.

Bednarik Award – nation's defensive player of the year (Maxwell Football Club)

Two dynamic linebackers and a shutdown cornerback, each of them a consensus All-American awaiting possible unanimous All-America honors from the Walter Camp Football Foundation on Thursday, compose the three Bednarik Award finalists. The trio includes one player, Alabama's **Patrick Surtain II**, competing in Monday's College Football Playoff National Championship, **Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah** of Notre Dame, who played in the playoff semifinals and another, Tulsa's **Zaven Collins**, who was The American Athletic Conference's first player to ever receive unanimous Player of the Year honors at any position. The winner will be announced tonight on *The Home Depot College Football Awards* on ESPN.



Surtain, a junior from Plantation, Fla., and regarded as the nation's top cornerback, tied for fourth in the country with 11 pass breakups and opposing quarterbacks only have a passer rating of 50.2 when targeting him in coverage. The SEC Defensive Player of the Year going up against Ohio State's big-play receiving corps and its play-making quarterback Justin Fields is one of the keys to Monday night's national-title tilt. An Alabama player has won the Bednarik Award in two of the last four years (DE Jonathan Allen in 2016; S Minkah Fitzpatrick in 2017) and an SEC player has won it in three of the last four seasons (adding Kentucky LB Josh Allen in 2018).

Owusu-Koramoah, a senior from Hampton, Va., led the Irish (10-2) in tackles for loss (11.0) and was second on the team in total tackles with 62 with 42 solos. He had six stops in Notre Dame's 31-14 loss to Alabama in last week's Rose Bowl playoff semifinal. Notre Dame's only previous Bednarik Award winner was linebacker Manti Te'o in 2012 and the ACC's last winner was defensive tackle Aaron Donald in 2013 in Pitt's first year in the league.

Collins won the Bronko Nagurski Trophy two weeks ago, the first Tulsa player to earn any of the current national on-field performance awards and its first All-American since 1991. He opted out of Tulsa's Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl last week and declared for the NFL Draft following a season with 53 tackles and 11.5 tackles for loss that led Tulsa (6-3) going into its bowl game. In four games against top-25 foes Collins had 25 solos among 35 combined stops and 10 tackles for loss with four sacks. Temple linebacker Tyler Matakevich is The American's only previous Bednarik winner from 2015.

Biletnikoff Award – nation's outstanding receiver regardless of position (Tallahassee Quarterback Club Foundation)

Three consensus All-Americans representing a school that is playing for the national title and two others who played in New Year's Day or New Year's Six bowl games spotlight the Biletnikoff Award finalists for 2020. Together, the three SEC players are the country's top two receivers by average per game, receptions and yards and another who is one of its top tight ends who led the FBS in receiving TD's at that position.

Alabama WR **DeVonta Smith**, a senior from Amite, La., dazzled fans with big plays as the national leader in receptions, receiving yards and yards after the catch. The SEC's Offensive Player of the Year caught 105 passes – the second-most at Alabama in any season – and half of his 1,641 yards came after the catch. As a WR finalist for its Maxwell Award, Smith is near-certain to earn unanimous All-America status today from the Walter Camp Football Foundation. Smith's 20 TD grabs are tied for the SEC single-season record (and tops all-time at 'Bama), a mark made only last year from LSU's Ja'Marr Chase (Chase did it in 15 games, Smith has reached it in 12). Amari Cooper is one of two Alabama players to win the Biletnikoff (in 2014) with Jerry Jeudy earning its only two seasons ago in 2018.

Elijah Moore cemented his place in the Ole Miss (5-5) record books with a 149.1-yard receiving average that led the nation and was second in yards with 1,193. The junior from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was also tops in receptions per game, catching almost two more passes (10.8 to second-place's 8.9) than any other receiver to go with eight TD's and creating 158.3 all-purpose yards per game that were 12th in the FBS. Moore declared for the NFL Draft and did not play in Outback Bowl win over Indiana. He is third on Ole Miss' single-season yardage list (1,193) and his three 200-yard games mark the only time a Rebel has done that in a career. Moore is Ole Miss' first Biletnikoff finalist since Laquan Treadwell in 2015. The Rebels have never had a Biletnikoff Award winner.

The Biletnikoff Award prides itself in honoring players at any position who catch passes, and this year **Kyle Pitts** of Florida (8-4) is the first tight end to ever be a finalist. Pitts gives the SEC all three finalists, marking only the second time (also 2008) for all three finalists to come from the same conference, and the SEC will now have won four of the last seven going back to Cooper's win in 2014. Pitts, a junior from Philadelphia, Pa., who opted out prior to last week's Goodyear Cotton Bowl loss to Oklahoma, had 43 receptions for 770 yards and 12 TD's that tied for the national lead among TE's and are the second-highest total by a TE in SEC history. Pitts is Florida's first finalist since Jabar Gaffney in 2001. Florida has never had a Biletnikoff Award winner.

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Bronko Nagurski Trophy – nation's top defensive player (Football Writers Association of America/Charlotte Touchdown Club)

Tulsa linebacker **Zaven Collins**, a playmaker who helped seal two of Tulsa's six wins with interceptions and sparked the Golden Hurricane's rise to the American Athletic Conference Championship Game, was named the recipient of the 2020 Bronko Nagurski Trophy by the Football Writers Association of America on Dec. 22.

Collins is the first player at Tulsa (6-3) to win any of the current on-field performance awards and is the Golden Hurricane's first All-American since offensive lineman Jerry Ostroski in 1991. Collins, a junior from Hominy, Okla., won the award from among six finalists that also included Coastal Carolina defensive end Tarron Jackson, Iowa defensive tackle Daviyon Nixon, Notre Dame linebacker Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah and Alabama cornerback Patrick Surtain II. Collins was a unanimous choice as The American Defensive Player of the Year and the first from Tulsa to earn that honor.

Broyles Award – nation's top assistant coach (Broyles Foundation)

Steve Sarkisian, the Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks coach at Alabama who was announced as the new head coach at Texas over the weekend, won the 25th annual Broyles Award on Dec. 28. Sarkisian, who has constructed one of the nation's most explosive offenses at Alabama, will stay with the unbeaten Crimson Tide and coach in Monday's College Football Playoff National Championship. In his second season as Alabama's offensive coordinator, Sarkisian is overseeing a Crimson Tide attack that is second nationally in scoring at 48.2 points per game and sixth in total offense at 535.0 yards per game. Bama led the nation in both going into the bowl season.

Alabama has had two of the last three Broyles Award winners, including former offensive coordinator Mike Locksley (now head coach at Maryland) in 2018 and former defensive coordinator Kirby Smart (now head coach at Georgia) in 2009. The last three Broyles Award winners have come from the SEC. Sarkisian was selected from a group of five finalists that included BYU OC Jeff Grimes, Cincinnati DC Marcus Freeman, Indiana DC Kane Wommack and Northwestern DC Coordinator Mike Hankwitz.

Burlsworth Trophy – nation's best player who began his career as a walk-on (Brandon Burlsworth Foundation and Springdale Rotary Club)

Pitt center **Jimmy Morrissey** was named the 11th winner of the Burlsworth Trophy on Monday as the nation's most outstanding player who began his career as a walk-on. The senior from Huntingdon Valley, Pa., became the first Pitt center to earn All-ACC honors in 2018 and followed it with an outstanding 2019 season, establishing himself as arguably the conference's top center while not surrendering a sack during the season. He has been a team captain the past two seasons for Pitt (6-5), which opted out of a bowl game, and was a semifinalist for the William V. Campbell Trophy. Morrissey, Pitt's first Burlsworth Trophy winner and the ACC's second in three seasons, was selected from three finalists that included BYU wide receiver Dax Milne and Arkansas linebacker Grant Morgan.

Butkus Award – nation's best linebacker (Butkus Foundation)

Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah, who led Notre Dame into the College Football Playoff and the regular-season ACC title, earned the 36th annual Butkus Award honoring the nation's best collegiate linebacker. A senior from Hampton, Va., Owusu-Koramoah had 62 tackles for the Irish (10-2), 42 solo, three forced fumbles and a pair of recoveries. The selection committee noted his range and versatility in choosing him over fellow finalists Zaven Collins of Tulsa, Nick Bolton of Missouri, Monty Rice of Georgia and Devin Lloyd of Utah. Notre Dame linebackers have now won three of the last nine Butkus Awards. Owusu-Koramoah is the first since Jaylon Smith in 2015 and Manti Te'o won it in 2012. The ACC now has consecutive winners (Clemson's Isaiah Simmons in 2019) and a Notre Dame, ACC or SEC player has won it nine of the last 10 seasons.

Davey O'Brien Award – nation's best quarterback (Davey O'Brien Foundation)

The three finalists for the 2020 Davey O'Brien Award have combined to throw for 11,472 yards and 103 touchdowns this season in leading their teams to 30 combined wins, two spots in the College Football Playoff and another in the Goodyear Cotton Bowl and come from familiar schools within the award's annals. Each of the three – Alabama's **Mac Jones**, Clemson's **Trevor Lawrence** and Florida's **Kyle Trask** – are first-time finalists for the award.

Jones, a junior from Jacksonville, Fla., leads the nation in passing efficiency (203.3), total quarterback rating (95.6) and completion percentage (.770). He is second in the nation in both passing yards (4,036) and passing TD's (36). Jones has guided top-ranked Alabama (12-0) into the College Football Playoff National Championship with four 400-yard games and eight over 300, just missing it with 297 yards in last week's Rose Bowl semifinal win over Notre Dame. Jones would be Alabama's first Davey O'Brien winner and only the eighth from the SEC.

Lawrence, a junior from Cartersville, Ga., is a two-way threat for Clemson (10-2), which fell to Ohio State in last week's Sugar Bowl playoff semifinal. The ACC Player of the Year completed 231-of-334 passes (69.2) for 3,153 yards and 24 TD's while also rushing for 203 yards and eight scores. He is seventh in FBS in total offense (335.6) and is among the top 10 in passing yards (8th) and TD passes (12th). Lawrence

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passed for more than 300 yards five times with a pair of 400-yard games, and at one point had a streak of 366 consecutive passes without an interception. Clemson, the nation's top-ranked team until it lost at Notre Dame without Lawrence in the lineup, was 9-1 in games he started. Lawrence would join Deshaun Watson (2015, '16) as Clemson's Davey O'Brien winners.

Trask, a senior from Manvel, Texas, has completed 301 of 437 passes (.689) for 4,283 yards and 43 touchdowns and leads the country and has set Florida school records in both yards and passing TD's. He was second in the nation in total QBR heading into the bowl season. Trask lit up scoreboards with seven games throwing least four TD's, had five games of 400-plus passing yards and nine with at least 300. He is third in total offense averaging 361.1 yards per game. Two other Florida QB's have earned three former Davey O'Brien Awards, Danny Wuerffel (1995, '96) and Tim Tebow (2007).

Disney Spirit Award

Clemson running back **Darien Rencher** earned the 2020 Disney Spirit Award for his inspiring leadership amid college football's push to overcome social injustice and the coronavirus pandemic. Rencher, a senior from Anderson, S.C., was one of the early voices in the effort among college football players nationwide to promote safe play during the 2020 season amid the pandemic. Working with some of the college game's biggest stars, such as Ohio State QB Justin Fields, Oklahoma State RB Chuba Hubbard and Clemson QB and teammate Trevor Lawrence, Rencher sparked the national #WeWantToPlay movement among college football players who were eager to find ways for teams to safely play this season.

He is the first Clemson player to receive the Disney Spirit Award, given annually by Disney Sports to college football's most inspirational player, coach, team or figure. Disney Sports Vice President Faron Kelley will present the award at *The Home Depot College Football Awards* tonight.

Doak Walker Award – nation's premier running back (SMU Athletic Forum)

The three finalists for the Doak Walker Award come from a team playing for the national title on Monday, another College Football Playoff semifinalist and the nation's rushing leader who took his team to its first New Year's Six bowl game. It's an exciting mix of players and roles – Clemson's **Travis Etienne**, who's earned multiple national honors and awards as an all-purpose back contributing on special teams as well as running back, Alabama's **Najee Harris**, a dynamic every-down back who is as explosive between the tackles as he is out on the corners, and Iowa State's **Breece Hall**, a workhorse back who led the nation in rushing attempts as well as yards. Hall and Harris are the consensus All-American running backs waiting to see if they'll earn unanimous status on Thursday.

Postseason awards a nothing new to Etienne, a senior from Jennings, La., who has earned consensus All-America nods as an all-purpose player this season but also second-team All-America honors at running back from the American Football Coaches Association. Etienne finished the season in the Sugar Bowl playoff semifinal with 914 rushing yards, just missing on becoming Clemson's first player to rush for 1,000 yards in three different seasons and 5,000 for his career. He led all FBS running backs with 588 receiving yards and is the only FBS player with at least 850 rushing yards and 400 receiving yards to date. Etienne accounted for 16 TD's this season and is the ACC's all-time leader in rushing and career TD's. Etienne was also a Doak Walker finalist in 2018 and a semifinalist last season, and was also a finalist for the Paul Hornung Award as one of the nation's most versatile players. Clemson has never had a Doak Walker Award winner and the ACC's only former winner is Boston College's Andre Williams (2013).

Hall recorded one of the greatest individual seasons in Iowa State's history. The sophomore from Wichita, Kan., leads the nation in total rushing yards (1,572) coming off a 136-yard performance in the Cyclones' 34-17 win over Oregon in the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl in their first New Year's Six bowl game in school history. Hall was the only FBS back to rush for over 100 yards in nine games this season and had at least 75 yards and one TD run in all 12 games. He led the Big 12 at 130.5 rushing ypg and was selected as its Offensive Player of the Year. A bruising back, Hall is in the national top three in rushing TD's (21, 2nd), total points scored (138, 2nd), yards after contact (861, 1st), first-down rushes (69, 2nd) and 20-yard rushes (14, 3rd).

Harris, a senior from Antioch, Calif., helps keep the pace in undefeated Alabama's offense by leading the nation with 27 total TD's and as the SEC leader in rushing yards (1,387, 3rd in nation), rushing yards per game (115.6, 12th) and rushing TD's (24, 1st). He scored at least one TD in 11 of the Tide's 12 games. The first team All-SEC back rushed for 125 yards last week in Alabama's 34-17 Rose Bowl win over Notre Dame with 40 receiving yards and had 245 total yards and a record five TD's in the Tide's win over Florida in the 2020 SEC Championship Game. He became Alabama's career rushing leader (now 3,717 yards) in the SEC title game, passing 2015 Doak Walker Award winner Derrick Henry. Another all-purpose threat, Harris has averaged 9.6 yards on his 36 catches. Henry is the Tide's last Doak Walker Award winner from 2015 and Trent Richardson won it in 2011.

One note on the Doak Walker Award – in addition to outstanding performance on the field, candidates for the award must have demonstrated records of leadership and exhibited the characteristics of sportsmanship and fair play associated with Doak Walker, which has contributed to underdog winners in the past.

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Eddie Robinson Award – national coach of the year (Football Writers Association of America/Allstate Sugar Bowl)

Coastal Carolina coach **Jamey Chadwell** led his team to historic heights this season within its program, its conference, the national rankings and even the College Football Playoff with an 11-win season that captured the country's imagination and brought immeasurable attention to the school in Conway, S.C. For his achievements in leading the Chanticleers to so many historic program firsts, Chadwell was named the 2020 Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year on Wednesday by the Football Writers Association of America and the Allstate Sugar Bowl.

Chadwell is a first-time winner of the Eddie Robinson Award and the first coach from the Sun Belt Conference to win the honor. In his second full season at CCU, the SBC Coach of the Year managed an 11-game win streak that brought along Coastal's first win over a top-25 team, its first national ranking that at one point ascended to No. 9, a first division championship, its first bowl berth and later its first conference championship at the FBS level. An overtime loss to Liberty in the FBC Mortgage Cure Bowl closed the historic season at 11-1.

Chadwell earned the award past eight other finalists in Tom Allen of Indiana, Brent Brennan of San Jose State, Matt Campbell of Iowa State, Karl Dorrell of Colorado, Luke Fickell of Cincinnati, Nick Saban of Alabama, Kalani Sitake of BYU and Dabo Swinney of Clemson.

George Munger Award – national coach of the year (Maxwell Football Club)

The Maxwell Football Club (MFC) announced its six finalists Tuesday for the 2020 George Munger Collegiate Coach of the Year Award – Tom Allen of Indiana, Jamey Chadwell of Coastal Carolina, Ryan Day of Ohio State, Luke Fickell of Cincinnati, Hugh Freeze of Liberty and Nick Saban of Alabama. The winner's announcement will be made Jan. 19 and the award will be formally presented on the winner's campus in the spring.

Allen, the Big Ten's Coach of the Year, brought Indiana (6-2) into the top-10 for the first time since 1969 and pressed Ohio State for the conference's East Division title. The Hoosiers' six conference wins were its most since 1987. Chadwell guided Coastal Carolina (11-1) to a series of program-firsts, including its first national ranking, first conference title, first bowl bid and its first 11-win season. Day led Ohio State (7-0) to the Big Ten title with a dynamic offense, and the Buckeyes will play for its second College Football Playoff National Championship on Monday.

Fickell led Cincinnati (9-1) to its first outright league title and all the way to No. 8 in the final College Football Playoff rankings. The Bearcats missed a perfect season on a final-seconds field goal by Georgia in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl, Cincinnati's first New Year's Day bowl since 2009. Freeze recorded a number of firsts at Liberty this season – first win over a top-25 program, first national ranking, two wins over ACC schools and a second consecutive FBC Mortgage Cure Bowl win. Saban faces Day for the national title on Monday with eight players who earned first- or second-team All-America status from all three phases.

Heisman Trophy (Heisman Trophy Trust)

Alabama WR **DeVonta Smith** became the first wide receiver to win the Heisman Trophy since 1991, capturing college football's most prestigious individual prize on Tuesday. Smith, the national leader in receptions, receiving yards and yards after the catch, is the 86th Heisman winner and is the third player in Alabama history to win the award. He is the first non-quarterback to win the Heisman since Crimson Tide RB Derrick Henry won it in 2015. Michigan's Desmond Howard was the last wide receiver to win the Heisman in 1991 and only Notre Dame's Tim Brown (1987) and Nebraska's Johnny Rodgers (1972) are modern-era receivers to win it.

The SEC's Offensive Player of the Year also won the Paul Hornung Award as the nation's most versatile player on Tuesday. He is a finalist for the Billetnikoff Award as the top receiver and the Maxwell and Walter Camp Awards as the Collegiate Player of the Year to be announced tonight on *The Home Depot College Football Awards*.

Lou Groza Award – nation's top placekicker (Palm Beach Sports Commission)

One kicker stands out among the three finalists for the 29th Lou Groza Award as a consensus, and to this point unanimous, All-American. **Jose Borregales** of Miami has been the first-team kicker on all four sources that determine consensus All-America status, perhaps giving him the edge over fellow finalists **Jake Oldroyd** of BYU and **Will Reichard** of Alabama, two kickers who have not missed a field goal attempt this season.

Borregales, a senior from Miami, Fla., transferred to the Hurricanes ahead of this season and gave them one of the best years in program history. At 18-for-20 on field goals, his 90 percent accuracy is tied for the best in the nation among kickers with at least 20 attempts. His eight FG's from at least 40 yards out are tied for fourth nationally. Miami has never had a Lou Groza Award winner but the ACC is well represented on the winners' log (six all-time winners) with Syracuse's Andre Szmyt the most recent in 2018.

Oldroyd, a sophomore from Southlake, Texas, finished the year a perfect 13-for-13 on field goals, the most by an FBS kicker without a miss this

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season. More than half of them came from at least 40 yards out, including three from over 50. That gives him more 50-yard field goals in a perfect season than any FBS kicker since at least 2004. He made the first 73 extra point attempts of his career, setting the all-time BYU record for consecutive PAT's before a blocked attempt broke his streak. No kicker from a FBS Independent school has ever won the Lou Groza Award.

Reichard, a sophomore from Hoover, Ala., has been perfect on 85 combined kicks this season going into Monday's national title game. Going 12-for-12 on FG's and 73-for-73 on PAT's, his 85 total attempts are the most in FBS history by a kicker who stayed perfect on the year. He scored double-digit points in seven games on his way to a 109-point season that ranks second in the country. Reichard is only Alabama's third kicker to ever be a Lou Groza Award finalist and first since Leigh Tiffin in 2009. The SEC has only had three winners but a Reichard win would give the league consecutive choices after Georgia's Rodrigo Blankenship earned last year's award.

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John Mackey Award – nation's best tight end (Friends of John Mackey)

There's a sense of newness with the John Mackey Award in that any of its three finalists will be the first from their school to win it and don't come from blue-blood tight end factories. There's a finalist who grabbed headlines with big plays and plenty of scores in Florida's **Kyle Pitts**, and two – Iowa State's **Charlie Kolar** and Texas A&M's **Jalen Wydermyer** – who were big-time third-down threats and essential to their QB's and team's success that took both to first-time New Year's Six bowl appearances.

Kolar, a junior from Norman, Okla., was second at Iowa State in receptions (33) and his 446 receiving yards led all Big 12 tight ends. His five receiving TD's led Iowa State and were eighth among all FBS TE's, as was his yardage. Kolar was a big target for Iowa State for high-efficiency QB Brock Purdy and a key to the Cyclones' drive to the Big 12 regular-season title, the first in their history. The Big 12 has had three previous Mackey Award winners, most recently Mark Andrews of Oklahoma in 2017.

Pitts, a junior from Philadelphia, Pa., shot to the top of the pass-catching stats early in the season and finished with 43 receptions, 770 yards and 12 TD's after opting out of Florida's Cotton Bowl loss to Oklahoma. His 12 TD's are the second-highest total by a TE in SEC history and spotlight his big-play ability that sparked his becoming the first TE to be a Biletnikoff Award finalist. He has three 100-yard-plus games this season and would be the Gators' first Mackey Award winner and is their second finalist after Ben Troupe in 2003. Pitts is also a finalist for the Biletnikoff Award, the first tight end to ever be a finalist as the nation's top receiver at any position.

Wydermyer, a sophomore from Dickinson, Texas, surged at the end of the season with at least two TD catches in three of the Aggies' last five games prior to the Orange Bowl. He led all SEC TE's, including Pitts, with 46 catches on the year and 29 that went for first downs. Another key target, 14 of his catches, one-third of his season total, went for first downs on third-down plays. Against A&M's two top-five opponents, No. 2 Alabama and No. 4 Florida, Wydermyer's combined line was 13 catches for 135 yards.

The Mackey Award winner will be announced tonight on *The Home Depot College Football Awards*.

Maxwell Award – national player of the year (Maxwell Football Club)

It's a tough call on who will win the Maxwell Award as the College Player of the Year but a fascinating one as voters tried to define what it takes to win one of the ultimate player prizes in college football. The three finalists – Alabama QB **Mac Jones**, Clemson QB **Trevor Lawrence** and Alabama WR **DeVonta Smith** – each fit into whatever point you want to post in terms of stats, playmaking, wins and leadership.

How do you choose between Jones and Smith, teammates who are as lethal a pass-catch tandem as any in college football history as they prepare for Monday's College Football Playoff National Championship? They are the eighth set of teammates to be finalists together since 1982. Both are consensus All-Americans at their positions, with Smith perhaps earning unanimous status earlier Thursday prior to *The Home Depot College Football Awards*. Who makes who better? Would either be there as a finalist if not for the other?

Smith reminded us why a wide receiver deserved the Heisman Trophy he won Tuesday – and possibly a Maxwell Award tonight – last week as the Rose Bowl Most Valuable Player led all pass-catchers with 130 yards and three TD's on seven catches. He had 100 yards (101) at the half, marking his ninth 100-yard game of the season. The SEC Offensive Player of the Year has caught 20 TD's, or one for every five times he snags a pass.

Jones, a junior from Jacksonville, Fla., found other receivers besides Smith against Notre Dame, completing 25-of-30 passes for 297 yards and four TD's while rushing for 20 yards. All he's done is pass the 4,000-yard mark (4,036) and set the single-season record at 'Bama to go with 36 TD's that are the program's second-best mark. Jones has the offense at undefeated Alabama (12-0) cutting up defenses and has the yards, TD's and leadership to earn this award.

Lawrence, a junior from Cartersville, Ga., likely closes his career with a 34-2 record as a starter despite a Sugar Bowl semifinal loss to Ohio State. He's only the third Clemson QB to throw for more than 10,000 yards, which he topped with a 400-yard game in the Sugar Bowl. He's

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ninth in the nation with a 69.2-percent completion rate and had 24 TD's against only five interceptions despite sitting out two games. Whereas Jones earned first-team All-America status from three of the four organizations that determine a player's consensus status thus far, Lawrence (from the FWAA) got the other first-team nod. He's a winner with comparable stats to Jones with three playoff bids and one national title on his resume.

In the Maxwell Award's history, Alabama has had three previous winners, each of them in the last seven years – QB Tua Tagovailoa in 2018, RB Derrick Henry in 2015 and QB AJ McCarron in 2013. Throw in LSU QB Joe Burrow from last year and the SEC claims four of the last seven. Clemson has never had a Maxwell Award winner. The ACC had Louisville QB Lamar Jackson in 2016 most recently, but the ACC's only other Maxwell winner was Florida State QB Charlie Ward in 1933.

Outland Trophy – nation's most outstanding interior lineman (Football Writers Association of America)

One offensive tackle playing in Monday's College Football Playoff National Championship, another offensive tackle whose team lost in a playoff semifinal and one of the nation's top defensive tackles were named as the three finalists for the 75th Outland Trophy by the Football Writers Association of America. **Alex Leatherwood**, the All-SEC offensive tackle on Alabama's dominating offense that faces Ohio State in the national title tilt, headlines the list. **Liam Eichenberg**, an offensive tackle for Notre Dame's playoff team and top-20 rushing offense, joins **Daviyon Nixon**, an Iowa defensive tackle who led all interior linemen in tackles for loss, as this season's superior interior linemen.

Eichenberg, a graduate student from Cleveland, Ohio, anchored a talented offensive front that was third in the ACC and 11th nationally in rushing offense that took Notre Dame into the College Football Playoff. The Irish were third in the ACC in sacks allowed per game (2.09, and 23 total) and Eichenberg's efforts helped Notre Dame produce a 1,000-yard rusher in Kyren Williams and three different running backs who combined for nine 100-yard games. Notre Dame has had three Outland Trophy winners, the most recent being defensive end Ross Browner in 1976 (also guard Bill Fischer in 1948 and tackle George Connor in 1946). Guard Quenton Nelson was a finalist in 2017.

The campaign for Leatherwood, a senior from Pensacola, Fla., to win is simple: he's regarded as the best offensive lineman on the nation's best offense. Leatherwood's protection at left tackle is invaluable in helping quarterback Mac Jones direct the Tide offense. He has an overall blocking grade of 91.1 by the Alabama coaching staff having given up two sacks and three QB hurries this season. Bama has consensus All-Americans at QB, RB and WR – some of the credit to their success must start up front where its left tackle is providing protection for the nation's No. 2 scoring offense and No. 5 pass offense. Leatherwood was named a Permanent Team Captain by the Crimson Tide players as well as one of four Offensive Achievement Award winners by the coaches. Four of Alabama's five previous Outland winners have been offensive tackles – Cam Robinson (2016), Barrett Jones (2011), Andre Smith (2008) and Chris Samuels (1999) – as well as five of the Tide's last seven finalists.

A junior from Kenosha, Wis., Nixon was one of the premier defensive players in the country as the Big Ten Defensive Player of the year and Defensive Lineman of the Year who tied for the Big Ten lead with 5.5 sacks along with defensive end teammate Chauncey Golston. Nixon led the nation among defensive tackles with 13.5 tackles for loss, clogging the middle on an Iowa defense that was second in the Big Ten in total defense (313.8 ypg), third in scoring defense (16.0) and rushing defense (107.6) and fourth in pass defense (206.1). Nixon was tied for third in tackles for the Hawkeyes with 45 and 22 solos before Iowa's Music City Bowl against Missouri was canceled. The Hawkeyes have four Outland winners in their past, most recently offensive tackle Brandon Scherff in 2014. Offensive tackle Robert Gallery (2003), tackle Alex Karras (1957) and guard Calvin Jones (1955) are other winners.

Paul Hornung Award – most versatile player in college football (Louisville Sports Commission)

Alabama senior wide receiver and return specialist **DeVonta Smith**, a prolific pass-catcher and standout on special teams who scored TD's receiving, rushing and returning punts, won the 11th annual Paul Hornung Award presented by Texas Roadhouse as the most versatile player in major college football. Smith is the first Alabama player to win the Paul Hornung Award. The Louisville Sports Commission made the announcement Tuesday honoring football legend and Louisville native Paul Hornung, who passed away on Nov. 13, 2020, at age 84.

Smith converted 60 percent of his receptions into scores or first downs, led the nation in total receiving yards and TD receptions, averaged 24 yards per punt return, handled some kickoffs and a six-yard rushing TD. He won the Heisman Trophy on Tuesday as well as is a finalist for the Biletnikoff, Maxwell and Walter Camp Awards to be awarded tonight on *The Home Depot College Football Awards*. This season Smith totaled 1,912 all-purpose yards handling the ball receiving, rushing, returning punts and kickoffs and was a member of the onside kick receiving team and often was a gunner on the punt coverage team. He had 145 all-purpose yards in Alabama's 34-14 win over Notre Dame in the Rose Bowl playoff semifinal.

Smith was chosen over four other finalists – North Carolina RB/RS Michael Carter, Western Michigan WR/RS Dwayne Eskridge, Clemson RB/RS Travis Etienne and Florida WR/RS Kadarius Toney.

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Paycom Jim Thorpe Award – nation's best defensive back (Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame)

The top cornerback and two top safeties are the three finalists for the Paycom Jim Thorpe Award to be announced tonight on *The Home Depot College Football Awards*. One of them, **Patrick Surtain II** of Alabama, will be playing in Monday's National Championship.

Surtain, a junior from Plantation, Fla., is regarded as the nation's top cornerback and has a coverage grade of 86.3, sixth-best in the country by PFF. A stalwart of Alabama's defense has only given up one touchdown catch this season and was the Bama coaches' Defensive Player of the Week five times in 12 games, giving up 25 receiving yards or fewer eight times. Surtain was a finalist for Bronko Nagurski Trophy and is also a Bednarik Award finalist, whose winner will also be announced on Thursday's show.

Trevon Moehrig of TCU was a First Team All-Big 12 selection for a second consecutive season and ranks among the national leaders at 1.1 passes defended per game with two interceptions and nine pass breakups. The junior from Spring Branch, Texas, made a game-saving play with a one-handed interception in the end zone in the final minutes of a 29-22 win over then-No. 15 Oklahoma State. His 11 passes defended were second in the Big 12. His 47 tackles were third on TCU's defense.

UCF's **Richie Grant** was a unanimous first-team All-American Athletic Conference selection for a third season, leading the Knights with 72 total tackles with 49 solos, three interceptions, 3.5 tackles for loss and a sack on the season. He also had six pass breakups, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries.

Ray Guy Award – nation's best punter (Augusta Sports Council)

Pressley Harvin III of Georgia Tech is the favorite to win the Ray Guy Award as the nation's top punter from among its three finalists. Harvin, a senior from Alcolu, S.C., currently leads all FBS punters with a 48.02-yard average and now owns the ACC's best single-season mark in its history (was 47.8) after also shattering the school record (was 45.6). Just under half (22 of 45) of the All-ACC first teamer's kicks have traveled at least 50 yards and Harvin averaged at least 51 yards per punt four times in 10 games, earning the Ray Guy Punter of the Week nod twice this season with three other "Ray's 4" mentions. He now has three of the top-10 marks for single-season average in Georgia Tech history and is second on the career list with a 44.7-yard average behind 2007 Ray Guy winner Durant Brooks, the last of the ACC's two prior winners.

Should Harvin receive first-team honors from the Walter Camp Football Foundation on Thursday, he would become only the third unanimous All-American in Georgia Tech history, joining defensive back Ken Swilling (1990) and wide receiver Calvin Johnson (2006). Harvin is already recognized as the 22nd consensus All-American in Georgia Tech history after earning first-team recognition from four of the NCAA's five official selectors.

The ACC's Second Team punter, **Lou Hedley** of Miami, is also a finalist. Hedley, a junior from Mandurah, Australia, helped the Hurricanes have an FBS-leading net punting average of 44.98 in the regular season. He was named the ACC's Specialist of the Week twice and ranked second in punting at 47.3 yards per punt. He had 19 punts of 50-plus yards. An Australian has won the Ray Guy Award in six of the last seven seasons, including the 2019 winner Max Duffy of Kentucky.

Also among the finalists is Georgia's **Jake Camarda**, who became the first Bulldog to be named SEC Special Teams Player of the Year as well as the All-SEC First Team. Camarda, a junior from Norcross, Ga., sports a 46.9-yard average and is fourth in the national listings with a 42.7-yard net that is seventh. He placed 17 of his 31 kicks inside the 20 with 15 punts of 50-plus yards. He had only two of his punts returned this season for a combined two yards. The last two winners have come from the SEC – former Bulldog Drew Butler won the 2009 Ray Guy Award and was a finalist in 2010.

Rimington Trophy – nation's premier center (Boomer Esiason Foundation)

A consensus All-American, another who will face him in the College Football Playoff National Championship, and one of the country's upstart sophomores headline the three finalists for the Rimington Trophy. The favorite here has to be Alabama's **Landon Dickerson**, who has already garnered First Team All-America nods from The Sporting News and the FWAA that help determine the winner along with the Walter Camp Foundation, which will announce its team at 6 p.m. ET tonight on ESPN's SportsCenter.

Dickerson, a senior from Hickory, N.C., has had a dominant 2020 season. He's the top-rated run-blocking center according to Pro Football Focus and the anchor to an offensive front at undefeated Alabama (12-0) that just won the Joe Moore Award as the nation's best. Dickerson has started the last 20 Bama games at center and its coaches have credited him with zero sacks allowed and only one QB hurry given up in 725 snaps this season. Alabama's two former Rimington winners were both recent – Ryan Kelly in 2015 and Barrett Jones in 2012.

Voters in the Big Ten and nationally have been split choosing between Iowa's **Tyler Linderbaum** and Myers this season, as both have earned Second Team All-America honors behind Dickerson. The AP and FWAA chose Linderbaum, The Sporting News chose Ohio State's **Josh Myers**. Even Big Ten voters couldn't decide between them – Linderbaum earned the media's first team nod on the All-Big Ten team while the coaches chose Myers. Each was the others' second-team choice.

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Linderbaum, a sophomore from Solon, Iowa, has started every game at center the past two seasons. He guided an Iowa front that helped produce 31.8 points per game, second in the Big Ten, and was a semifinalist for the Joe Moore Award. Iowa also ranked second in the Big Ten in fewest sacks allowed and first downs produced. Linderbaum was Iowa's third all-time finalist but the Hawkeyes have never had a Rimington winner.

Myers led the Buckeyes' offensive line and helped Ohio State manage its way into the College Football Playoff by leading the Big Ten in rushing with 275.7 yards per game with a surge of 300-plus games in its last three leading into Monday's title tilt. Ohio State's offense is along in the Power Five averaging at least 250 yards rushing and passing per game. Ohio State has had three previous winners including recent consecutive choices in Pat Elflein (2016) and Billy Price (2017) to go with LeCharles Bentley in 2001.

Walter Camp Award – nation's most outstanding player (Walker Camp Football Foundation)

The Walter Camp Football Foundation's choices for its Player of the Year Award are as ripe as those for the Heisman Trophy and the Maxwell Award. How do you select a winner from among Alabama's consensus All-America trio of RB **Najee Harris**, QB **Mac Jones** and WR **DeVonta Smith** while also considering Clemson QB **Trevor Lawrence** and Florida QB **Kyle Trask**? We find out tonight during the 6 p.m. ET edition of *SportsCenter* on ESPN.

It seemed easy last year when LSU QB Joe Burrow was the Walter Camp winner. Now, there's three QB's each with stats, wins and leadership to their credit along with two playmakers who are essential to the Crimson Tide's dominance leading up to Monday's College Football Playoff National Championship. Harris, the MVP of the SEC Championship game, is the country's fourth-leading rusher with an all-purpose average of 143.5 ypg. Smith, the 2020 SEC Offensive Player of the Year, is coming off a Rose Bowl MVP game that helped earn him the Heisman Trophy on Tuesday and is the national receiving leader with 105 receptions and 1,641 yards. Perhaps no one this season was more dynamic with the band in his hands.

Smith's and Harris' yards came through Jones. Is he the best QB of the mix after leading the Crimson Tide to a 12-0 record and the SEC title? He has stats that are among Bama's all-time bests and equal to Tua Tagavailoa, Alabama's Walter Camp winner from 2018. He's thrown for over 400 yards four times (the most in a career in Alabama history) and tossed four or more TDs six times. Two of the last five Walter Camp Award winners are from Alabama.

Lawrence was named the ACC's Offensive Player of the Year after winning all nine of his starts prior to the College Football Playoff, throwing for 3,153 yards and a completion percentage of 69.2 with 24 TD's and five interceptions. Trask led the nation in passing yards with 4,283 and was tops in yards per game before falling to second by 0.1 ypg following Florida's loss in the Cotton Bowl, finishing at 374.9. He has 43 TD passes – the 8th-highest total in FBS history – and 46 overall TD's and 285 completions. His 186.65 passer rating is fifth-best nationally while his completion percentage of 69.7 is ninth best.

Clemson has never had a Walter Camp winner and Florida's only prior claim is Danny Wuerffel in 1996. Quarterbacks have won the last four awards and six of the last seven.

William V. Campbell Trophy – nation's premier scholar-athlete (National Football Foundation)

The National Football Foundation (NFF) & College Hall of Fame announced Memphis QB **Brady White** as the 31st recipient of The William V. Campbell Trophy Presented by Mazda on Wednesday. A total of \$223,000 was awarded in 2020 to White and the 11 other finalist who make up the NFF National Scholar-Athlete Class Presented by Fidelity Investments.

White became Memphis' all-time leading passer this season while pursuing a doctorate. A grad transfer, White graduated cum laude with a 3.58 GPA in business from Arizona State in 3.5 years. After completing his master's in sports administration at Memphis in just over a year, he is currently pursuing a doctorate in liberal studies. He led the Tigers to an 8-3 record this season and capped his career earning 2020 Montgomery Bowl MVP honors after completing 22 passes for 284 yards and three TD's in a win over Florida Atlantic. His 3,380 passing yards this season rank second in the American Athletic Conference and fifth nationally. The game captain is also second in the conference and fifth nationally with 31 passing TD's while his 202 points responsible for are second in the American and tied for fifth nationally. White set a Memphis record with 486 passing yards and tied a school and conference mark with seven total TD's in a comeback 50-49 win over UCF on Oct. 17, a game that earned him the Walter Camp and Maxwell Award National Player of the Week and the AAC's player of the week.

Wuerffel Trophy – exemplary community service and academic achievement

The Wuerffel Trophy, known as "College Football's Premier Award for Community Service," will be a part of *The Home Depot College Football Awards* tonight. The award's three finalists represent FBS players who best combine exemplary community service with athletic and academic achievement.

Texas QB **Sam Ehlinger** is the first Longhorn to be named as a finalist since Sam Acho won it in 2010. Ehlinger, a senior from Austin, Texas,

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has been recognized for his community service raising almost \$200,000 for charities related to COVID-19 relief through online fundraising. He contributed time passing out meals and school materials at the Austin Boys & Girls Club and was a finalist for the William V. Campbell Trophy as well. He is the Co-Big 12 Football Scholar-Athlete of the Year having earned his degree this fall as a three-time Academic All-Big 12 First Team member while guiding Texas to a 7-3 record this fall and a win in the Valero Alamo Bowl.

Teton Saltes, a right offensive tackle at New Mexico, was a semifinalist last year and becomes UNM's second finalist in the last four years, joining Garrett Adcock from 2016. The senior from Albuquerque, N.M., works with a host of organizations to bring awareness to causes ranging from suicide prevention to children's reading programs through the Save The Children Action Network. Over the summer he was on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, working with his native Oglala Lakota tribe in South Dakota and also with tribes in New Mexico to distribute needed supplies to those on reservations which were hit particularly hard. Saltes graduated with a degree in political science and Native American studies and spent his senior season enrolled in the UNM Law School.

Georgia Southern QB **Shai Werts** is a four-year starter for the Eagles and a three-time SBC Academic Honor Roll member who has graduated with a sports management degree. Once falsely charged and arrested for substance possession, Werts uses his platform to raise awareness against false imprisonment and has been an advocate for social justice this preseason. GSU was second among all FBS teams in 2019-20 in community service hours logged with Werts leading the initiative building to 515 hours by the Eagles. The senior from Clinton, S.C., individually composed over 100 hours of community service volunteering with Athletes in Action, Boys and Girls Club, Fight Against Childhood Obesity, Bulloch County Back to School Drive, Relay for Life and various food banks. Werts would be Georgia Southern's first Wuerffel Trophy winner as well as the first from a Sun Belt Conference school.

