

HEAVY METAL: THE NCFAA NEWSLETTER (OCT. 5)

BEDNARIK AWARD – Nation’s defensive player of the year Next key date: Semifinalists named Tue., Oct. 29

Utah senior linebacker **Francis Bernard** (#13, Herriman, Utah) led a defense that shut down Washington State’s potent offense last week. Bernard finished with a game-high 12 tackles and an interception, helping contain a WSU offense that was leading the country in passing yards, was second in total offense and fifth in scoring. Bernard’s 12 tackles were his second double-digit tackle game of the season, and his interception with 5:35 left eventually led to Utah’s final touchdown.

BILETNIKOFF AWARD – Nation’s outstanding receiver regardless of position Next key date: Semifinalists announced Mon., Nov. 18

Liberty (3-2) is on a three-game win streak in part because of the deep threat of receiver **Antonio Gandy-Golden** (#11, Dallas, Ga.), a senior who is second in the nation with 688 receiving yards and tops all active FBS receivers with 3,106 career yards. He enters Saturday’s game at New Mexico State 65 yards away from breaking the Liberty career record. He has three straight 100-yard games and is the national leader with five plays of 50-plus yards. He has five TD’s in the three Liberty wins.

BRONKO NAGURSKI TROPHY – Nation’s top defensive player Next key date: Finalists named Wed., Nov. 20

Two defensive ends have set an eye-catching pace on the national sack lead: Ohio State junior **Chase Young** (8.0 sacks) and Illinois junior **Oluwole Betiku Jr.** (7.0). Young (#2, Upper Marlboro, Md.) has had a sack in seven consecutive games and 12 total for minus-83 yards in that span dating to last season. The seven sacks by Betiku (#47, Lagos, Nigeria), a graduate transfer from USC, has already equaled or topped the Illini season leader in 18 of the last 23 seasons. Betiku’s 3.5 sacks at UConn marked Illinois’ first 3.0-plus sack total in a game since 2011.

BURLSWORTH TROPHY – Most outstanding player who began his career as a walk-on Next key date: Semifinalists named Tue., Nov. 12

The deadline for submitting nominations for the Burlsworth Trophy is Wed., Oct. 30.

BUTKUS AWARD – Nation’s best linebacker Next key date: Semifinalists named Mon., Nov. 4

Two linebackers played major roles in their team’s conference-opening wins last week. Duke senior **Koby Quansah** (#49, Manchester, Conn.) matched his career-best with 13 tackles in the Blue Devils’ 45-10 win at Virginia Tech, along with a fumble recovery and an assisted sack. Quansah has racked up a team-best 37 tackles to go with 3.5 tackles for loss and 1.5 sacks for the ACC Coastal Division contenders. Baylor rolled to a 20-0 lead on Iowa State in the fourth quarter before kicking a late field goal for a 23-21 win. Senior linebacker **Clay Johnston** (#4, Abilene, Texas) tallied 13 tackles, his second-straight multi-tackle performance and ninth of his career. He also had a sack, 1.5 TFL’s, 2 PBU’s and a QB hurry.

DAVEY O’BRIEN AWARD – Nation’s best quarterback Next key date: Semifinalists named Wed., Nov. 13

There are 18 FBS starting quarterbacks who have not thrown an interception this season. But only two of them also rank in the top 20 in yards per game, touchdowns and passer rating. Alabama’s **Tua Tagovailoa** (#13, Ewa Beach, Hawaii) and Oregon’s **Justin Herbert** (#10, Eugene, Ore.) are at or near the top of the most lists judging the quarterbacks. Tagovailoa leads the nation in touchdowns (23) and is third in average yards per game (343.6) and quarterback rating (249.86). Herbert just makes this top-20 cut for the three categories without an interception at 20th in average (281.8) but is tied for seventh in touchdowns (14) and eight in quarterback rating (183.61).

DOAK WALKER AWARD – Nation’s premier running back Next key date: Semifinalists named Wed., Nov. 20

Boston College junior running back **AJ Dillon** (#2, New London, Conn.) earned a third straight ACC Running Back of the Week honor after Saturday’s 23-carry, 159-yard effort against Wake Forest. It was his third consecutive 150-yard game and his 15th career game with at least 100 yards, which is currently second among active FBS running backs. Dillon’s 627 yards lead the ACC and are third in the nation, and his 125.4 per-game average is fourth nationally. He is up to sixth on the BC all-time rushing list with 3,324 yards.

HEISMAN TROPHY – Nation’s most outstanding player Next key date: Finalists announced. Dec. 9

The Nissan Heisman House Tour is off the road this weekend, but will return Sat., Oct. 12, at Notre Dame when the Irish host USC.

JOHN MACKEY AWARD – Nation’s most outstanding tight end Next key date: Semifinalists announced Mon., Nov. 18

The leading tight end in receptions (23) and receiving yards (350) is Western Michigan senior **Giovanni Ricci** (#15, Loveland, Ohio), who caught his fifth touchdown of the season last week in the Broncos’ 31-15 win over Central Michigan in its MAC opener. The five touchdowns are tied for the national lead for a player who only had three receiving scores in his career entering this season.

LOU GROZA AWARD – Nation’s top placekicker Next key date: Semifinalists announced Thu., Nov. 7

The only FBS kicker still perfect on double-digit attempts of both field goals and extra points is Oklahoma State’s **Matt Ammendola** (#49, Lansdale, Pa.), after a 4-for-4 performance in the Cowboys’ 26-13 win over Kansas State last Saturday. The senior made field goals from 29, 25, 21 and 18 yards out and added two PAT’s. The 14-point day moved him into the nation’s top spot for kick-scoring this season with 54. On the year, he has yet to miss on any of his 10 field goals or 24 extra point attempts.

MAXWELL AWARD – Nation’s player of the year Next key date: Semifinalists named Tue., Oct. 29

Oklahoma senior quarterback **Jalen Hurts** (#1, Houston, Texas) accounted for 485 yards and four touchdowns in the Sooners’ 55-16 win over Texas Tech on Saturday. In less than three quarters of work, Hurts completed 17-of-24 passes for a career-high 415 yards and three touchdowns

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and rushed nine times for 70 yards and a score to lead the Sooners past the Red Raiders for an eighth straight year. His 249.0 pass efficiency rating stands as the third best nationally this season (min. 24 pass attempts).

OUTLAND TROPHY PRESENTED BY NFID – Nation’s most outstanding interior lineman.... Next key date: Semifinalists named Wed., Nov. 20

Oregon left tackle **Penei Sewell** (#58, St. George, Utah), a 6-6, 325-pound sophomore, has emerged as the standout in the season’s first month among a Ducks offensive front that already features four Outland Trophy Watch List members. Sewell hasn’t allowed a hurry, pressure or hit on the quarterback over 184 snaps played and has 21 knockdown blocks on the season. He hasn’t committed a penalty in his 705 career snaps and has allowed only one sack this season.

PAUL HORNUNG AWARD – Most versatile player in college football.....Next key date: Finalists announced Thu., Nov. 14

Southern Miss receiver **Jaylond Adams** (Adamsville, Ala.) had a momentous opening to the 2019 season. The nation’s second-leading all-purpose player (199.0 ypg) returned the opening kickoff 89 yards for a touchdown against Alcorn State and later tallied an 80-yard score on a punt return to become USM’s first player with two special teams touchdown returns in the same game since the 1988 Independence Bowl. Adams leads the nation in kick-return average with 47.4 yards on five returns, second in punt return average at 25.0 on four punts and has 257 receiving yards.

PAYCOM JIM THORPE AWARD – Nation’s best defensive back..... Next key date: Semifinalists announced Mon., Oct. 21

There are 13 players in the FBS with three interceptions, but only two of them are also tied for the national lead in PBU’s – and they’re on the same team. Arizona senior cornerback **Jace Whittaker** (#17, Oceanside, Calif.) and junior cornerback **Lorenzo Burns** (#2, Murrieta, Calif.) each have four PBU’s and seven passes defended. The experienced corner tandem each have 28 starts in their careers, and their combined six interceptions are more than the team totals of 106 of the 130 FBS programs. Whittaker is coming off a 2018 redshirt season in which he played only one game and ranks fourth on the Wildcats’ all-time PBU list with 32. Burns had a pick in last week’s 20-17 win over UCLA and has 22 PBU’s in his career.

RAY GUY AWARD – Nation’s best punter Next key date: Final candidates list announced Tue., Nov. 5

Kentucky junior punter **Max Duffy** (#93, Perth, Australia) was the Punter of the Week for the second time last week after breaking two school records, despite a 24-7 loss at South Carolina. Duffy broke his own single-game record (for 8-plus punts) averaging 51.1 yards on nine kicks and becoming, for the moment, the Wildcats’ career punting leader with a 46.6-yard average. Duffy leads the nation with a 51.2-yard average and Kentucky leads the nation in net punting with a 49.3-yard average.

RIMINGTON TROPHY – Nation’s premier center Next key date: Finalists named Mon., Dec. 9

Navy hosts Air Force on Saturday as the top two rushing teams in the country face off in the first leg of the Commander-In-Chief Trophy series. Navy leads the country in rushing offense, averaging 344.67 yards per game with senior captain **Ford Higgins** (#72, Norcross, Ga.) guiding the blocking over the ball. Higgins isn’t just the team captain, he’s this year’s Captain of the Captains by a vote among all the 33 varsity captains at the Academy. As such, Higgins leads discussions once a month with the captains on how they can improve what they are doing. Higgins is a senior Mathematics and Applied Math major with a class load this fall of: Principles of Propulsion; Maritime Irregular Warfare; Dynamic and Stochastic Models; Cryptology, Codes and Information Security; Physical Geography; and Tennis, as every academy player still needs a P.E. requirement.

WALTER CAMP AWARD – Nation’s most outstanding player Next key date: Semifinalists announced Thu., Nov. 21

Alabama WR **DeVonta Smith** (#6, Amite, La.) had 11 receptions for 274 yards and five touchdowns as Alabama defeated Ole Miss, 59-31. The junior’s receiving yards and touchdowns set school records and his five touchdowns also tied an SEC single-game mark. Notre Dame defensive end **Julian Okwara** (#42, Charlotte, N.C.) surged into the national sack rankings after posting three sacks and forcing two fumbles last week as the Irish beat Virginia, 35-20. Okwara led Notre Dame’s defense that recorded eight total sacks in the game. Both players were the Award’s National Offensive and Defensive Players of the Week.

WILLIAM V. CAMPBELL TROPHY – Nation’s premier scholar-athlete Next key date: Finalists announced Wed., Oct. 30

In a long-form piece on the team website, the Miami Dolphins profiled their rookie **Christian Wilkins**, the 2018 William V. Campbell Trophy winner from Clemson. The headline: “Christian Wilkins Loves Being Christian Wilkins: Why would the rookie big man want to be anybody else?” Enjoy a good read: <http://bit.ly/2AGAljd> on the self-described “total package.”

WUERFFEL TROPHY – Exemplary community service and academic achievement..... Next key date: Semifinalists announced Tue., Nov. 5

Arizona State junior running back **Eno Benjamin** (#3, Wylie, Texas) ran for a seventh consecutive 100-yard game and three touchdowns in leading the Sun Devils to a 24-17 win at Cal last Friday, its second road win over a ranked foe this season. He totaled an even 100 yards for his 11th career 100-yard game and moved into a tie for eighth place in ASU history. ASU is idle this week, preparing for a clash with Washington State.

– Compiled by Scott Farrell of collegepressbox.com

The **National College Football Awards Association** encompasses the most prestigious awards in college football. Founded in 1997, the NCFAA and its 25 awards now boast over 800 recipients, dating to 1935. Visit ncfaa.org to learn more about our story. Contact: Mark Wolpert, President (mwolpert@maxwellfootballclub.org or 267-973-3680).