

HEAVY METAL: THE NCFAA NEWSLETTER (OCT. 23, 2020)

Bednarik Award – nation’s defensive player of the year

The Maxwell Football Club honored Arkansas linebacker **Grant Morgan** (#31, Sr., Greenwood, Ark.) with its Player of the Week following a 19-tackle game against Ole Miss, a 33-21 win. Morgan also had three TFL’s and a pick-six in the game. With right-hand man and fellow linebacker Bumper Pool out of action and Morgan playing injured and wearing a large arm brace, he finished with a career-high in tackles and an interception for the ages, earning the “one-armed bandit” nickname.

Biletnikoff Award – nation’s outstanding receiver regardless of position

Alabama wide receivers **DeVonta Smith** and **Jaylon Waddle** have been heralded plenty, and deservedly so. But how about the sophomore who is drawing plenty of targets as defenses try to lock down the upperclassmen? **John Metchie III** (#8, So., Brampton, Canada) has 14 receptions through four games and is fourth in the nation at 24.86 yards per catch with three TD’s. There’s plenty of balls to go around at Alabama, which leads the SEC in passing at 393.0 ypg, so much so that the Crimson Tide own three of the SEC’s top seven receivers by average yards per game. Is there a way to split the award among this lethal trident? Combined, Waddle (third in SEC), Smith (fourth) and Metchie (seventh) have caught 77 balls for 1,388 yards for an 18.0-yard average with 11 TD’s. Arkansas State wide receiver **Jonathan Adams** (#9, Sr., Jonesboro, Ark.) tied his school’s record with 15 catches for a career-high 177 yards and two TD’s in a wild 59-52 win over Georgia State, also tying the most grabs in a single-game in the FBS this season. Going into Thursday’s game at App State, Adams was second in the nation with seven TD’s and is seventh in receptions per game (8.2) and 11th in average yards (107.8 ypg). Look out for Kansas State’s **Deuce Vaughn** (#22, Fr., Round Rock, Texas) coming out of the backfield. The true freshman running back currently leads the nation in receiving with a 31.0-yard average on nine catches. He only gets 2.3 receptions per game, but he’s taking them for a 69.8 yards per game.

Bronko Nagurski Trophy – nation’s top defensive player

The FWAA gave Arkansas linebacker **Grant Morgan** (#31, Sr., Greenwood, Ark.) its Player of the Week nod after he notched 19 tackles, three of them for losses, to go with a pick-six return in a 33-21 win over Ole Miss. Morgan’s 19 tackles are second only to teammate Bumper Pool’s 20 (vs. Mississippi State) among the single-game highs for total tackles in the FBS this season. A former walk-on in 2017, Morgan is now the nation’s top tackler averaging 13.0 per game and his 52 total stops are only one behind the national leader. Arkansas reported him to be only player in the FBS since 2000 to have at least 15 tackles in a game with 3.0 tackles for loss, two passes defended and an interception return for a touchdown. The pick-six came with three minutes left with the Hogs holding a 26-21 lead, essentially clinching the game, and was a part of Arkansas’ six interceptions in the game, another FBS-high this season. Arkansas, idle this week, has three of the country’s top four tacklers by average. Behind Morgan’s 13.0 per game are Pool (tied for 2nd, 12.0) and freshman safety Jalen Catalon (tied for 4th, 11.25).

Burlsworth Trophy – most outstanding player who started his career as a walk-on

The Burlsworth Trophy has pushed the dates forward for all nominations – now due by Nov. 18. The top 10 finalists will be announced on Dec. 1 with the three finalists being announced Dec. 8. The Burlsworth Trophy ceremony will be Dec. 21 either live or virtually.

Butkus Award – nation’s best linebacker

Check out the interior of Boston College’s defense, where the country’s two leading tacklers reside. **Max Richardson** (#14, Gr., Duluth, Ga.) and **Isaiah McDuffie** (#55, Jr., Buffalo, N.Y.) are 1-2 in the national listings with 53 and 52 total tackles, respectively, a rarity for teammates. The last BC player to lead the country in tackles was Luke Kuechly, the 2011 Butkus Award winner who had 191 stops that season. McDuffie’s 30 solos are tied for the national lead while Richardson is tied for sixth in solo stops. The duo has taken charge of the Eagles’ defense. South Alabama linebacker **Riley Cole** (#4, Sr., Oneonta, Ala.) had a career-best and Sun Belt Conference-high 15 total tackles – 10 of them solo – in the Jaguars’ win over Texas State. His biggest play was a TFL assist on a fourth-and-two at the USA 37-yard line in a tie game in the third quarter. Seven of his tackles came in the fourth quarter. His 40 tackles tie for 19th nationally.

Davey O’Brien Award – nation’s best quarterback

The Davey O’Brien Foundation gave Alabama QB **Mac Jones** its Quarterback of the Week honor for his play in a 41-24 win over Georgia. Jones (#10, Jr., Jacksonville, Fla.) completed 24 of 32 passes (75 percent) for 417 yards and four TD’s against a Bulldogs’ defense that came into the game leading the nation (12.3 ppg, 198.3 passing ypg). He became the first QB in ‘Bama history to throw for 400-plus yards in three consecutive games, averaging 13.0 yards per attempt. Jones’ passing efficiency rating (219.5) and total QB rating (97.7) were both second in the nation last week. The Davey O’Brien Watch List member has been named to the Foundation’s Great 8 three times this season. The other Great 8 QB’s last week included **Jason Bean** of North Texas, **Dillon Gabriel** of UCF, **Hendon Hooker** of Virginia Tech, **Trevor Lawrence** of Clemson, **Jordan Travis** of Florida State, **Brady White** of Memphis and **Zach Wilson** of BYU.

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Bean, a redshirt sophomore, had a dynamic game off the bench, accounting for 350 total yards and five TD's (two passing, three rushing) in less than three quarters to lead the Mean Green to a come-from-behind 52-35 win at Middle Tennessee. Bean was 12-of-17 passing for 181 yards and two TD's without an interception while rushing 10 times for a career-high 169 yards and three TD's. The 350 yards accounted for 46 percent of North Texas' total of 768 yards, a new program record and the FBS' second-highest offensive output this season (UCF put up 798 last week in a losing effort).

Doak Walker Award – nation's premier running back

The nation's rushing yardage leader is also its leading handler as well. UTSA's **Sincere McCormick** (#3, So., Converse, Texas) has 702 yards to lead the nation and is 110 yards ahead of second place. He also has more carries than anyone else with 118 – logical because the Roadrunners (3-3) are one of only six teams to have played six games thus far. But McCormick's totals stand up even with the additional games – he's ninth in the nation at 117.0 yards per game and averaging 5.95 yards per carry (48th). A freshman All-American last year, his 19.67 attempts per game are 11th nationally. Now at his midseason – UTSA is one of four schools (ULM, Texas State, Troy) to still have 12 regular-season games scheduled – McCormick would project to rush for 1,404 regular-season yards. Jonathan Taylor of Wisconsin won the last two Doak Walker Awards having gained 2,003 (in 2019) and 2,194 (in 2018) yards. West Virginia's **Leddie Brown** (#4, Jr., Philadelphia, Pa.) ran for a career-high 195 yards on only 18 carries against Kansas for his third 100-yard rushing day in four games. The Big 12's second-leading rusher (128.8 ypg) had an 87-yard TD run that was the Mountaineers' longest since 2009.

Heisman Trophy – nation's most outstanding player

Khalil Herbert of Virginia Tech leads the nation in rushing yards per game at 148.0, but a plethora of kick-return yardage has boosted him into the national all-purpose leadership as well, and by a hefty margin. Herbert's (#21, Gr., Fort Lauderdale, Fla.) 240.5 all-purpose yards per game are 40.5 yards ahead of second place and 80 yards ahead of third place players who are almost exclusively special teams players and have only played two games. Herbert, a Kansas transfer owns four straight 100-yard rushing games and adds 295 yards in kickoff returns, where he also is third among Power Five players with a 32.8-yard return average. No Tech player has had four straight 100-yard games since 2011.

John Mackey Award – nation's most outstanding tight end

Most of North Carolina State's assorted passing numbers are buried in the middle of the ACC stats listings. But there are few teams who are deadlier throwing the ball right now than the Wolfpack, and a large part of it is coming from the hands of tight end **Cary Angeline** (#6, Sr., Chester Springs, Pa.). N.C. State (4-1) has 11 TD strikes through five games – tied for 14th nationally – and Angeline's caught five of them, second only to Florida's Kyle Pitts (7) for TD's among FBS tight ends. Over the last two seasons 10 of Angeline's 36 catches have resulted in a TD, and the No. 23 Wolfpack's current three-game win streak heading into Saturday's clash at No. 14 North Carolina has his stamp all over it. His two TD's helped the Pack engineer a 30-29 upset at then-No. 24 Pitt on Oct. 3 to start the streak. Angeline's (pronounced ANN-juh-line) only catch in a win at Virginia on Oct. 10 was a 32-yard TD strike, and one of his two grabs against Duke last week in only his ninth career start was a four-yard score. The Mackey Watch List member must be accounted for wherever he is on the field. Another streaking tight end is Texas A&M's **Jalen Wydermyer** (#85 So., Dickinson, Texas), who has yet to find the end zone this season but finds the red yardsticks just fine. The sophomore has 11 catches out of 19 that have resulted in first downs, and seven of those have come on third down. Wydermyer began the month combining for 13 catches for 135 yards in back-to-back games against No. 2 Alabama and No. 4 Florida and has become a force for the same program that sent consensus All-American tight end Jace Sternberger into the NFL after last season.

Lou Groza Award – nation's top placekicker

The Palm Beach County Sports Commission recognized three kickers as its Stars of the Week. **Nick Sciba** of Wake Forest, a 2019 Groza Award finalist, went 4-for-4 on field goals in the Demon Deacons' 40-23 win over Virginia. The NCAA record-holder for consecutive field goals made, Sciba (#4, Jr., Clover, S.C.) hit from 44, 38, 32 and 25 yards out and had four PAT's for a 16-point game, topping all FBS kickers last week. He's averaging 9.5 points per game, tied for 25th nationally. South Alabama's **Diego Guajardo** (#36, So., Spanish Fort, Ala.) kicked field goals from 44, 33 and 24 yards and made all three PAT's in a 30-20 win over Texas State. The 12-point game is Guajardo's career high and he now leads the Jaguars in scoring with 30 points. His seven makes are tied for 10th in the nation. UAB's **Matt Quinn** (#19, Fr., Spanish Fort, Ala.), who followed Guajardo kicking at Spanish Fort HS, had a career-high 13-point game boosted by a career-long 44-yarder as part of his three field goals (also from 38 and 30 yards). Quinn's 33 points are second among the Blazers' scoring. In a separate note, **Massimo Biscardi** (#29, Jr., Downingtown, Pa.) kicked a 40-yard field goal with four seconds left to give Coastal Carolina its first win over a top 25 team, 30-27 at No. 21 Louisiana. The game-winner was the second of his career (2018 at Georgia State) and puts him at 11-for-13 from 40 yards or longer for his CCU career.

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Maxwell Award – nation's player of the year

Memphis quarterback **Brady White** (#3, Sr., Newhall, Calif.) earned the Player of the Week slot after leading the Tigers to a record-setting comeback win over UCF. White finished 34-of-50 with career highs in completions (34), yards (486, also a school record), passing TD's (6) and total TD's (7) in the 50-49 win. The seven total touchdowns tied a school and AAC record. Memphis trailed 35-14 in the second half but eventually rallied with a nine-play, 85-yard touchdown drive to take the lead with 1:08 remaining to complete the largest comeback in school history.

Outland Trophy – nation's most outstanding interior lineman

Offensive tackle **Landon Young** of Kentucky had 10 knockdown blocks in the Wildcats' 34-7 win at No. 18 Tennessee last week. The hometown former state wrestling champion (#67, Sr., Lexington, Ky.) graded at 90 percent and had 22 blocks at the point of attack, including being in front of a two-yard TD run by Chris Rodriguez. He didn't allow any sacks or quarterback pressures. West Virginia's defensive front led by Watch List members **Darius Stills** (#56, Sr., Fairmont, W.Va.) and **Dante Stills** (#55, Jr., Fairmont, W. Va.). The Mountaineers' defense is averaging 4.0 sacks per game, tops in the Big 12 and fourth nationally. Last week West Virginia held Kansas to 62 rushing yards, the third time in four 2020 games it has held its opponent to fewer than 100 yards on the ground. The strong presence up front is leading to success in the rear of its defense, too. The Mountaineers' six interceptions are No. 1 in the Big 12 and seventh nationally as a team.

Paul Hornung Award – most versatile player in college football

Three offensive players and returning specialists touched the ball a combined 54 times and scored four touchdowns to earn the Honor Roll mentions this week. Virginia Tech continued its first start to the season behind **Khalil Herbert** (#21, Gr., Fort Lauderdale, Fla.), who ran 18 times for 143 yards, caught a 29-yard TD pass and returned two kickoffs for 52 yards as the Hokies (3-1) ran past Boston College, 40-14. Khalil accounted for eight first downs. Coastal Carolina (4-0), nationally-ranked (No. 25) for the first time in its FBS history, scored a 30-27 road win at No. 21 Louisiana behind running back **CJ Marable** (#1, Sr., Decatur, Ga.), who carried the ball 24 times and scored two different ways. Marable had 17 carries for 70 yards and a first-quarter score and caught three passes for 40 yards, one of which was a 13-yard TD. Marable registered six first downs rushing and receiving. Alabama continues to shine with its offense and special teams, headlined by wide receiver and return specialist **Jaylen Waddle** (#17, Jr., Houston, Texas), who touched the ball four different ways as the No. 2 Crimson Tide beat No. 3 Georgia, 41-24. Waddle caught six passes for 161, had one carry and returned one kickoff and one punt. He had the game's top highlight on a 90-yard TD bomb late in the third quarter to give Alabama a 27-24 lead.

Paycom Jim Thorpe Award – nation's best defensive back

South Carolina cornerback **Jaycee Horn** (#1, Jr., Alpharetta, Ga.) had two interceptions in a 30-22 win over Auburn, vaulting him into a tie for eighth nationally with the first picks of his career. He also deflected a pass that led to a third Gamecocks interception, and all three takeaways led to South Carolina TD's. Horn also had four pass breakups and logged three tackles.

Ray Guy Award – nation's best punter

The Augusta Sports Council announced **Nolan Cooney** of Syracuse as the Ray Guy Award Punter of the Week for the Oct. 17 games. Cooney (#92, Sr., East Greenwich, R.I.) punted six times against Liberty for a total of 279 yards, with a gross average of 46.5 yards. Six of his punts ended up inside Liberty's 20-yard line and he had a long punt of 52 yards. He was selected from this week's Ray's 4 List that also included **Jake Camarda** of Georgia, **Pressley Harvin III** of Georgia Tech and **Kirk Christodoulous** of Pitt.

Rimington Trophy – nation's premier center

Army West Point is manning its usual post among the national leaders running the ball. The Black Knights, with sophomore **Connor Bishop** (#57, So., Holland, Pa.) heading the line at center, are currently third in the country, averaging 310.0 yards per game and enter the weekend coming off their fourth 300-plus-yard effort on the ground in a win at UTSA. Army already has four different players who have had 100-yard rushing games, only the 16th season for that to happen in 131 seasons at West Point. Bishop's move from guard to center for the 2020 season has led to major success as Army (5-1) prepares for the back half of its 11-game schedule. Six players have 100 or more yards thus far led by Tyrell Robinson (33 carries for 298 yards), who is one of just two players in the nation to have more than 290 rushing yards on fewer than 35 carries. Robinson is averaging 9.0 yards per carry, most of it coming behind Bishop, a Rimington Watch List member, and the interior line. The Rimington Trophy Committee revealed its 2020 Watch List last week.

Walter Camp Award – nation's most outstanding player

We could write about Alabama QB **Mac Jones** every week in this space. We don't – we like to spread it around just like he does each week. Nonetheless, all Jones did last week was throw for 417 yards with a 75 percent completion rate (24 of 32) and a 219.5 passer

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rating against what was the nation's top-ranked defense. It was Jones' third straight 400-yard passing game as he accounted for 19 first downs through the air in a 41-24 win over Georgia. The nation's total offense leader is UCF sophomore QB Dillon Gabriel averaging 466.0 yards in four games played. Gabriel set AAC single-game records last week for passing yards (601) and total offense yards (650) despite a 50-49 loss at Memphis, and leads all FBS players with 1,756 passing yards.

William V. Campbell Trophy – nation's premier scholar-athlete

The National Football Foundation (NFF) & College Hall of Fame announced that the 63rd NFF Annual Awards Dinner originally scheduled for Dec. 8 has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Plans for honoring the NFF National Scholar-Athlete Awards and the 2020 College Football Hall of Fame Class will be announced at a later date. In an interview released by the NFF this week, 2016 Campbell Trophy winner Zach Terrell of Western Michigan offered his thoughts on his alma mater's historic 2016 season that ended in the Goodyear Cotton Bowl and the influence of then-head coach P.J. Fleck. Terrell: "The 2016 season really vindicated the 'Row the Boat' message we were trying to spread. A lot of us on the team had gone 1-11 just a few years prior and remember all the negative things people had said about us as players, the program and our mantra. To see us grow over the next few years and eventually reach the milestones listed was really rewarding. It all came down to belief. Belief in one vision, one mantra and one goal. The rest is history. There aren't enough adjectives to describe how I feel about Coach Fleck. He changed my life. I've never had someone challenge me more in all aspects of my life. Mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. The coolest part about coach is that he practiced what he preached. While he was challenging us to the highest standard in all facets of life, he was doing the same for himself. That is why he was able to have so much success at Western Michigan and now at Minnesota." Fleck and the Gophers open their season hosting Michigan in prime time Saturday.

Wuerffel Trophy – exemplary community service and academic achievement

Temple travels to Memphis on Saturday. Keep your eyes on Owls **LB Isaiah Graham-Mobley** and Tigers **QB Brady White**, both 2020 Wuerffel Trophy nominees.

