

# HEAVY METAL: THE NCFAA NEWSLETTER (OCT. 30, 2020)

## **Bednarik Award – nation's defensive player of the year**

The Maxwell Football Club honored Rutgers LB **Olakunle Fatukasi** (#3, Sr., Far Rockaway, N.Y.) as its Player of the Week following the Scarlet Knights' 38-27 win at Michigan State. It's just one game, but Rutgers already looks dramatically improved with Greg Schiano back on the banks. Rutgers had a suffocating defensive effort behind Fatukasi, who was a major disruption for the Spartans' offense with 10 stops, forcing a fumble, recovering two fumbles, and using great field awareness to earn Pro Football Focus' top run defense grade for a Week 8 linebacker.

## **Biletnikoff Award – nation's outstanding receiver regardless of position**

The Tallahassee Quarterback Club Foundation announced five more additions to its 2020 Watch List, each of them a wide receiver. Receivers are frequently added to the watch list as their season performances dictate. Actual, not potential, performance is the basis for inclusion on the Biletnikoff Award Watch List. The additions follow: **Jacob Cowing** of UTEP (#6, So., Maricopa, Ariz.) is second in C-USA in receiving yards per game at 85.8 and averaging 15.1 yards per catch. **John Metchie III** of Alabama (#8, So., Brampton, Canada) is fifth in the SEC and 22nd nationally averaging 99.8 receiving yards per game. **Dax Milne** of BYU (#5, Jr., South Jordan, Utah) averages 106.5 yards per game, 16th on the national list and is tied for 10th with five TD's along with **Amari Rodgers** of Clemson (#3, Sr., Knoxville, Tenn.), who is 15th nationally with 33 receptions while averaging 86.7 yards per game, 36th nationally. **Jalen Tolbert** of South Alabama (#8, Jr., Mobile, Ala.) is 13th in the nation with 486 yards and just under Metchie in 23rd at 97.2 yards per game. Already on the Watch List is LSU WR **Terrace Marshall Jr.** (#6, Jr., Bossier City, La.), who is tied for fourth nationally at 128 yards per game, but more notably are among his 27 receptions, one-third of them have gone for TD's; his nine TD's are second in the nation. The Watch List currently has 68 players under consideration. The TQCF has opened its 2020 FanVote. Every fan may vote once daily on the Biletnikoff Award FanVote ([biletnikoffaward.com/fan-vote](http://biletnikoffaward.com/fan-vote)) page. The aggregate fan tally will be counted as one official vote to determine semifinalists (ten receivers), finalists (three receivers) and the winner.

## **Bronko Nagurski Trophy – nation's top defensive player**

The FWAA gave Wake Forest safety **Nick Andersen** (#45, Fr., Clinton, Va.) its Defensive Player of the Week honor after the true freshman vaulted to the top of the national interceptions list with three picks against one of the ACC's top offenses in a 23-16 win over Virginia Tech. The first interception for Andersen came off a deflection in the end zone to stop a Hokies drive just before halftime and Wake Forest nursing a seven-point lead. The second stopped another drive in Deacons territory in the third quarter and the third sealed the game near midfield in the final seconds to kill Tech's last game-tying threat. Virginia Tech entered the game as the ACC's top rushing team (312 yards per game) and second-best in scoring (42.0 points). Andersen's game-high 11 tackles – nine of them solos – helped hold the ACC's top rushing team (312 yards per game) to 210 rushing yards and 16 points, and kept Khalil Herbert, the nation's leading rusher by average, to less than half (64 yards on 14 carries) of his 148 yards per game. He is the Deacs' second-leading tackler with 33 stops and 21 solos who also has a fumble recovery is at the close of a banner month. In a 40-23 win over Virginia on Oct. 17, he registered nine tackles (six solo) and two pass break-ups.

## **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**

**Chazz Surratt** of North Carolina (#21, Gr., Denver, N.C.) recorded a team-high eight tackles, a sack, forced a fumble and grabbed his second career interception in a 48-21 win over N.C. State. **Caden McDonald** of San Diego State (#54, Jr., Haslet, Texas) opened the season with a career-high 3.0 TFL's and 2.5 sacks to go with eight tackles in a win 34-6 win over UNLV. The 2.5 sacks are the most by an Aztec since 2017 and tie for the 6th-highest count in the FBS this season. **Trey Baldwin** of Louisiana Tech (#3, Sr., Orange, Texas) posted a career-high 18 tackles, 2.0 TFL's, an interception and his first career sack despite a 27-26 loss at UTSA. Baldwin is now 12th in the FBS in tackles per game at 11.4, and his 14 solo tackles are the second-highest total in the nation. The 18 tackles are tied for the seventh-most in a single game and he's the first Bulldog to have at least 18 tackles since 2010. **Zaven Collins** (#23, Jr., Hominy, Okla.) of Tulsa had a 37-yard interception return for a TD, forced a fumble and had five solo tackles among six total in a win at USF. His forced fumble came at Tulsa's 6-yard line just before halftime.

## **Davey O'Brien Award – nation's best quarterback**

The Davey O'Brien Foundation announced Cincinnati's **Desmond Ridder** (#9, Jr., Louisville, Ky.) as its National Quarterback of the Week following his career-best game against SMU. Ridder totaled four TD's and 305 yards of total offense, rushing for a career-high 179 yards and three scores – the 179 yards are the most by any Cincinnati QB and came on just eight carries (22.4 ypc) – and marked his fifth career 100-yard rushing game, helped by a 91-yard TD run in the fourth quarter that equaled the school record. He also completed 13 of 21 passes for 126 yards and a TD. Ridder is sixth in the AAC in passing efficiency at 137.2. The other QB's on this week's Great 8 list were **Ian Book** of Notre Dame, **Justin Fields** of Ohio State, **Dillon Gabriel** of UCF, **Graham Mertz** of Wisconsin, **Asher O'Hara** of Middle Tennessee, **Zac Thomas**

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of App State and **Malik Willis** of Liberty.

## **Doak Walker Award – nation's premier running back**

West Virginia hosts Kansas State on Saturday looking to get back in the Big 12 title hunt. While the Big 12's total defense leader is notable, a potent ground game has emerged behind RB **Leddie Brown** (#4, Jr., Philadelphia, Pa.), who is in the top 10 nationally in rushing (10th, 118.4 ypg) and 14th in all-purpose yardage at 146.0 ypg. Only nine players have carried the ball more often than Brown and his seven TD's tie for 10th in the nation and nine TD's overall tie for the Big 12 lead.

## **Heisman Trophy – nation's most outstanding player**

With Trevor Lawrence sidelined this week due to a COVID diagnosis and a redshirt freshman slated to start against Boston College, an increased share of the Clemson offensive load should fall on **Travis Etienne** (#9, Sr., Jennings, La.), who is at the cusp of more national and school records. Etienne has had at least one rushing or receiving TD in 41 of his 49 career games, and should he cross the goal line Saturday in a 42nd career game, he will break the FBS record held by San Diego State's Donnel Pumphrey from 2013-16. Etienne, with 4,560 career yards, needs 43 more to break the ACC career rushing record held by N.C. State's Ted Brown (4,602 from 1975-78). He also seeks a 20th career 100-yard rushing game. Etienne is just as lethal as a pass catcher as he is a runner. He is 37th nationally in rushing at 87 yards per game – with only limited duty in some of Clemson's runaway wins – but moves up to third in the nation with 860 total yards and is 16th in all-purpose yards at 143.3 ypg. He has 522 rushing yards and 294 as a receiver.

## **John Mackey Award – nation's most outstanding tight end**

Wisconsin TE **Jake Ferguson** (#84, Sr., Madison, Wis.) caught a career-high seven passes for 72 yards and set another personal-best with three TD's in the Badgers' 45-7 win over Illinois. Ferguson is just the 9th player in Wisconsin history to catch at least three TD's in one game and the third Badgers TE in the last 50 years, joining Owen Daniels (2005) and Garrett Graham (2009). Ferguson has caught at least one pass in each of his 28 career games. That string of 28 consecutive games with a reception matches the 4th longest active streak by an FBS player (Nebraska's JD Spielman is tied for the longest active streak at 36).

## **Lou Groza Award – nation's top placekicker**

The Palm Beach County Sports Commission recognized three kickers as its Stars of the Week. **Gabe Brkic** of Oklahoma (#47, So., Chardon, Ohio), a 2019 Groza Award semifinalist, tied his own program record with four field goals in the Sooners' 33-14 win at TCU. He had makes of 40, 38, 32 and 22 yards – a 54-yarder bounced off the crossbar – and his 15-point day pushed his season total to a team-leading 41 points. Wake Forest's **Nick Sciba** (#4, Jr., Clover, S.C.) returns for a second consecutive week after booting three field goals in a 23-16 upset over No. 19 Virginia Tech. Sciba's three makes from 46, 41 and 28 yards extend his streak to eight straight field goals and he's tied for fourth nationally with 10 makes on the season. His team-leading 49 points on the season are tied for seventh among FBS kickers. Houston topped Navy 37-21 with the help of **Dalton Witherspoon** (#47, Jr., Moore, Okla.), whose career-long 53-yarder was one of three field goals that opened the Cougars' scoring and matched the program record as Houston's longest field goal since 2004. Witherspoon is a perfect 125-of-125 on PAT's in his career and leads Houston in scoring with 28 points.

## **Maxwell Award – nation's player of the year**

The award's Player of the Week is Wisconsin QB **Graham Mertz** (#5, So., Overland Park, Kan.) after he led the Badgers past Illinois in the Big Ten season-opener. The hype has been through the roof for Mertz ever since he turned down offers from almost every major program to play in Madison. Last Friday the nation got a glimpse why he was a blue-chipper. Pro Football Focus' top-graded Week 8 passer had a near flawless record-setting debut, completing 20-of-21 passes for 248 yards and five TD's, while showing advanced poise and decision-making for a redshirt freshman.

## **Outland Trophy – nation's most outstanding interior lineman**

**Brady Christensen** (#67, Jr., Bountiful, Utah) of BYU is currently at the top of grading charts as the top offensive tackle through the first half of the season. PFF has Christensen is the only offensive lineman with 90-plus grades in both pass and run blocking, and among offensive tackles, Christensen allowed quarterback pressures just 1.3 percent of the time, one of the four lowest rates in the FBS. As the starter at left tackle, Christensen has been a key for the undefeated and 10th-ranked Cougars (6-0) that are No. 6 nationally in total offense (547.3 ypg), scoring (45.0 ppg) and passing offense (353.3 ypg). He protects the blindside of QB Zach Wilson, who is second in the nation in total passing yards (1,928) and completion percentage (78.3) and passing efficiency (210.41).

## **Paul Hornung Award – most versatile player in college football**

Four offensive skill players and return specialists combined for more than 600 yards in total offense and six TD's to earn spots on the award's

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Honor Roll this week. North Carolina RB **Michael Carter** (#8, Sr., Navarre, Fla.) had 20 touches in a 48-21 win over N.C. State, rushing 17 times for 106 yards and a TD, caught two passes for 46 yards and returned a kickoff 24 yards. He accounted for six first downs overall. Oklahoma WR **Marvin Mims** (#17, Fr., Frisco, Texas) caught two long TD passes and was a weapon on return duty in a road win at TCU. Mims' 50-yard TD catch early in the second quarter proved to be the winning score and his 61-yard score early in the fourth quarter gave Oklahoma a 20-point lead. He finished the game with 193 all-purpose yards, adding a 38-yard punt return that set up a field goal. Memphis WR **Tahj Washington** (#18 Fr., Marshall, Texas) had two TD receptions in the Tigers' 41-29 home win over Temple. Washington had one carry, two kick returns and five catches. Ohio State WR **Garrett Wilson** (#5, So., Austin, Texas) opened his season with a 50-yard TD reception in a 52-17 win over Nebraska, and six of his receptions accounted for Buckeyes first downs. He returned a punt 22 yards and had a kickoff return.

## **Paycom Jim Thorpe Award – nation's best defensive back**

Wake Forest safety **Nick Andersen** (#45, Fr., Clinton, Va.) made a second consecutive start last week against No. 19 Virginia Tech and became the first Demon Deacon since A.J. Greene in 1987 to intercept three or more passes in a single game. The true freshman earned the award's Player of the Week as the first ACC player to have three or more interceptions in a game since 2014 and just the fourth player in program history and its first freshman to do so. Andersen also turned in a team-high, game-high and career-high 11 total tackles including nine solo tackles. Wake Forest's nine interceptions this season are tied for second in the FBS and Andersen's three immediately vault him into a tie for the national lead with 12 others.

## **Ray Guy Award – nation's best punter**

The Augusta Sports Council announced Georgia Tech punter **Pressley Harvin III** (#27, Sr., Alcolu, S.C.) as the Ray Guy Award Punter of the Week after he averaged 51 yards on four punts at Boston College with three of them downed inside the 20-yard line and none with a return. It is the second Punter of the Week award this season for Harvin, who leads the ACC and is fourth nationally with a 48.5-yard average. He moves up to second by average among punters that have played more than one game. Half of his 32 punts this season have traveled at least 50 yards and 15 have been pinned inside the opponents' 20-yard line. Georgia Tech reports that since the beginning of the 2019 season, FBS punters have had a net average of 50 yards or more with a minimum of four punts a total of 18 times, and Harvin is the only punter that has accomplished the feat three times (Nov. 21, 2019 vs. NC State, Sept. 19 vs. UCF and last Saturday at BC). A 70-yard punt against UCF (51.2 avg.) on Sept. 19 helped him earn the honor that week as well. The other three punters among "Ray's 4" this week are **John Haggerty** of WKU, **Tommy Heatherly** of FIU and **Austin McNamara** of Texas Tech.

## **Rimington Trophy – nation's premier center**

Alabama center **Landon Dickerson** (#69, Sr., Hickory, N.C.) guided the Crimson Tide offense to a 587 total yards in a 48-17 win at Tennessee. 'Bama gained 170 yards and five TD's on the ground while the O-line didn't allow a sack or QB pressure against one of the SEC's top defenses. The CoSIDA Academic All-District player finished at 100 percent on his assignments per the 'Bama coaches and did not commit a penalty. Dickerson, a graduate transfer from Florida State, is pursuing his Master's degree in business administration.

## **Walter Camp Award – nation's most outstanding player**

Cincinnati QB **Desmond Ridder** (#9, Jr., Louisville, Ky.) accounted for four TD's (three rushing, one passing) as the No. 9 Bearcats won at No. 16 SMU, 42-13. Ridder, the award's National Offensive Player of the Week honoree, passed for 126 yards and a TD while rushing for 179 yards and three more scores, including a 91-yarder, to lead the 4-0 Bearcats. Wake Forest safety **Nick Andersen** (#45, Fr., Clifton, Va.) earned the National Defensive Player of the Week honor after posting 11 tackles with three interceptions as the Demon Deacons beat No. 19 Virginia Tech, 23-16. Andersen led a Deacs defense that held the Hokies to a season-low point total. Ridder and Andersen are the first players from their respective schools to earn the Walter Camp National FBS Player of the Week honors since the award started in 2004.

## **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 uncertainty created by 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.

## **Wuerffel Trophy – exemplary community service and academic achievement**

This week marks the final week to nominate a player for the 2020 Wuerffel Trophy. Even if your school is not playing this season, SIDs can still nominate a player for the award. Nominations close at 6 p.m. ET on Oct. 31.