

# 2021 NCAA Honors Celebration

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

Virtual

NCAA Convention



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ANDY KATZ: Welcome to the 2021 NCAA Honors Celebration. I'm Andy Katz, and it's my pleasure to be your host for this event. Each year the NCAA honors its best and brightest during the Honors Celebration. The today's top 10 recipients are recent graduates who excelled in academics, athletics, community service and leadership.

The Silver Anniversary recipients finished their athletics eligibility 25 years ago and are making lasting impacts in their careers and in their communities.

The Inspiration and Valor recipients are recognized for remarkable bravery and persistence. And our event will culminate with the presentation of the NCAA's highest award, the Theodore Roosevelt Award.

As we begin our celebration, please welcome NCAA President Mark Emmert.

MARK EMMERT: Thanks for tuning in for this virtual Honors Celebration. This year's awardees represent what is extraordinary about college sports. And though we're doing things differently this year as a virtual event, the importance of these awards has never been greater. The honorees' achievements and contributions are specially inspiring to us right now, and we need that inspiration, to be honest.

So, congratulations to all the honorees, to your families, your schools and your conferences who are all watching. And thank you, Andy Katz, for stepping up and serving as emcee this year. I know you'll do a great job. Enjoy the program and the remarkable achievements of these college athletes.

ANDY KATZ: Thank you, President Emmert. Tonight's honorees are an esteemed group. Let's meet them now.

First, the 2021 NCAA Today's Top 10 Award recipients, from the University of Pennsylvania, Nia Akins. From Washington University in St. Louis, Bernardo Amaral Neves. From the University of Miami of Florida, Brittny

Ellis. From the University of Texas at Austin, Alison Gibson. From Duke University, Eoin Gronningsater. From the Missouri University of Science and Technology, Deshawn Jones. From the University of California Los Angeles, Lily Justine. From Whitworth University, Kayla Leland. From the University of Kentucky, Asia Seidt. And from West Chester University of Pennsylvania, Juah Toe.

And now the 2021 NCAA Silver honorees. From the University of California, Berkeley, Shareef Abdur-Rahim. From the University of California at San Diego, Adam Burgasser. From the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Michelle Marciniak. From Texas A&M University at College Station, Fernando Palomo. From Harvard University, Amy Reinhard. From the University of Kansas, Lt. Col. Dan Rooney. And from the University of Virginia, Michelle Cusimano Vachris.

Next, the 2021 Award of Valor recipient, from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, Jaimire "Duty" Dutrieuille.

The 2021 Inspiration Award recipient, from Georgia Institute of Technology, Chaunté Lowe.

And the 2021 NCAA Theodore Roosevelt Award is presented to the University of Kansas graduate, John McLendon.

Congratulations to all of our 2021 honorees. Each year the honors award recipients are selected by the NCAA honors committee composed of representatives of NCAA member schools and conferences and past award recipients.

Please welcome Dr. Christopher Howard, the chair of the Honors Committee and president of Robert Morris University.

DR. CHRISTOPHER HOWARD: Hello. I'm Dr. Chris Howard, the eighth president of Robert Morris University. In 1991, I graduated from the United States Air Force Academy, where I played Division I football. Some 25 years, later I was awarded the Silver Anniversary Award. What a great day in my life for me, my family, my teammates and indeed the Air Force Academy.



I'm proud to say that I serve now as the NCAA Honors Committee chair. And that award that I won so many years ago means a great deal to me, as I said before. And I know the award means a great deal to Today's Top 10 winners, the Theodore Roosevelt Award winner, the other winners that have won the awards this year.

The committee that comes together, that chooses the award recipients is a distinguished lot. Careers in law enforcement and in professional sports, collegiate sports. Other management roles and leadership roles across the country and indeed across the globe.

They've worked hard and diligently to make very, very difficult decisions to choose the nominees and the winners for this year's NCAA awards.

We're sorry we're having to do this virtually, but do understand that we offer as a committee our heartfelt congratulations to all the honorees from the ones that graduated a long time ago to ones that are just graduating now.

So thank you, thank you so much for your great effort as student-athletes and contributing so much to our society and indeed the world. Thank you.

ANDY KATZ: Thank you, Dr. Howard. And thanks to all the NCAA members and past recipients who served on the Honors Committee. Your hard work and commitment to honoring these award recipients is deeply appreciated.

We'll turn next to Today's Top 10, representing all three NCAA divisions. They have distinguished themselves through their accomplishments in academics, athletics, community service and leadership.

Let's learn more about the Today's Top 10 honorees as they reflect on the opportunities college sports provided along with their most memorable moments as college athletes.

ALISON GIBSON: Being a college athlete provided me so many opportunities, especially in leadership and community service.

I was involved in SAC all four years of college and the president of SAC my senior year. I was also involved in other leadership organizations as well as being able to travel to Costa Rica for an awesome community service trip and do other community service things such as buying presents and visiting aspiring athletes.

BRITTNY ELLIS: My best piece of advice for any aspiring athlete whether or not you're just starting out in the sport or

you're already on the collegiate field is stick with it. There will be days you want to quit. It's just a fact. Not everyone just loves every single day of sports, especially those hard practice days. I know most other sports probably hate conditioning days, but that's all we do in track so I'm used to it.

I actually hated weight room days. Those were the days -- and my coach knew it, everyone knew it -- those were the days that you were about to lose me because I was not with it. Good thing or bad thing, you just kind of take it and learn from it.

EOIN GRONNINGSATER: I am a special education teacher at Promise Academy II Harlem Children's Zone, which is a middle school up in Harlem on 125th Street. I teach sixth grade ELA and math. So I get to see students in both math and ELA, which is usually pretty unique for a teacher and I actually really appreciate getting to see both sides.

As well as teaching, I'm still fencing competitively. I'm training for the Olympic qualifier in April where I'll be representing Ireland and Madrid at the qualifier.

JUAH TOE: The time-management aspect of being a student-athlete really prepared me for life after college athletics because now in my master's program I'm taking fewer classes than I did in undergrad, but it's important for me to find things to fill the time that I'm not being preoccupied by a sport as intensely. And so it helps me manage my time with knowing when to do my homework and when to go to the gym, when to do all of these other things. And it really helped me learn how to manage my time, which is super important, not only in school but also in your career life.

LILY JUSTINE: College sports provided me with tons of opportunities to give back to my community because collegiate athletes have a lot of influence, not only at their schools but also within their communities. And one of the biggest populations that we athletes have a lot of influence on is the youth. So, I recognize that I had this influential leadership position in my community for young kids. And I realized that I could make a positive impact on their lives just through coaching, teaching, mentoring, tutoring and just setting a positive example for them to feel inspired.

BERNARDO AMARAL NEVES: Some of the opportunities that playing college tennis provided me, I feel really I could talk about it all day, but first of all it really provided me with an opportunity to be part of an absolutely incredible community of people at WashU of extremely smart, motivated and talented people, some of whom really became some of my closest friends. And, of course, it

gave me the opportunity to travel across the country and have fun during some tough semesters academically, but just have some fun with some of my closest friends and compete across the entire United States against some of the best tennis players in the country.

**NIA AKINS:** Some of the biggest takeaways from college for me is learning to deal with high-achieving people of different personality types and coming together with those people to accomplish a goal or a task. Sometimes that can be very difficult. And as a professional athlete I'm dealing with a very similar group of people, very high-achieving personalities that -- I mean, Brooks does a really good job of bringing those people together beautifully.

**KAYLA LELAND:** One of these experiences, as a college athlete, that has best prepared me for life after college was participating in various NCAA championships. Qualifying for and becoming an All-American at these events certainly requires a lot of dedication and determination, which translates into so many different aspects of my life today.

**ASIA SEIDT:** One of my biggest pieces of advice that I would give to anyone going into college athletics or currently just in athletics in general is just be where your feet are. It's one of my favorite quotes, I have it on the back of my phone, and it just means be present of where you are in the moment.

**DESHAWN JONES:** Playing college sports provided me an opportunity to play the sport I love for four more years at a very high competitive level surrounded by some great teammates, some great fans and taught by some great coaches. It allowed me to be able to get my degree in an area and field that I really enjoy. And it also set me up for better opportunities in the future.

**ANDY KATZ:** Congratulations to all of our Today's Top 10 award recipients. We're proud of your accomplishments and know that you'll continue to excel in your future endeavors.

Our next honoree is the recipient of the Award of Valor, which is given to an individual who averted or minimized potential danger to another through courageous action. Let's hear from 2021 Award of Valor honoree, Jaimire "Duty" Dutrieuille.

**JAIMIRE DUTRIEUILLE:** It was May 28th, 2019. I will never forget that day. That day changed my life forever. I had just been getting off work and I was going to visit a friend. It was a nice day outside. The sun's shining. We're outside sitting on a porch just conversing. I'm talking to his niece about school. He has a son in his hand. And two guys come running down the street with guns in their

hands.

And my back is towards all this. So I don't see none of this happening. As they got close enough, my friend could kind of pinpoint what was going on. And he had his son in his hands so he took off, ran in the house. So I'm still really confused on what's going on at the time. And as they get close enough, at this point now they're shooting at the porch.

So, I was conversing with the niece, so as the shots go off, instead of me running, my first instinct was to grab her, shoo her, make sure she's okay. End up protecting her, nothing happened to her. I was the only one that ended up getting shot.

What I believe made me grab and shoo her was out of pure instinct. Of course I have two little sisters. So I have my protector side of me as well. And I would want somebody to protect my mothers or sisters if that was the situation. So I did what I had to do.

The shot to my elbow shattered my elbow. The shot to my butt hit my sciatic nerve and it kind of messed with the nerves in my legs. And then the shot to the back of my head hit my optic nerve, which caused me to lose all my peripheral vision.

My recovery wasn't as bad as it probably would seem it was maybe because I was always in good spirits. My friends came to visit me literally every day.

My team has been there for me throughout this whole process. And they came to visit me. They raised money for me. That helps connects more with my brothers. So, for me, I was feeling love and getting love every day.

I run a nonprofit with a couple of my friends. It's called Team Braddock because Braddock is the area that I live in and grew up in. We hold sports clinics for the kids two days out of the week when we're in session. We figure if we keep them busy and, you know, be there for them and try to listen to them and see what their problems is that we can help them make a change in our community.

I'm definitely a very positive person because positive thoughts lead to a positive mind. And, so, if you think positive you have positive mind. That's when things are much better off.

>> It's Jaimire Dutrieuille. Touchdown!

**ANDY KATZ:** Congratulations, Jaimire. We applaud your courageous actions and wish you the best as you continue to recover from your injuries.



Our next award is the Silver Anniversary Award, which is presented to former college athletes on the 25th anniversary of the end of their college athletics eligibility. This year's Silver Anniversary Class is made up of stellar college athletes who are achieving great success in their chosen professions while making significant impacts in their communities.

Let's hear from our 2021 Silver Award recipients.

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**MICHELLE MARCINIAK:** I knew basketball was my sport because I used to want to practice it all the time. I decided to transfer to Tennessee, where I was recruited, obviously, by Pat Summitt. I feel like she prepared me, every way shape and form, to become the woman I am today, the business woman I am today.

Winning as a senior and finishing my career as MVP of the National Championship team, I feel very blessed.

**DAN ROONEY:** My job description is rare. I'm the only person in the history of the world to be a PGA golf professional and a fighter pilot. Specifically when I was in college as an athlete, I learned how to perform under pressure. That translated to the battlefields over Iraq. And I was on a flight with identical twin brothers, CPL Brad Buckland bringing his twin brother, CPL Brock Buckland, home, who had been killed in Iraq. And it inspired me to start Folds of Honor.

And since that point we've awarded now 28,000 scholarships to spouses and children who have had someone killed or disabled, who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms.

**AMY REINHARD:** I think the key to my success as an athlete was that I just really loved it. Being the first Harvard team to qualify for the NCAA Tournament postseason was definitely gratifying as a senior. So, the Friends of Harvard Women's Basketball Endowment fund was put together in the name of Kathy Delaney-Smith. We just raised an endowment all from players, which is an accomplishment I'm super proud of. It's just really meaningful to all.

**ADAM BURGASSER:** My top athletic achievement came in my senior year when I won the Division III Nationals and was named the Division III National Diver of the Year. My current area of study is in astrophysics. My greatest career achievement as an astrophysicist was the recent discovery of the TRAPPIST-1 system. This is a system that we found in 2016 that we now know has seven earth-sized

planets in orbit around it. And three of them are at the right distance from their star to have the potential of water on their surface, and therefore the potential for life.

**MICHELLE CUSIMANO VACHRIS:** I was on a National Championship team my freshman year. It was magical. Playing a sport in college is an extension of the classroom -- a career that is similar to athletics. It's not a straight line up. You learn through athletics what you can control and what you can't control. And all of those things really helped me in law school and they help me every day in my career as an attorney.

**SHAREEF ABDUR-RAHIM:** Being a kid from Georgia, I didn't know much about Berkeley. Once I learned about university and the history.

I was bought in. I was the Freshman of the Year in the Pac-10 at that time, and I was the Player of the Year in the Pac-10. So, those are my top achievements.

The Future Foundation is a not-for-profit that my wife and I founded that we wanted to, from an academic standpoint, help prepare young people to developing themselves and prepare themselves for college. Honestly, I don't think I would rest well not helping people.

**FERNANDO PALOMO:** My dad, his dream was to put all seven of his kids through college, and I was the last one to do so. And I was kind of like closing that chapter for him. Now and for 20 years I've been an announcer for ESPN. I started in 2000 hosting the first Latin America SportsCenter. And three years after that, they gave me the opportunity to become the number one play-by-play announcer for soccer. I believe it's extremely important for the NCAA and colleges to continue providing students with the opportunity to become athletes.

In that process, you're allowing them to achieve an education. The dreams that they might think one day are impossible but they can try and overcome.

**ANDY KATZ:** Congratulations again to our Silver Anniversary honorees. You can learn more about all of the 2021 honorees by visiting [NCAA.org](http://NCAA.org).

Our next honoree is the recipient of the NCAA Inspiration Award, which is reserved for incredible people who, when confronted with a life-changing event, display determination and perseverance, and serve as a role model to others. Let's hear from our Inspiration Award recipient, Chaunté Lowe.

**CHAUNTÉ LOWE:** I decided that I wanted to become an Olympian when I was four years old after watching the



1988 Olympics. And, so, 100 percent, when I decided that I was going to go to Georgia Tech, it was with the opportunity of trying out for that Olympic team in 2004. My sophomore year, that was at the top of my mind. I came from a home where we had a lot of poverty, a lot of moving around. At a certain point we experienced homelessness and family was something that I was really deeply wanting. So when I went to Georgia Tech, they didn't just care for me as an athlete; they cared for me as a total person.

And my coaching staff, the medical directors, the academic advisory team, they were all my family. Going to the Olympics for the very first time was a dream come true. When I went to the 2004 Olympic Trials in Sacramento, I remember they were introducing all these professionals that I was going to be competing against.

And they introduced me and I was sitting there wearing my Georgia Tech uniform just knowing that everything that we had done for the last two years were for that moment. And we showed up and we showed out and when I made that team, it was by far the happiest moment of my life.

Nobody ever wants to hear those words, "you have cancer." And so when I got the diagnosis, immediately I was shocked. I think my blood turned cold. I felt unimaginable grief. And then I decided, no -- it was just like a switch flipped -- and I said no. No, I am going to fight. And that academic and athletic, like, prowess just took over. And everything that it took to become a four-time Olympian, an American record holder, a medalist, a graduate of Georgia Tech, I now applied it to that breast-cancer journey.

So the first thing, I had to have a vision, that plan. And for me that plan was survival. And from that moment I fought. It was difficult. There were times where I slept two, three days at a time. I was extremely weak and nauseous, and I had headaches and I lost all my hair, my eyelashes, eyebrows. It was ugly.

And then, when I got to that point where I felt secure enough in my plan and what I was doing, it's, like, who else can I bring with me? Everybody doesn't have the experience of being a Division I or a professional athlete or an Olympian. So, how can I take what I've been doing for the last 20 years and help somebody else who might not know?

I am happy to say that I am cancer-free. I think by finding it so early I had a lot more options to just really obliterate it. And that's why I think that, right now, our best defense for so many people is to find out early. And, so, I want to teach them what to look for.

The future for me is to continue to advocate for health equity and awareness, surrounding not only breast cancer but various types of cancer. And continuing to speak. I love it so deeply that I know that I will be motivating, inspiring, coaching, training people to be their best selves, to go after their dreams and to live a better and inspired life probably as long as I can talk.

So, I will get the opportunity to try out for my fifth Olympic game as a cancer-surviving, butt-kicking mother of three this summer.

For me it's always positivity. If I have an option to choose the negative route or the positive route, I'm going the positive route 100 percent of the time. I believe that everything will work out exactly the way that it's supposed to. And I will control the controllables. And for the things I can't control I'll figure out a way to roll with the punches.

ANDY KATZ: Congratulations, Chaunté. You are truly an inspiration.

Now we've come to our final 2021 award, the Theodore Roosevelt Award. For the presentation, please welcome Dr. Jack DeGioia, president of Georgetown University and the chair of the NCAA Board of Governors.

JACK DEGIOIA: The Teddy Award is the highest honor the NCAA may confer. The award is named after President Theodore Roosevelt, whose concern for the conduct of intercollegiate athletics led to the formation of the NCAA in 1906. It is given to a person who, "by personal example and contributions to society exemplifies the ideals to which collegiate athletics programs and amateur sports competition are dedicated."

The 2021 Theodore Roosevelt Award is presented posthumously to Coach John McLendon, a pioneering coach and civil rights activist who helped transform the game of basketball. A black basketball player in the 1930s, segregation and racism limited Coach McLendon's opportunities to compete as a college athlete.

Despite this, he became the first Black man to study under Dr. James Naismith while a student at Kansas. His path from Kansas led Coach McLendon to many important firsts. Throughout his career, he broke down racial barriers and opened the doors for others to follow him.

While coaching basketball at Tennessee A&I University, he led the first all-Black college team to a national tournament in 1954.

He was the first Black coach in professional basketball when he joined the American Basketball League's



Cleveland Pipers in 1959.

When he became head coach at Cleveland State in 1966, he was the first Black head basketball coach at a predominantly white university. A distinguished career in basketball and business followed. In 1991, he returned to Cleveland State as an athletics department advisor, a position he held until his death in October of 1999.

The first person to be enshrined in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame as both a coach and contributor, his legacy continues to inspire and empower others through the McLendon Foundation created by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics.

Coach McLendon fought racism and discrimination throughout his life, and he excelled in basketball as a coach. In recognition for all that he was able to accomplish on the basketball court, the excellence he achieved in his lifetime, his commitment to justice, we honor and remember Coach John McLendon with the Teddy Award.

MILTON KATZ: John McLendon was not only a great basketball coach, a legend in the sport of basketball, but really a pioneer in civil rights.

TRACEY BANKS: The ultimate goal was to be allowed to excel in the same way that anyone else with his talents and with his skills would have been able to excel. But he opened the doors behind him for so many others once he was able to break through.

DENNIS GATES: There are many coaches who have stood on the shoulders of John McLendon and many who still do. I'm just one of them.

MILTON KATZ: John McLendon was determined, fiercely determined to use the sport to promote social change, specifically to integrate the sport of basketball for both players and coaches.

H. MAURICE BANKS: Being inducted as a coach into the Hall of Fame, the experience truly was unlike anything that I had ever been to. It let me see that my granddad really is a part of the story when you tell the story of basketball.

MILTON KATZ: Kenny Smith, just months before John McLendon passed away said that every basketball player is indebted to John McLendon for what he gave to the sport and for opening the doors for everyone of every color to play this sport.

TRACEY BANKS: He was a quiet, dedicated trailblazer.

MILTON KATZ: And, really, every accomplishment he had

on the basketball court, whether at North Carolina College for Negroes in the Secret Game, winning national championships at Kansas City with Tennessee A&I State University, whether breaking through the barriers of coaching an integrated team for the Cleveland Pipers, being the first Black professional coach in the American Basketball League, coaching at Cleveland State University and the integrated basketball team -- every one of those incidents was breaking down a racial barrier.

TRACEY BANKS: He didn't set out to make history. He set out to be excellent and to do the best work that he could and be the best person that he could.

MILTON KATZ: He believed that there were enough good people in this country and in the world that would support fairness and equity in collegiate sports and throughout our institutions. And, so, he just wanted to open that door so that others would follow. And, really, most of those beliefs go back to James Naismith, who taught him that when he was a young student at the University of Kansas.

DENNIS GATES: College basketball coaches from across the country got together through NACDA and created a scholarship. The John McLendon Scholarship Foundation, the purpose is to break down barriers, to give opportunities to minorities who may not have had the opportunity before to explore, to fix what they see shouldn't be occurring. And that's not having people of color in administration.

H. MAURICE BANKS: I think of him as my hero, and the more I've learned about him is truly, it's awe inspiring, actually.

DENNIS GATES: There's so many lessons that he was taught. And he used it in a positive way. And he used his emotional intelligence to help guide him through the controversies. And to be able to gain the respect nationally as a coach, as a Hall of Famer, it speaks for itself. And I'm just thankful to have you guys recognize John McLendon as the Theodore Roosevelt recipient of this year.

H. MAURICE BANKS: We all just feel that it's a tremendous honor just to be a part of the prestige of that award.

ANDY KATZ: Congratulations to John McLendon's family. We thank you for being part of this ceremony as we reflect on his tremendous contributions, not only to basketball, but to American society.

Coach McLendon's impact and legacy awe us and inspire us. And he continues to be a shining example for all.

As we close out our program, we salute all of our deserving



2021 honorees for their accomplishments. You can learn more about their stories by visiting [NCAA.org](http://NCAA.org).

And now, on behalf of the NCAA, thank you for tuning in. Stay well and stay safe.

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