

ARMED FORCES MERIT AWARD



October 20, 2020

2020 Armed Forces Merit Award Nominations Announced

Fort Worth, Texas - A total of 38 individuals and three programs have been nominated for the 2020 [Armed Forces Merit Award](#) presented by the [Football Writers Association of America \(FWAA\)](#). The list includes eight collegiate players, 14 college coaches, 14 college and university administrators and two college referees.

Coordinated by the staff at the [Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl](#), the [Armed Forces Merit Award presented by the FWAA](#) was created in June 2012 "to honor an individual and/or a group with a military background and/or involvement that has an impact within the realm of college football."

With 38 nominations (33 individuals and five programs) considered for the 2019 award, Army West Point coach and military service veteran [Mike Viti](#) was the eighth recipient of the Armed Forces Merit Award. A graduate of West Point, Viti has completed four seasons at the school's fullback coach and co-founded Legacies Alive (LA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

The mission of the Legacies Alive is to strengthen and support the Gold Star families of our nation's fallen heroes and brings national awareness to the life and character of all service members who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Viti oversees the strategic and executive direction of the organization.

Other recipient include [Nate Boyer](#) of the University of Texas (2012), [Brandon McCoy](#) of the University of North Texas (2013), [Daniel Rodriguez](#) from Clemson University (2014), [Bret Robertson](#) of Westminster College (Fulton, Mo., 2015), [Steven Rhodes](#) from Middle Tennessee State University (2016) and [Dr. Chris Howard](#) from Robert Morris University (2018).

Boyer (long snapper), **McCoy** (defensive lineman), **Rodriguez** (wide receiver) and **Robertson** (defensive back) served in the Army before playing collegiate football. A Marine, **Rhodes** played four seasons at Middle Tennessee and participated in the 2013 Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl with the school.

A 1991 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, **Dr. Howard** was a Rhodes Scholar and received the 1990 Campbell Trophy, the highest academic award in the nation presented to a senior college football player. A member of the College Football Playoff Selection Committee (2017-2019), Dr. Howard was inducted into the CoSIDA Academic All-America Hall of Fame and a recipient of the NCAA Silver Anniversary Award, which recognizes distinguished individuals on the 25th anniversary of the conclusion of their collegiate athletic careers.

[Kansas State](#) and its football team were honored in November 2017 as the sixth recipient of the Armed Forces Merit Award for the university's partnership with the United States Army that created a bond between the school's athletic department and the Iron Rangers at Fort Riley.

Media Contacts

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2020 Armed Forces Merit Award Nominations

Programs

- [Athletes Of Valor](#), Alex Stone, Founder & CEO, Athletes of Valor (U. S. Marines)
- [Battlefields To Ballfields](#), Mike Pereira, CEO/President/Director
- [National Association of College Directors of Athletics](#), Wounded Warrior Project

Active Players

- [Cornelius Andrews](#), Union College, WR, 5-7, 148, Jun., Stockbridge, GA.
- [Alexander Findura](#), Bloomsburg, DL, 6-6, 255, Sen., Woodland, Ga. (U. S. Marine Corps)
- [Rashaud Freeman](#), Webber International, LB, 6-0, 225, Jun, Jacksonville, Fla. (U. S. Army)
- [Rasheed Holloway](#), Union College, WR, 6-0, 198, Jun., Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
- [Damian Jackson](#), Nebraska, DL, 6-2, 275, Jun. Las Vegas, Nev. (U. S. Navy)
- [Kenwon Mack](#), Union College, CB, 5-9, 165, Soph., Detroit, Mich.
- [Collin O'Donnell](#), Bluefield College, DL, 6-0, 250, Soph., North Tonawanda, N.Y. (U. S. Army)
- [Josh Schenck](#), Oklahoma, LB, 5-11, 210, Sen., Knightdale, N.C. (ROTC Cadet)

Football Coaching Staff

- [Troy Calhoun](#), Head Coach, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Jake Campbell](#), Assistant Backfield, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Jordan Eason](#), Assistant Offensive Line, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Robert Green](#), Defense Assistant & Director of Racial Equality, United States Naval Academy (U. S. Marine Corps)
- [Brian Knorr](#), Inside Linebackers, U. S. Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Steed Lobotzke](#), Offensive Line, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Alex Means](#), Outside Linebackers, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Ben Miller](#), Running Backs/Special Teams Coordinator, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Andre Morris](#), Spurs, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [John Rudzinski](#), Defensive Coordinator, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Trent Steelman](#), Quarterbacks, Eastern Kentucky University (U. S. Army)
- [Mike Thiessen](#), Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Charlton Warren](#), Defensive Backs, Georgia (U. S. Air Force)
- [Mick Yokitis](#), Wide Receivers, United States Naval Academy (U. S. Navy)

Football Support Staff

- [Clayton Kendrick-Holmes](#), Chief of Staff/Football Operations, United States Military Academy (U. S. Navy)
- [LTC John Nawoichyk](#), Assistant AD/Military Operations, United States Military Academy (U. S. Army)
- [Omar Nelson](#), Director of Player Development, United States Naval Academy (U. S. Navy)
- [Capt. Ross Pospisil](#), Director of Player Development, United States Naval Academy (U. S. Marines Corps)
- [CPT Blake Powers](#), Admission Support, United States Military Academy (U. S. Army)
- [CPT Zachary Reichert](#), Assistant Director of Football Operations, United States Military Academy (U. S. Army)
- [Steve Senn](#), Director of Recruiting, United States Air Force Academy (U. S. Air Force)
- [Jordan Simmons](#), Strength & Conditioning, Nevada (U. S. Army)
- [Mike Sullivan](#), Director of Recruiting, United States Military Academy (U. S. Army)
- [Rusty Whitt](#), Football Strength & Conditioning Coach, Troy University (U. S. Army)
- [Nick Zinani](#), Sports Performance Coordinator, Wake Forest University (U. S. Army)
- [Jake Zweig](#), Director of Man Development, Illinois, (U. S. Navy)

University Leadership

- [Dr. Jack Hawkins, Jr.](#), Chancellor of Troy University (U. S. Marine Corps)
- [Jim Knowlton](#), Director of Athletics, University of California (U. S. Army)

Referees

- [Raymond Daniel](#), Official, Mid-American Conference (Army National Guard)
- [Steve Thielen](#), Official, Mid-American Conference (U. S. Army)

[ESPN Events](#), a division of ESPN, owns and operates a portfolio of 35 collegiate sporting events nationwide. The roster includes four early-season college football games, 17 college bowl games, 11 college basketball events, a college softball event and two college award shows, which accounts for approximately 400 hours of live programming, reaches nearly 64 million viewers and attracts over 800,000 attendees each year. With satellite offices in more than 10 markets across the country, ESPN Events builds relationships with conferences, schools and local communities, as well as providing unique experiences for teams and fans. For more information, visit the official [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [YouTube](#) pages.

The **Football Writers Association of America** (FWAA, <http://www.sportswriters.net>) consists of the men and women across North America who cover college football for a living. Founded in 1941, the membership includes journalists, broadcasters and publicists, as well as key executives in all the areas that involve the game. The FWAA works to govern areas that include game day operations, major awards and an All-America team. Through its website, the FWAA works to improve communication among all those who work within the game. Behind the leadership of President Doug Lesmerises of Cleveland.com, Executive Director Steve Richardson and a board of veteran journalists, the FWAA continues grow and work to help college football prosper at all levels. There are now over 1,000 members.