



# The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame, Inc.

**NFF Contact:**  
Matt Sweeney..... Special Projects Coord.  
Phone..... 800.486.1865  
Fax..... 973.829.1737  
Website..... www.footballfoundation.com  
Address..... 22 Maple Avenue  
Morristown, NJ 07960

## NEWS RELEASE

# COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S 2003 NATIONAL SCHOLAR-ATHLETE CLASS ANNOUNCED

## 15 SCHOLAR-ATHLETES AVERAGE A 3.7 GPA FOR CLASS

Morristown, NJ – October 29, 2003 – The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame announced today, its 2003 National Scholar-Athlete Class, which includes student-athletes from all NCAA divisions, I-A, I-AA, II, III, and the NAIA. They are:

### DIVISION I-A

AWARDEE	SCHOOL	POS.	MAJOR	HOMETOWN
Robert Droege	University of Missouri	OT	Education	St. Louis, MO
Nathaniel Jones	Rutgers University	CB	Finance	Scotch Plains, NJ
Craig Krenzel	Ohio State University	QB	Molecular Genetics	Sterling Heights, MI
Eli Manning	University of Mississippi	QB	Marketing	New Orleans, LA
Rodney Reed	Louisiana State University	OT	Accounting	Raceland, LA
Dontarrious Thomas	Auburn University	LB	Management	Hawkinsville, GA
Jonathan Vilma	University of Miami	LB	Finance	Miami, FL
Renaldo Works	University of Oklahoma	RB	Management	Tulsa, OK

### DIVISION I-AA

John Frieser	Colgate University (NY)	TE	Sociology / Anthropology	Endwell, NY
Jason Whaley	Western Carolina University	OL	Computer Info. Systems	Pink Hill, NC

### DIVISION II

John Edmonds	NW Missouri State University	LB	Accounting	Maryville, MO
Keith Heckendorf	St. Cloud State Univ. (MN)	QB	Physical Education	Mosinee, WI

### DIVISION III

Flynn Cochran	Rensselaer Polytechnic Inst. (NY)	WR	Management	Kent, WA
Justin Napotnik	Thiel College (PA)	RB	Biology / Pre-Medicine	Sharpsville, PA

### NAIA

Daniel Woodburn	Hastings College (NE)	WR	Business	Curtis, NE
-----------------	-----------------------	----	----------	------------

“Since 1959, these highly sought after awards have recognized only a chosen few who have excelled above all in the areas of scholarship, citizenship and athletic performance,” said National Football Foundation Chairman **Jon F. Hanson**. “We are pleased to honor these outstanding young men for all of their achievements with an \$18,000 post-graduate scholarship.”

To be eligible for a National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame post-graduate fellowship, the nominee must be a senior or graduate student in his final year of eligibility, have a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, have shown superior academic application and performance, have outstanding football ability as a first team player, and have demonstrated strong leadership and citizenship.

“The 15 exceptional scholar-athletes we chose this year represent the best and brightest this nation has to offer on all playing levels,” stated **Robert E. Mulcahy III**, chairman of the Awards Committee and director of athletics at Rutgers University. “Each year it seems the talent pool continues to expand, and our job to select the most deserving individuals gets more difficult. This year’s incredible class is a testament to the hard work of our committee.”

These scholar-athletes will be recognized at The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame’s 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Dinner on December 9, at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. Also being honored at the dinner will be the 2003 College Football Hall of Fame class, which will share the dais with these scholar-athletes.

Each scholar-athlete receives an \$18,000 post-graduate scholarship, and that evening, one will receive the Draddy Trophy as the top scholar-athlete in the nation, increasing the scholarship to \$25,000.

---

## **Flynn Cochran**

### **Wide Receiver**

*Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (NY)*

An exemplary student and multi-faceted talent on the football field, Flynn Cochran has served as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s defensive back, quarterback, running back, punter, punt and kick returner and currently, one of the top wide receivers in Division III football.

A Management major, Cochran was named to the Academic All-America, All-District I and All-Conference First Teams in 2002. A regular Dean’s List member and recipient of the RPI Academic Excellence Award, he is a two-time Academic All-Conference selection and a member of the Epsilon Delta Sigma Management Honor Society.

A Second Team All-Conference pick in 2002, Cochran led the team with 66 receptions for 968 yards – ranking him 26<sup>th</sup> in the nation in receiving yards per game. Named to Don Hansen’s *Football Gazette* All-Region Third Team in 2002, he earned All-Conference honors as a defensive back in 1998, ranking second in the conference with seven interceptions. A tireless leader, Cochran helped the Engineers to two conference titles and their first NCAA playoff appearance in 2001.

A two-year Team Captain and future leader in the U.S. Armed Forces, Cochran is extremely involved in the Navy ROTC unit at RPI. He is the Company Commander of the Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps and attended the United States Navy Mini-BUDS (Basic Underwater Demolition / SEAL School). An Eagle Scout, Cochran is also a member of the Troy Disaster Relief Squad and is a youth Sunday School Teacher.

## **Robert Droege**

### **Offensive Tackle**

*University of Missouri - Columbia*

One of the top guards in the nation and leader of the University of Missouri offensive line, Robert Droege is equally as impressive in the classroom.

A three-time Academic First Team All-BIG 12 Conference selection, Droege is an eight-time member of the Conference Commissioner's Honor Roll and a recipient of the Missouri Athletics Department Academic Excellence Award. Twice receiving Academic All-America District V recognition, he completed his undergraduate degree last May with Summa Cum Laude honors and is currently enrolled in Missouri's Education Administration graduate program.

An imposing physical presence on the gridiron at 6'6," 305 lbs., Droege was a First Team All-Conference pick and was named Missouri's Offensive Lineman of the Year in 2002. A 2003 Preseason Second Team All-America selection by *Street & Smith's*, he is on the Watch List for both the Lombardi Award (nation's top lineman) and Outland Trophy (nation's top interior lineman) and is already the #6 NFL-rated talent in the conference for the 2004 Draft.

Always active in the community, Droege volunteers with Big Brothers & Big Sisters, coaches at Columbia youth football camps and has helped raise money for the Martin Luther King Memorial Restoration Project.

## **John Frieser**

### **Tight End**

*Colgate University (NY)*

Possessing a perfect balance of academic excellence, athletic prowess and community involvement, John Frieser has led Colgate University as a three-year starter at tight end and as the team's top scholar in the classroom.

A three-time member of the Patriot League Academic Honor Roll, Frieser has twice earned Academic All-America District I First Team honors. Possessing a double major in Sociology and Anthropology, he is a member of the Lambda Alpha and Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Societies. A six-time recipient of the Dean's Award, Frieser was named to the Athletics Director's Association Academic Team in 2002.

At 6'5," 260 lbs., Frieser is a supreme blocker whose efforts have twice earned him First Team All-Conference recognition. Also regarded as a legitimate pass-catching threat, he has caught more than 50 receptions and compiled more than 800 yards in his career.

A leader on the team and in the community, Frieser, the 2003 Team Captain, is a Helping Hands volunteer and tutor at a local elementary school. He is also a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity, which hosts numerous blood drives and recently put on an Easter Egg Hunt for local children.

## **John Edmonds**

### **Linebacker**

*Northwest Missouri State University*

A dominating linebacker and dedicated student in the classroom, John Edmonds leads by example at Northwest Missouri State University.

An Accounting major, Edmonds is a three-time member of the Mid-American Athletic Association Commissioner's Honor Roll and a Second Team Academic All-District VII selection in 2002. A regular Dean's List member, he is a part of the Delta Mu Delta National Honors Fraternity.

Starting his career as a walk-on, Edmonds' will and determination earned him a starting position and led to unanimous First Team All-Conference honors in 2002. Leading his team with 12 tackles for a loss and ranking third in total tackles as a junior, he was named Second Team All-Midwest Region. A 2003 preseason All-America pick, Edmonds currently leads his team in tackles (55), tackles for a loss (8) and sacks (2.5) through seven games this season.

Voted Team Captain by his teammates in 2003, Edmonds participates in the team's annual spring citywide clean-up day and serves on the school's M-Club (letterman's club).

## **Keith Heckendorf**

### **Quarterback**

*St. Cloud State University (MN)*

One of the most well-balanced scholar-athletes in NCAA Division II history, Keith Heckendorf is arguably the most prolific passer in St. Cloud State University history, and his academic excellence speaks for itself.

A Second Team Academic All-America in 2002, Heckendorf has twice earned Academic All-Conference and Academic All-America District V honors. A recipient of the prestigious Presidential and SCSU Renslow scholarships, he is a regular Dean's List member and was honored by the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Football Foundation as a senior in high school.

A Second Team All-America and Top Three Finalist for the Harlon Hill Trophy in 2002, Heckendorf led the Huskies to their first conference title in 14 years. Named First Team All-Conference, he led the conference in total offense (270 ypg) and pass efficiency (144.7). A 2003 preseason consensus All-America and projected Offensive MVP, Heckendorf leads the conference in five categories, including passing yards (1,938) and touchdown passes (22) and currently ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation in pass efficiency (159.9). Holding eight school records, he has passed for over 8,500 yards and 55 touchdowns in his career.

A two-year captain, Heckendorf remains active in the community as a tutor for SCSU Athletes in Action, an instructor at high school football camps and a United Way volunteer. A recruiting panel speaker for Huskies football, he also volunteers his time reading to elementary school children.

## **Nathaniel Jones**

**Cornerback**

*Rutgers University (NJ)*

A defense and special teams standout, Nathaniel Jones brings leadership to the Rutgers University secondary and provides academic superiority off the field.

A Second Team Academic All-America and Academic All-District II selection in 2002, Jones was named New Jersey Sports Writers Association Scholar-Athlete of the Year. A Robert G. Carr Scholar, he is a member of the Golden Key and Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Societies.

A dangerous returner and fearsome cornerback, Jones was a First Team All-Conference pick in 2002 en route to being named BIG EAST Co-Special Teams Player of the Year. Leading the conference and ranking fifth in the nation with 28.3 yards per kickoff return in 2002, he had two 100-yard kickoff returns for touchdowns and was twice named Special Teams Player of the Week. An established defensive presence, Jones also tallied the third-most tackles (84) on the team in 2002. A 2003 *Athlon* preseason All-America pick, he again ranks among the conference leaders in kick return average and interceptions through seven games this season.

Providing leadership in his community, Jones is the BIG EAST representative for the National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and a member of the Leadership Council at Rutgers. A participant in annual Christmas toy and Thanksgiving turkey drives, he speaks regularly at Pop Warner Football Leagues and the Rutgers Football Middle School program.

## **Craig Krenznel**

**Quarterback**

*Ohio State University*

Seldom does a player rise to the top of both the academic and athletic world like Craig Krenznel has. His 3.68 GPA in Molecular Genetics proves his academic prowess, and his leadership on the gridiron led Ohio State to their first National Championship in 32 years.

A Second Team Academic All-America in 2002, Krenznel received *The Sporting News* Socrates Academic Award and recorded a perfect 4.0 in four quarters. A three-time Academic All-BIG TEN Conference selection, he received the Ohio State Academic Achievement Award three times, Dean's List recognition six times and the Ohio State Exceptional Academic Award 11 times.

Under center, Krenznel led the Buckeyes to a perfect 14-0 season including a victory over top-ranked and defending national champion Miami in the 2003 Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, of which he was named Offensive MVP. A Second Team All-Conference pick, Krenznel compiled 2,478 yards of total offense in 2002, 5<sup>th</sup> best all-time at OSU. Named Archie Griffin Offensive Player of the Year and voted OSU's Co-MVP for the 2002 season, he ranks eighth all-time with over 3,300 career passing yards.

Named 2003 Team Captain, Krenznel is a frequent visitor to the James Cancer Hospital and Children's Hospital. A speaker at numerous engagements, he also volunteers at a local food pantry, charity fundraisers and during Right To Read Week.

## **Eli Manning**

### **Quarterback**

*University of Mississippi*

Following in a rich family tradition of quarterbacks with academic genius and athletic supremacy, Eli Manning has maintained a rigorous academic ledger while establishing himself as one of the nation's elite at his position.

A Second Team Academic All-America selection in 2002, Manning has earned Academic All-Southeastern Conference honors three times and First Team Academic All-District VI honors twice. Listed in *Who's Who Among American Universities and Colleges*, he is a member of the Chancellor's, Dean's and UMAA Honor Rolls.

A Second Team All-Conference pick in 2002, Manning is a two-time semifinalist for the Davey O'Brien Award (nation's top quarterback). Named All-America Honorable Mention in 2001 by *The Football News*, he holds 24 school records including single-season passing yards (3,401), career passing yards (8,600+) and career touchdown passes (65+). A preseason All-America in 2003, Manning leads the SEC in eight passing and total offense categories through seven games.

Very active in the community, Manning is a two-time member of the American Football Coaches Association's Good Works Team. Chairman for the 2003 Yocona Area Council Boy Scout Membership Drive, he has taped numerous "Stay In School" commercials for the NCAA and is a vital part of the "Reading with the Rebels" program.

## **Justin Napotnik**

### **Tailback**

*Thiel College (PA)*

Regarded as one of the elite scholar-athletes in Division III, Justin Napotnik continues to run over, through and around Thiel's opposition while sustaining a perfect academic record.

Despite enduring the rigors of a grueling schedule as a Biology / Pre-Medicine major, Napotnik has maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA and is a member of the Alpha Chi Honorary Fraternity. A three-time Academic All-Conference selection, he has been named to the Dean's List six times, two more and he will be awarded the prestigious golden "Dean Key."

A three-year starter, Napotnik was a Second Team All-Conference selection in 2002 and Honorable Mention in 2000. Last season, he compiled 632 yards and three touchdowns. Through six games in 2003, Napotnik is leading the team in rushing for the third straight year and needs only 54 yards to move into fifth place on Thiel's career rushing list. Having amassed more than 1,700 career yards, he had a 78-yard touchdown run in 2000, the second longest from scrimmage in school history.

A community leader, Napotnik is a member of the President's Athletic Conference Student-Athlete Advisory Council and serves as a director of a free youth football camp, which teaches children the basic fundamentals of how to play football. Involved in numerous community service projects, he spearheaded the adoption of a child in East India by the football team.

**Rodney Reed**  
**Offensive Tackle**  
*Louisiana State University*

A model of consistency, Rodney Reed has defined himself as an academic leader at Louisiana State University. On the field, Reed's consistency is proven in his streak of 36 consecutive starts at offensive tackle, sixth longest in the nation.

Possessing a 3.95 GPA in Accounting, Reed was a First Team Academic All-America selection in 2002 and a Second Team pick in 2001. A three-time Academic All-Southeastern Conference selection, he graduated with honors last May and is currently working towards his MBA at LSU. A four-time member of the President's List and two-time member of the Mortar Board, Reed is a member of the Omicron Delta Kappa and Beta Gamma Sigma National Honor Societies and was twice named LSU's Most Outstanding Student in the College of Business.

At 6'4," 280 lbs., Reed is in his fourth year as a starter for LSU and participated in a team-high 889 plays in 2002, allowing only four sacks and was called for just one penalty. In three years, Reed has helped lead the Tigers to three bowl games and an SEC title in 2001. In 2000, he was named to the Freshman All-Conference Team.

A member of the 2003 SEC Good Works Team, Reed is the founding member of the LSU Football Peer Leader Committee. A guest speaker at the 2002 Sugar Bowl Fellowship of Christian Athletes breakfast, he is a member of the LSU Fiscal Committee for Athletic Accreditation and regularly visits sick children at local hospitals.

**Dontarrious Thomas**  
**Linebacker**  
*Auburn University*

A dominating Southeastern Conference linebacker, Dontarrious Thomas has been equally as impressive in the Auburn University classroom.

A three-time Academic All-Conference Honor Roll selection, Thomas earned Academic All-America District III Second Team honors in 2002. Four-time recipient of the Auburn Athletic Department Top Tiger Award, he is a member of the Omicron Delta Kappa National Honor Society and is the recipient of the Arthur Ashe Scholar-Athlete Award. Having graduated with an undergraduate degree in Management last May, Thomas was a finalist for the SEC Boyd C. Whorter Student-Athlete of the Year Award in 2002.

A physical specimen at 6'4," 238 lbs., Thomas had 122 tackles and nine tackles for a loss in 2001 en route to Second Team All-Conference honors. Named 2003 Capital One Bowl Defensive MVP and Defensive Player of the Week once in 2001, he has amassed 300 career tackles, ranking him among the top 10 all-time at Auburn. Through eight games, he ranks second on the team with 48 tackles and is a member of the 2003 Butkus Award (nation's top linebacker) Watch List.

A devoted community member, Thomas volunteers his time with the March of Dimes, Toys for Tots and Read Across America programs. A guest speaker at junior high school banquets, he is also a member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

**Jonathan Vilma**  
**Linebacker**  
*University of Miami (FL)*

Terrorizing opposing quarterbacks, Miami's Jonathan Vilma has established himself as one of the nation's top linebackers. Off the field, his academics parallel few while his community involvement continues to grow.

A First Team Academic All-America and All-District III selection in 2002, Vilma is a member of the Provost's and Athletics Director's Honor Rolls and the UM Dean's List. A two-time Academic All-BIG EAST Conference pick, he has twice been named an Arthur Ashe Sports Scholar and received the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Walter Kichefski Football Scholarship Endowment Award, presented annually to the top scholar-athlete in the football program.

A two-time unanimous First Team All-Conference selection, Vilma has led the team in tackles in each of the last two seasons and was a Butkus Award (nation's top linebacker) semifinalist in 2002. Anchoring the Miami defense, Vilma has helped lead the team to a 42-2 record in his tenure, including the 2001 National Championship. A Bronko Nagurski Award (nation's top defensive player), Butkus Award, BIG EAST Defensive Player of the Year and First Team All-America candidate, he has amassed 250 career tackles and 20 tackles for a loss.

A motivational speaker at local schools, Vilma has participated in the Thanksgiving Dinner Delivery, Hall of Champions Dinner, Youth Football Clinic, Annual DARE Softball Game, Fireman Corporate Challenge and numerous other charitable events.

**Jason Whaley**  
**Offensive Lineman**  
*Western Carolina University (NC)*

Jason Whaley leads by example at Western Carolina University with his athletic prowess, academic excellence and community leadership.

A three-time Academic All-Conference Honor Roll member and two-time Academic All-America District III selection, Whaley was named to the Division I-AA Athletics Directors Association Academic All-Star Team in 2002. An eight-time Dean's List member, he is a member of the WCU Honors College, the Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society and was named Male Student-Athlete of the Year three consecutive years.

A Second Team All-Conference selection, Whaley was an integral part of an offensive line that gave up only 15 sacks in 370 pass attempts in 2002. Bolstering the line, his efforts helped WCU to lead the conference and rank 25<sup>th</sup> nationally in passing offense in 2002. Seeing action at both guard and tackle in his career, Whaley was named 2003 Preseason All-America by *Street & Smith's*.

Named 2003 Team Co-Captain, Whaley helped build a recreation park for area youth in Sylva, NC. Eager to visit children in various area hospitals, he has also prepared and served meals at The Community Table of Sylva, which provides free meals for people in need.

## **Daniel Woodburn**

### **Wide Receiver**

*Hastings College (NE)*

Perfection may best describe Hastings' Daniel Woodburn, a marquee receiver on the field and one of the academic elite in the classroom.

A Business major from Curtis, Nebraska, Woodburn possesses a perfect 4.0 GPA and was named NAIA First Team All-America in 2002. Regularly appearing on the Dean's List, he is a member of both the Alpha Chi and Omicron Delta Epsilon National Honor Societies.

One of the top receivers in the NAIA, Woodburn earned Second Team All-America and First Team All-Conference recognition in 2002. Breaking the school's all-time single-season record for receiving yards, he caught 45 passes for 1,091 yards and 12 touchdowns in 2002. His receiving yards were the nation's third best and led the Great Plains Athletic Conference along with receiving yards per game, average yards per catch and touchdown receptions.

Named Team Captain for 2003, Woodburn participates in the Teammates Mentoring Program at Hastings College and is very active in a number of community charitable efforts.

## **Renaldo Works**

### **Running Back**

*University of Oklahoma*

In the classroom, Renaldo Works is a mold of consistency. On the football field, he continues to compile impressive rushing numbers in hopes of guiding the #1 ranked Oklahoma Sooners to a 2003 National Championship.

A three-time Academic All-Conference pick and two-time Academic All-America District IV selection, Works was named the 2003 Athletics Council Outstanding Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Regularly appearing on the Dean's List, Works is a six-time member of the BIG 12 Commissioner's Honor Roll, six-time Sooner Scholar and a member of the President's Honor Roll.

A leader of the Oklahoma offense that has guided the Sooners to a perfect 8-0 season start and a #1 national ranking, Works leads the team in rushing yards and touchdowns. The hero of a win over Alabama in 2002, he gained 62 yards on a pair of shovel passes to set-up the game winning touchdown with just over a minute left to play. Named Freshman All-America Honorable Mention in 2000, Works has amassed over 1,400 rushing yards and 20 touchdowns in his career.

Always active in the community, Works participated in a fundraiser for firemen from New York following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. An elementary school mentor, he participates in the Sooner Housing Center Safe Trick or Treat program and helps out at canned food drives at local shelters.

*With 119 chapters and over 13,000 members nationwide, The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame, a non-profit educational organization, runs programs designed to use the power of amateur football in developing scholarship, citizenship and athletic achievement in America's young people. NFF programs include the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Ind., PLAY IT SMART, The NFF Center for Youth Development Through Sport at Springfield College (Mass.), the NFL-NFF Coaching Academy, and scholarships of nearly \$1 million for College and High School Scholar-Athletes.*