



# THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ATHLETES

A 501 c 3 Non-Profit Organization

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### African American Scholar-Athletes Receive Top Honors

Washington, DC (January 3, 2024) – On **Saturday, March 2, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.**, the National Alliance of African American Athletes (The Alliance) will recognize another stellar group of high school athletes from across the nation for the **Franklin D. Watkins Memorial Award**. The award is presented each year to the nation's top African American male high school scholar-athletes.

The Five 2024 Watkins Recipients in alphabetical order are:

- \* **Khalil (KJ) Bolden**, Buford, GA, Buford High School – 3.6 GPA: National Honor Society, Honor Roll, Key Club Volunteer, Buford Leadership Council Volunteer, Diversity Club Volunteer, Volunteer for The Hope Club in Georgia, Member of the Beta Club, 1<sup>st</sup> Team Touchdown Club, Ranked Top 20 Recruit Nationally, 2X Georgia State Football Champion, 2X Georgia State Track Champion, Gold Medal in 100 Meter, Gold Medal in triple & long jump, 4X MaxPreps All American, and 3X Georgia All-State Football Athlete, and Army All American.
- \* **Christopher Cole**, Salem, VA, Salem High School – 3.9 GPA: National Honor Society, 4 Year Honor Roll, Member of the Salem African American Club, GW Carver Elementary School Mentor, Special Olympics Volunteer, Community Outreach Volunteer, Coat Giveaway Volunteer, Basketball National Champion, 4<sup>th</sup> in the Nation 55 Meter Hurdles, Virginia First Team All-Region, ESPN & Rivals Top 50 Player in the Nation, Tom Lemming Report All American, High School Butkus Award Semi-finalist, Under Armour Camp Baltimore Linebacker MVP, Rivals Camp Series Linebacker MVP, Game Day Series Game MVP, Virginia State Champion, Virginia First Team All-State, #1 Football Player in Virginia, #3 Linebacker in the Nation, and Under Armour All American.
- \* **Colin Simmons**, Duncanville, TX, Duncanville, High School – 3.6 GPA: National Honor Society, A/B Honor Roll, Volunteer for Juneteenth Festival, Volunteer to feed the Hungry at Farmer's Market, Volunteer for Back to School Festival providing supplies to Youth, Intern for Oakcliff Non-Profit, MVO Bobble Head Winner, Basketball State Champion, Dallas Morning News Defensive Player of the Year, #1 Defensive Edge Rusher Nationally, #3 Player in the Nation, 2 Time Football State Champion, 2 Time Defensive MVP, Texas Defensive Player of the Year, MaxPreps All American, and Under Armour All American.
- \* **David Stone**, Oklahoma City, OK, IMG Academy – 3.3 GPA: National Honors Society, 4 Year Honor Roll Achiever, Youth Mentor OKC Trojans, Volunteer for Special Olympics, Volunteer IMG Math and Science Tutor, Volunteer for Oklahoma Food Bank, Oklahoma Skyline Volunteer, Organized the OKC Black Male Summit, ESPN Battle of the Beach MVP, MaxPreps Florida All State, Rivals Miami MVP, ESPN 300 Elite, MaxPreps First Team All American, #3 Recruit in Florida, #7 Recruit in the Nation, #2 Defensive Lineman in the Nation, Highest Ranked Player in Oklahoma History and Under Armour All American.
- \* **Taylor Tatum**, Longview, TX, Longview High School – 3.8 GPA: National Honors Society, Kicks for Kids Volunteer, Lobo Special Olympics Volunteer, Trent Williams Silverback Camp Volunteer, Longview Parks and Rec Camp Volunteer, 3X Hank Aaron Invitational, 1<sup>st</sup> Team All District Outfielder, New Balance Future Baseball Star Elite, 200 Meter State Finalist, Texas District MVP, MaxPreps First Team All-State, #10 Recruit in Texas, #48 Recruit in the Nation, MaxPreps First Team All American, Whataburger Super Team, Rivals #1 RB Nationally and Army All American.

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**“Empowerment Through Education and Athletics”**



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## **The Watkins Award ceremony will be held at the Washington DC Hilton**

"This year's 2024 Watkins Award features an incredible collection of fine student-athletes," Everette Pearsall, Executive Director of The Alliance, shares. "Each of these young men is well equipped for success academically. We have continued to recognize and honor the premier African American Scholar-Athletes in the United States."

Watkins Recipients are chosen based on their unweighted grade point average, their personal statements, extracurricular activities, community service, and letters of recommendation. Each winner will be recognized in the Washington, DC, area, and each will receive an award, ring, and dinner in his hometown.

Sponsors and supporters of this year's event include: Under Armour, JMA Solutions, Pacific Club Impact Foundation, Iconic Plumbing, Peoples Community Foundation, Dell Giving, Profusion, Gary McPherson Financial, and Jostens, manufacturer of the Watkins Award trophy and rings. Media representatives are invited to cover the awards ceremony. For more information about the Watkins Award, The Alliance, or to get tickets for the awards ceremony visit our website at [www.naaaa.com](http://www.naaaa.com) or email [everette@naaaa.com](mailto:everette@naaaa.com)

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The Watkins Award has been presented annually to African American scholar-athletes since 1992. The Watkins Award is named for Franklin D. Watkins, the coach of championship football and basketball teams in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Previous award winners include Heisman Trophy winner Jameis Winston of New Orleans Saints, Rhodes Scholar Myron Rolle, Justin Blalock, formerly of the Atlanta Falcons, Gerald McCoy, 6-time Pro Bowler and 12 –year NFL Alumnus, Nakobe Dean of the Philadelphia Eagles, and Butkus Award Winner, Heisman Trophy finalists Dwayne Haskins and Bryce Love. Arrelius Benn, formerly of the Jacksonville Jaguars, Ted Ginn, Jr. a 14 year NFL Alumnus, Devin White of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Lorenzo Alexander, a 15 year NFL Alumnus, Mercedes Lewis of the Chicago Bears, Darnell Dinkins, an 8-year NFL Alumnus and Super Bowl Champion with the New Orleans Saints, LaVar Arrington, a 7-year NFL Alumnus, and Ronald Curry, an 8-year NFL Alumnus, to name a few. The full roster of past Watkins recipients can be found at [www.naaaa.com/classbook](http://www.naaaa.com/classbook)

The National Alliance of African American Athletes was founded in 1989. The mission of The Alliance is to empower African American males through athletics, education, and public programs. The mentoring program and the Watkins Award for high school male African American Athletes are the cornerstones of our programs. The NAAAA works to improve academic success and elevate thousands of youths. The Watkins Award program has enabled the NAAAA to mentor young people as they navigate the amateur, high school, collegiate, and professional athletics. The NAAAA's SAT prep program has served over 25,000 students of all backgrounds in over 25 cities. The Teen Summits have impacted thousands of youth in cities and opened students' eyes to the academic and industry opportunities available.

**“Empowerment Through Education and Athletics”**