



**NATION'S TOP HIGH SCHOOL MALE SCHOLAR-ATHLETES HONORED
AT 32ND ANNUAL WATKINS AWARD GALA**
*University of Georgia recruit Christopher Cole, from Salem, Virginia,
named Watkins Class of 2024 Standard Bearer*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sunday, March 3, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Alliance of African American Athletes honored the five members of the Watkins Award Class of 2024 on Saturday night, recognizing them as the nation's top African American male high school scholar-athletes at the 32nd annual Watkins Award Gala on Saturday night.

Christopher Cole, a linebacker from Salem, Va., who has enrolled at the University of Georgia, was named the Standard Bearer for this year's class.

"This truly is an honor," Cole said to a rousing ovation. "I just want to keep giving back to my community and being a role model to Black young men. I'm going to major in sports medicine – I want to show that Black men can be in medicine too, that I'm not just an athlete but a student and a Black young man too."

"It all starts with your character. How you greet people and how you treat people."

Cole's honor capped a memorable weekend for the five winners in this year's class. Cole was joined for the weekend by fellow Georgia early enrollee Khalil Bolden of Buford, Ga.; Colin Simmons of Duncanville, Texas, who has enrolled at the University of Texas; David Stone of Oklahoma City who has enrolled at the University of Oklahoma; and Taylor Tatum of Longview, Texas, who also is a standout baseball player and has signed a letter-of-intent to join Stone at Oklahoma.

The group's itinerary included trips to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, Washington Monument and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, as well as a visit to Under Armour headquarters in Baltimore.

The five winners of this year's Watkins Award were selected based on their unweighted grade-point average, personal statements, extracurricular activities, community service and letters of recommendation.

"When I talk about being a Watkins man, I talk about a man who has done much more off the field than he has on the field," said J. Everette Pearsall, Executive Director of The Alliance.

Former NFL cornerback and NFL Players Association President Domonique Foxworth, now a media personality, delivered the keynote address.

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ATHLETES

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

www.naaaa.com



“I don’t have all the answers and though everyone who has spoken to you has given you great advice, they don’t have all the answers and you don’t either,” Foxworth told this year’s Watkins winners. “You’re going to have change in your life and you should embrace that. With talented Black men, the world is going to tell you to be humble but I’m a cornerback – I’m going to tell you to be cocky. You can be humble and you can be confident. ... The reason I’ve had my successes are because I was confident in myself. ... I’ll leave you with this: Keep learning, keep growing and stay cocky.”

Jan Adams, co-founder and chief executive officer of JMA Solutions, was honored with the Sharon Love Community Service Award for her dedication and commitment to helping others.

“I’m so excited to see all the giving back that the young people are doing,” said Adams, who served in the U.S. Army for 24 years before embarking on a business career. “Keep giving back, that’s all I have to say. Keep giving back.”

Josh Dobbs, a member of the Watkins Class of 2012 and a quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, was honored as the Watkins Man of the Year for his success on the field and in the community.

Each member of the Watkins Class of 2024 receives an award, ring and dinner in his hometown. Sponsors of the Watkins Award include Major Sponsor Under Armour; JMA Solutions; Pacific Club Impact Foundation; Peoples Community Foundation; Dell Giving; ProFusion; Gary McPherson Financial; Events DC; Destination DC; Kings Watch and Jewelry; ConferenceDirect; Washington Hilton; and Jostens Corporation, manufacturer of the Watkins Award trophy and rings.

CONTACT: Josh Barr, joshbarr4520@gmail.com

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE AND THE FRANKLIN D WATKINS MEMORIAL AWARD

The National Alliance of African American Athletes was founded in 1989 and its mission is to empower African American males through athletics, education and public programs. Since 1992, The Alliance has annually presented the Watkins Award to the nation’s elite high school student-athletes. The award is named for the late Franklin D. Watkins, who coached championship football and basketball teams in Harrisburg, Pa. Past winners include Heisman Trophy winner Jameis Winston and Rhodes Scholar Myron Rolle, as well as several others who went on to play in the NFL.

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ATHLETES

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

www.naaaa.com