



PRESS RELEASE

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2011 HENDRICKS AWARD FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

Chicago, IL –The Ted Hendricks Foundation is pleased to announce the finalists for the 2011 Ted Hendricks Defensive End of the Year Award. Twenty two players received votes in the preliminary round this season. Six have advanced to the final ballot.

This year's finalists are as follows:

FRANK ALEXANDER - OKLAHOMA

6'4" 255 lbs SR

Alexander is a senior from Baton Rouge, LA (Southern Lab School). Overall this season, he has been the most active player on the Sooner defense, recording 51 tackles, 18 tackles-for-loss, an interception, 7 hurries, 6 passes broken up and 3 forced fumbles. Alexander's Big 12-leading 8.5 sacks this season give him a career total of 20.5, which ranks seventh in OU history. His season highlight came in the Texas game, when he recorded 6 tackles, 3 sacks and forced a fumble.

ANDRE BRANCH - CLEMSON

6'5" 260 lbs SR

Branch leads the ACC in sacks with 10.5 (10th in NCAA) and tackles-for-loss with 16. His 72 tackles ranks 2nd on the Tigers defense this season. If he records 2 more tackles than safety Rashard Hall in this weekend's ACC championship game, Branch will become the first defensive lineman to lead the team in tackles since William Perry in 1984. He collected ACC Player of the Week honors on October 1, when he recorded 11 tackles, 4 sacks and 6 tackles-for-loss against nationally ranked Virginia Tech. Branch is a 2011 first-team All ACC selection.

VINNY CURRY - MARSHALL

6'4" 263 lbs SR

Curry, a senior from Neptune, NJ (Harmony Community HS), finished his Conference USA career with a flourish last week. He led the Herd to bowl eligibility with his 10-tackle performance in the overtime win over a tough East Carolina squad. On the season, Curry has recorded 72 tackles, 11 sacks, 21 tackles-for-loss, 6 forced fumbles, 8 hurries and 3 blocked kicks. He was named the Nagurski National Defensive Player of the week for his 3.5 sack performance against Rice on October 15. Curry has also been invited to the 2012 Senior Bowl.

WHITNEY MERCILUS - ILLINOIS

6'4" 265 lbs JR

After recording just 24 tackles in his first two seasons, Mercilus enjoyed a breakout season for the Illini in 2011. The Junior from Akron, Ohio (Garfield HS) leads the NCAA (FBS) in sacks with 14.5 and forced fumbles with 9. Mercilus is also tied for 7th in tackles-for-loss (19.5). The 9 forced fumbles is a new Big Ten record and is just one shy of the top NCAA mark. His season highlight came against Ohio State, when he recorded 9 tackles and 1.5 sacks. Mercilus is also a finalist for the Nagurski Trophy and was a semifinalist for the Bednarik and Lombardi Awards. He was selected to the 2011 All-Big Ten first team this week.

SAM MONTGOMERY - LSU

6'4" 245 lbs SO

The sophomore from Greenwood, SC nearly chose to play basketball and football at North Carolina, after being a teenage club teammate of former Kentucky basketball guard John Wall. Montgomery was twice selected the SEC Defensive Lineman of the Week this season. His 2011 totals include 41 tackles, 8 sacks, 12 tackles-for-loss and a forced fumble. Returned to play in all 12 games this season, after suffering a season-ending knee injury in 2010.

NICK PERRY - USC

6'3" 250 lbs JR

Perry leads the Pac-12 in sacks with 9.5 and finished his junior season with 54 tackles, 13 tackles-for-loss, 3 passes broken up and 3 forced fumbles. He is a 2011 first-team All Pac-12 selection. Known for being USC's quickest defensive lineman, Perry began his career as a pass-rush specialist and grew into his role as starter his sophomore year. His highlight game this season came against Arizona, when he recorded 10 tackles and a sack.

The final vote for 2011 Hendricks Award will be concluded on December 6th, and the winner will be announced December 7th. This year's winner will be honored at the Hendricks Award Dinner in the spring of 2012 in Miami, FL. Time and place are to be determined.

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