

# Donald, Kelce unanimous AP All-Pros; Rodgers, Henry chosen

By **BARRY WILNER**  
AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK — Dynamic defensive star Aaron Donald and unstoppable tight end Travis Kelce were unanimous choices Friday, Jan. 8, for The Associated Press NFL All-Pro Team.

Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers was selected for the third time, finishing ahead of Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes in voting from a nationwide panel of 50 media members who regularly cover the league. Last season's Super Bowl MVP shared second-team honors with Josh Allen of Buffalo.

Tennessee running back Derrick Henry, who ran for 2,027 yards to win his second consecutive rushing title, was named All-Pro for the first time after leading the AFC South champion Titans to their first division title in 12 years.

"Very consistent, very durable, very impressive," coach Mike Vrabel said of the NFL's first winner of back-to-back rushing titles since Hall of Famer LaDainian Tomlinson in 2006-07.

Donald, who has helped the Los Angeles Rams to the top-ranked defense in the NFL, earned his sixth All-Pro selection. It was the third for Kansas City's record-setting Kelce.

"I think the best display of greatness is making people around you better," Rams coach Sean McVay said of Donald. "And that's exactly what he does, by the way he influences them every single week."

Mahomes lauded Kelce for the way he approaches his job.



Stephen Brashear/Associated Press, File

**Los Angeles Rams defensive lineman Aaron Donald sacks Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson during the second half of an NFL football game in Seattle on Dec. 27, 2020. Donald was selected on Friday, Jan. 8, 2021, to The Associated Press All-Pro Team.**

"For a guy to have that much talent, work that hard and be able to learn really every single day like that, that's what makes him so special on the field," Mahomes said.

Joining Donald and Kelce were 15 players returning to the squad, and 14 newcomers. Seattle linebacker Bobby Wagner also made his sixth squad.

"The marvelous durability that he's demonstrated for middle linebacker after all these years is just off the charts," Seahawks coach Pete

Carroll said.

Kansas City receiver Tyreek Hill is now a three-time All-Pro along with Rodgers, among the favorites to win MVP after guiding the Packers (13-3) to the top seed in the NFC.

Joining Henry as first-time choices among skill players were Buffalo wide-out Stefon Diggs, who led the NFL in catches and yards receiving, and Rodgers' favorite target, Davante Adams.

"For me, honestly, I think it's just been finding differ-

ent small things that I can get better at," Adams says. "I feel like I'm a pretty complete receiver. ... It's just fine-tuning the things I do well and just figuring out a way to do them even better."

Diggs was traded by Minnesota to Buffalo in the offseason and made a huge impact as the Bills won their first AFC East title in 25 years.

"For me, it was just in whatever situation I was going to be put in or chosen in, I was just going to embrace," said Diggs, who

finished the regular season with 127 catches for 1,535 yards and eight touchdowns.

The Packers and Colts led all teams with four All-Pro apiece. Green Bay left tackle David Bakhtiari, who is out for the playoffs after injuring a knee in practice during the final week of the regular season, made it for the second time. Center Corey Linsley was a first-time selection.

Indianapolis has interior lineman DeForest Buckner and linebacker Darius Leonard on the defense, left guard Quenton Nelson on offense,

and George Odum as the special teamer. Nelson is a three-time All-Pro, Leonard a double selection, while Buckner and Odum made it for the first time.

Rounding out the offense were Cleveland right tackle Jack Conklin (second selection), and Washington right guard Brandon Scherff (first).

Also on defense were edge rushers T.J. Watt, the NFL's sacks leader for Pittsburgh who is on his second All-Pro Team, and newcomer Myles Garrett of Cleveland; San Francisco linebacker Fred Warner (first selection); cornerbacks Xavien Howard (first) of Miami, the league's interception leader, and Jalen Ramsey (second) of the Rams; and safeties Tyrann Mathieu (third) of Kansas City, Minkah Fitzpatrick of Pittsburgh and Budda Baker of Arizona, both for the second time. There was a tie between Fitzpatrick and Baker for the second safety spot.

The long snapper position is new to the All-Pro Team in 2020, and Baltimore's Morgan Cox was the choice. Chicago kick returner Cordarrelle Patterson made it for the fourth time. The rest of the special teams positions were newcomers: Miami kicker Jason Sanders, New England punter Jake Bailey and punt returner Gunner Olszewski.

Repeaters from 2019 were Donald, Wagner, Nelson, Watt, Fitzpatrick, Mathieu and Patterson.

In all, 18 players represent the AFC, which is considered the stronger conference this season, and 11 for the NFC. Exactly half of the 32 clubs have a 2020 All-Pro.

## Almost home: No. 1 Stanford women top No. 11 Oregon 70-63

By **JANIE MCCAULEY**  
Associated Press

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. — Down three key players who are quarantined and road weary, No. 1 Stanford needed every defensive stop down the stretch.

Haley Jones returned to her hometown and had 18 points and six rebounds, and No. 1 Stanford beat No. 11 Oregon 70-63 on Friday, Jan. 8. The Cardinal was playing in Northern California for the first time in nearly a month.

Francesca Belibi's three-point play with 17 seconds remaining in the third capped a second decisive 9-0 run that period by the short-handed Cardinal (10-0, 7-0 Pac-12).

"It just meant a lot to me and the team," senior Anna Wilson said. "It's amazing to be down three people — three important people, too, whether it's a leader, a scorer, a 3-point shooter, rebounder — to not have those big pieces and understand that our team is playing for them and just how close our team is."

The game was played at Kaiser Permanente Arena, home of the Golden State Warriors' G League affiliate. Stanford played in Northern California for the first time since a win at rival California in Berkeley on Dec. 13, 2020, and the Cardinal haven't been able to play or practice on campus since Santa Clara County's restrictions on sports came down Nov. 28, 2020, and the team left town Dec. 2, 2020.

Stanford's run spanning the final two quarters reached 13-0 before Sydney Parrish's three-point play at 7:48 of the fourth. Parrish finished with 14 points.

Oregon (8-2, 6-2) lost again after it fell out of the top-10 with a home defeat to UCLA that ended the Ducks' nation's best 27-game winning streak. The Ducks had won the past three with Stanford but have never beaten a top-ranked team.

Maddie Scherr swished a long 3 at the first-quarter buzzer for a 20-16 Oregon

lead, and the Cardinal trailed at halftime for the first time all season, down 33-32.

The Ducks lost for just the second time in the last seven meetings in the series after beating the Cardinal three times in 2019-20 — including an 89-56 rout in the Pac-12 tournament title game — but Oregon has never won four in a row against Stanford.

"I'm disappointed, quite frankly," Oregon coach Kelly Graves said. "I'm proud of the players for how we continued to battle. But I'm disappointed we lost the game. We've won this conference three times in a row. We expect to win."

Oregon junior transfer Taylor Mikesell was held to six points on 3-for-12 shooting and missed all three of her 3-point attempts.

Jones, the Pac-12 rebounding leader, also had two of her team's six steals. Senior point guard Kiana Williams struggled with her shot to finish 3 of 13 for 13 points, missing all six from deep, but converted 8 of 9 free throws.

Wilson added 11 points and nine rebounds for the Cardinal, who committed 17 turnovers.

"That was the thing I was most disappointed about. We were too careless with the ball," coach Tara VanDerveer said.

### Short-handed

Stanford announced it was without three players because of COVID-19 protocols and contact tracing following the Sunday, Jan. 3, game at Arizona State.

Guards Lexie Hull and Hannah Jump and forward Alyssa Jerome were the three not on the bench or the court. The hope is they will return for practice next week and game next Friday, Jan. 15, at Utah.

"They're doing very well," VanDerveer said.

The Cardinal will remain in Santa Cruz through a practice Sunday, Jan. 10, then stay in San Mateo before departing Wednesday, Jan. 13, for Salt Lake City.

## Signing: Nichols currently has a 4.0 GPA

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Conference play.

Heppner lost in the first round of the state playoffs to eventual state champion Kennedy.

As the basketball season came to a close, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools and sports. It was supposed to be for two weeks.

"In March, we were still training like we were going to have a season," Nichols said. "Then it was gone. I kept running. I took a little time off, then started preparing for cross-country."

In October, Nichols competed in a race in Tillamook for her club team. Each heat consisted only of runners from each club, boys and girls combined.

"It was kind of odd," Nichols said.

Nichols took another break until December, but instead of hitting the road, it was the treadmill because of the weather.

Hunter will be her teammate at EOU, but at home, Nichols said running with her brother is not much of an option.

"I'm not in shape like him," she said. "He will run



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

**Madelyn Nichols nears the finish line of the 2019 3A/2A/1A girls district cross-country championships at Community Park in Pendleton in November 2019.**

20 miles."

Her parents, Russ and Toni Nichols, coach the

Heppner cross-country and track teams. They both ran at Centennial High School in

Gresham, but not in college. Nichols said running with her dad is worse than with her older brother.

"My dad runs those crazy ultra-marathon 100-mile races," she said.

### Finding the good

Nichols has a 4.0 GPA and will graduate in the spring with about 50 college credits. She would like to major in molecular biology.

"I've thought about being a doctor or a (physician assistant)," she said. "There is less schooling being a PA."

When school and running aren't consuming her time, Nichols has been putting her energy into DIY projects.

"I have school from 8 a.m. to noon and I really can't hang out with friends," she said. "I've redone my room five times, but I like to refurbish furniture. I'm teaching myself."

Hunter has been the recipient of one of her creations.

"When my brother moved into his house in La Grande, he needed a table," Nichols said. "A lady in Heppner had a free one and I redid it. It's getting plenty of use from dinner, card tournaments and pingpong."

## CCC:

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but this is far from his focus. He is excited by what he sees on the horizon for the CCC in the short term and long term. He is hopeful, for example, that men's and women's basketball will be able to start up in March or April.

Cashell also said he feels optimistic about the outlook for CCC's baseball program, especially because Eastern Oregon University reinstated its program after cutting it in 2005 because of financial problems. The addition means the CCC will have a six-team baseball league when collegiate action begins again. The presence of a CCC baseball league, which requires a minimum of six members, will give teams the opportunity to win an automatic post-season playoff berth, Cashell said.

Previously the schools

with baseball in the CCC were part of an NAIA West division. It was composed of teams from the CCC and the Frontier Conference and offered no automatic bids for NAIA post-season play to teams based on their records.

Cashell also said he is enthusiastic about the possible addition of CCC lacrosse leagues for men and women in the near future. Five schools in the CCC have added or will be adding the sport, including EOU, which launched a women's lacrosse program in 2019. Eastern's team was scheduled to begin play in 2021 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"We are paying close attention to men's and women's lacrosse. It is trending in the right direction, so we may be adding it in the future," he said.

Cashell served as the athletic director for the University of Montana Western before coming to Eastern in 2001. He said experience

as an athletic director is vital preparation for becoming a commissioner. He said the positions are involved in many of the same tasks, including scheduling. Cashell — who was named the CCC's athletic director of the year for 2007-08 and 2009-10 — said he enjoys taking on the challenges this work poses.

"I'm pretty organized. Attention to detail comes naturally," he explained.

He said as CCC commissioner he works with just about everybody who comes into contact with athletics at the college and university level, including sports information directors, presidents and registrars, just as he did as an athletic director.

"The difference is now I'm working with 23 schools instead of one," he said.

Cashell said he finds his job fulfilling because it gives him the opportunity to provide meaningful opportunities for student athletes.

"This is my passion,"

he said

This passion ties in with the philosophy of the NAIA, which focuses on developing and providing opportunities for the student athletes, which drew Cashell to the collegiate athletic organization years ago.

"I am an NAIA guy and will always continue to be one," Cashell said.

He said it is easier to work in Corvallis as CCC commissioner because he is closer to more member schools and transportation hubs, including airports. His wife, Heather, who previously worked at EOU, is now the executive assistant for Oregon State University's general counsel, and their daughter, Elizabeth, is a junior at Oregon State.

Cashell said and his family members always will have a warm place in their hearts for La Grande.

"We love La Grande," he said. "It is a wonderful place and is filled with wonderful people."