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AP Officially Enshrined in CFB Hall of Fame

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NEW YORK - For a guy with a blue collar work ethic, a black-tie affair probably seemed like an odd way to celebrate Adrian Peterson's greatness, but nonetheless, Peterson took his rightful place in the College Football Hall of Fame this week. The New York Hilton Midtown's Grand Ballroom played host to Peterson and an all-star cast of history's greatest football legends and the sport's most promising student-athletes during the 60th National Football Foundation (NFF) Annual Awards Dinner Tuesday night.

A celebrity-laden College Football Hall of Fame class took center stage at the event during their formal induction, and 13 of the game's current-leading student-athletes collected $241,000 in postgraduate scholarships as NFF National Scholar-Athletes. The festivities began with the announcement of Virginia's Micah Kiser as the recipient of the 28th William V. Campbell Trophy®, presented by Fidelity Investments, as the top football scholar-athlete in the nation, and the evening culminated with powerful speeches from Hall of Fame inductees Peyton Manning and Coach Steve Spurrier, responding on behalf of the 2017 class.
A packed house of 1,600, including more than 80 current collegiate head coaches and 40 returning Hall of Famers attended the event, which took place at its new venue after a 58-year stint at the Waldorf Astoria. ESPN's Joe Tessitore entertained the crowd as the emcee for the annual celebration, which lived up to its historic role of bringing the college football community together at the end of the regular season to pay tribute to the game and its greatest legends.

Peterson's No. 3 jersey is retired at Georgia Southern and he still stands as the NCAA's Division I all-time leading rusher with 6,559 yards in regular-season contests. He is already a member of GS's Athletics Hall of Fame and was a four-time All-American for the Eagles. The Alachua, Florida, native was the first sophomore to win the Walter Payton Award, given to the top player in the FCS. He rushed for 100 or more yards in 48 consecutive games and at the time of graduation, held 30 school and playoff records. He was a sixth-round draft choice of the Chicago Bears in 2002 and was a Super Bowl XLI participant.

The 2017 class was introduced by NFF Board Member Archie Griffin, a Hall of Fame running back from Ohio State. Members of the class included Bob Crable (Notre Dame), Marshall Faulk (San Diego State), Kirk Gibson (Michigan State), Matt Leinart (Southern California), Peyton Manning (Tennessee), Bob McKay (Texas), Dat Nguyen (Texas A&M), Adrian Peterson (Georgia Southern), Mike Ruth (Boston College), Brian Urlacher (New Mexico) and coaches Danny Ford (Clemson, Arkansas), Larry Kehres (Mount Union [Ohio]) and Steve Spurrier (Duke, Florida, South Carolina). NFF Chairman and Hall of Fame inductee Archie Manning (Mississippi) conducted the Official Hall of Fame Ring Ceremony.

Peterson was inducted as a member of the inaugural SoCon Hall of Fame class in 2009 and was a unanimous choice for induction into Georgia Southern Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2012 in his first year of eligibility.

He is well known for his charity work and advocacy of the importance of education. He has dedicated his life to motivational speaking and working with multiple charities.

Peterson joins fellow Georgia Southern star Tracy Ham as the only two Eagles enshrined in Atlanta. They are also the only two Georgia Southern football players to have their jersey numbers retired.

The 10 players and three coaches bring the total number of players in the Hall of Fame to 987 and the number of coaches in the Hall to 214. Spurrier, just the fourth person ever to be inducted into the Hall as both a player and coach, responded on behalf of the 2017 College Football Hall of Fame coaches and touched on how important the honor is to all of the coaches.

Peyton Manning, Tennessee's all-time leading passed and just the second Campbell Trophy® winner to join the Hall of Fame, delivered the response on behalf of the 2017 College Football Hall of Fame players. Manning touched on the great honor of the Hall, his personal story of attending his father, NFF Chairman Archie Manning's induction as a kid and had personalized messages for each of his fellow inductees. Peyton ended his speech with a message about the importance of the game of football.

The 2017 College Football Hall of Fame Class boasted 10 First Team All-Americans, three coaches, one Campbell Trophy® winner, three unanimous First Team All-Americans, seven consensus First Team All-Americans, five winners of college football major awards, one coach with the highest winning percentage in college football history, the youngest coach to ever win a national title and just the fourth individual to enter the Hall as both a player and a coach.