



THE
**COLLEGIATE WOMEN
SPORTS AWARDS**
PRESENTED BY **HONDA**



Class of 2021 Honda Inspiration Award Finalists Announced

(May 21, 2021) – Senior Camryn Hidalgo from Georgia Tech, redshirt sophomore Asjia O’Neil of the University of Texas and Baylor University senior DiDi Richards are named finalists for the Honda Inspiration Award as announced by Judy Sweet, CWSA Board Member and Chair of The Collegiate Women Sports Awards (CWSA) Inspiration Award committee.

The Honda Inspiration Award winner for the Class of 2021 will be selected from these three finalists by the CWSA Board of Directors and honored with the Class of 2021. On Tuesday, June 22 at 8pm ET, CBS Sports Network will air *Defying the Odds: The 2020 & 2021 Honda Inspiration Award* – a special telecast highlighting the three finalists as well as Jazzy Richards, the 2020 Inspiration Award winner.

Chris Voelz, Executive Director of the CWSA. Stated: "One of the most special awards of the CWSA awards program is the Honda Inspiration Award. After the Inspiration Committee reviews all the applications, it is one of the most significant votes we take as a Board of Directors. We are never disappointed in the finalists who each exude special courage in overcoming adversity and represent themselves and institutions so admirably as they inspire us each day. This year is no exception. We are abundantly grateful that their stories can be shared nationwide on CBS Sports Network."

An Inspiration Award winner has been selected annually for the past 33 years. The Honda Inspiration Award is given to a deserving female student-athlete in Division I, II or III who has experienced extraordinary physical and/or emotional adversity, injury and/or illness, or experienced extraordinary personal sacrifice during her college enrollment as a student-athlete and yet returns to athletic success.

"Each of the nominees for the 2021 Inspiration Award had a truly inspiring story making the selection of three finalists very difficult. The selected three finalists were especially inspiring in their strength, resiliency, determination and success in overcoming significant injuries and health challenges," said Sweet.

Camryn Hidalgo, Senior, Georgia Tech, Diving

Hidalgo arrived for her freshman season at Georgia Tech in 2017 as a highly ranked recruit and put together a strong inaugural season. In February of 2018, Camryn was set to make her debut at the ACC Championships to continue her successful freshman season that included setting school records and qualifying for NAAs. However, on the first day of practice in Greensboro, N.C., Camryn suffered a season-ending injury.

While getting set to practice one of her "1.5 – "1.5 dives, Camryn left the board, flipped and hit her head directly on the diving board, causing a severe injury. The collision caused a massive laceration along her eye, forehead and extended up into her scalp. After she was treated on site by local EMS and the team’s athletic trainer, Hidalgo was taken to the local hospital where she was evaluated.

That night, she underwent surgery, needing 12 staples and so many stitches that the doctors lost count after 60, and was diagnosed with a serious concussion. Her concussion caused difficulties in the classroom and completing day-to-day activities. Hidalgo attended therapy sessions twice a week, while also doing at-home exercises to help her recover. While she was not mentally blocked or fearful of diving again, her body responded as if she was, and she had to "retrain" her body to perform at a high level again. Hidalgo suffered two more concussions in subsequent years but had a record setting diving career.

Asjia O’Neil, Redshirt Sophomore, University of Texas, Volleyball, Middle Blocker

O’Neil underwent her second open heart surgery in January 2020 after undergoing a first surgery when she was just 12 years old in 2013. O’Neil's surgery was the result of a leak in her mitral valve. She was born with a heart murmur and a slight leak in her mitral valve.

O'Neal first received the news that she would need a second surgery in November 2019, while the Texas Volleyball team was closing out a Big 12 Co-Championship season. She helped the Longhorns earn a No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament, was named to the Big 12 All-Rookie Team and completed the season knowing she would have surgery in January.

From the first moments post-op, O'Neal was intensely focused on each step of her recovery. Starting with simply sitting up in her hospital bed, to taking her first steps around her room and then to taking laps around the hospital floor, she was motivated to improve every day. The surgery, which lasted more than eight hours, was successful and there was no more leakage.

DiDi Richards, Senior, Baylor University, Basketball, Guard

Richards suffered temporary paralysis in a collision with teammate, Moon Ursin, on October 24, 2020 in a scrimmage in Waco. In what was later diagnosed as a SCIWORA - Spinal Cord Injury Without Radioactive Abnormality, Richards lost feeling below her hips for nearly 16 hours.

As a shock to her spinal cord and nervous system, Richards visited a myriad of specialists, doctors and medical professionals. She progressed from walker, to walking, to rehabbing, to resuming basketball activities. Her rehab was extensive and intense, but she made progress daily.

Thirty-eight days following the collision, she returned to the floor off the bench in Baylor's second game of the season, December 1, 2020, in Tampa, Florida. She scored a basket vs. South Florida 13 seconds into action and led Baylor with seven assists that game. She led Baylor to the 2020-21 Women's Basketball Final Four.

About Honda Corporate Social Responsibility

For more than 60 years in the U.S., Honda has been committed to making positive contributions to the communities where its associates live and work. Honda's mission is to create products and services that improve the lives of people while conducting its business in a sustainable manner and fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. Accordingly, Honda believes in helping people reach their life's potential through its focus on improving children's health, inspiring underrepresented students, preserving the environment for future generations, creating safety for everyone, and strengthening our communities. Learn more at <http://csr.honda.com/>.

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