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**Caleb Huntley of Ball State, La’Andre Thomas of the University of Memphis and Drew Wilson of Georgia Southern University Named 2019 Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award Nominees**

**ROCHESTER, Minn.**—The College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA), in association with The Associated Press (AP) and the Fiesta Bowl Organization, have selected three college football student-athletes—**Caleb Huntley** of Ball State, **La’Andre Thomas** of the University of Memphis and **Drew Wilson** of Georgia Southern University—as nominees for the **2019 Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award**.

Ten times during the 2019 college football season, three inspiring student-athletes from all levels of college football, who have overcome injury, illness or other challenges, will be recognized as **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Nominees** by a panel of writers, editors and sports information directors from CoSIDA, AP and *Touchdown Illustrated*. CoSIDA members can nominate student-athletes at [Comeback-Player.com](http://Comeback-Player.com).

Previous nominees are: **Ashton Antwine** (Northeastern State), **Kaleb Barker** (Troy), **Shaq Bond** (Utah State), **Jamieson Craske** (Stetson), **Aaron Crawford** (UNC), **Frazier Daniel** (Mount Union), **Jonathan Haden** (UAB), **Jaquan Hemphill** (Hardin-Simmons), **Jake Luton** (Oregon State), **Josh Paschal** (Kentucky), **Isaiah Pola-Mao** (USC), **CJ Sanders** (SMU), **Amadeo West** (Army), **Octavion Wilson** (Salisbury) and **Antoine Winfield Jr.** (Minnesota).

At the end of the season, three of the nominees will be chosen as **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award** winners and will be recognized at a special ceremony during the College Football Playoff Semifinal at the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. Additionally, \$30,000 will be donated in the names of the nine student-athletes selected as finalists to their school’s general scholarship fund, with \$15,000 being awarded in the names of the three winners and \$15,000 on behalf of the six named honorable mention.

For more details, follow on social media at @ComebackPlayerFB and #MayoClinicCPOY, or visit [www.Comeback-Player.com](http://www.Comeback-Player.com). Here’s a look at this week’s nominees:

**Caleb Huntley, a running back at Ball State University**, saw his 2018 season cut short due to

an Achilles injury after just six games. The Atlanta native had been coming off a strong freshman season in which he rushed for 1,003 yards and was named BSU's John Hodge Award winner as the outstanding freshman. After a grueling off-season rehabilitation, he opened this season with 81 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries versus Indiana. He followed that up with three more games of 64, 86 and 52 yards, before his breakout performance of the season when he put up 157 yards rushing and two TDs on 35 carries in a 27-20 win versus Northern Illinois. He followed that performance up by rushing for 152 yards on 29 carries in a win versus Eastern Michigan. On the season, he leads the team with five touchdowns and 592 yards rushing, which is good for fifth in the Mid-America Conference.

**La'Andre Thomas, a defensive back at the University of Memphis**, has come back from adversity in both football and life. After a strong freshman season, Thomas was expected to take the next step in his development until a nerve injury in his shoulder sidelined him after just three games. Following an off-season of rehabilitation, the 6-foot-1, 185-pound speedster was back at safety in time for the start of this season. In five games, he's recorded 27 tackles, two for a loss, a sack, a forced fumble and an interception that he returned 33 yards for a touchdown. His football comeback pales in comparison to the personal challenges he faced growing up homeless with eight brothers and sisters in Jackson, Miss. But with the help of foster families, relatives and the generosity of others, and of course football, Thomas was able to showcase his talents as a dual-threat quarterback at Wingfield High School and earn a college scholarship.

**Drew Wilson, an offensive lineman for Georgia Southern University**, missed the entire 2018 season, suffering a detached retina in his right eye. What was initially thought to be the onset of pre-diabetes due to its rapid escalation was determined by specialists in Charleston to be a detached retina, which then required four surgeries to repair. Due to sensitivity to light following the surgeries, Wilson was forced to take the fall semester off. Unable to study or work out, he started to think about his future without football. But following his final surgery, he was convinced that the risks of playing were minimal. Even though the 6-foot-4, 310-pound Bamburgh, S.C., native is legally blind in the eye, he regained his starting position at right tackle and has helped lead the Eagles to an impressive 223 yards rushing per game.

"We understand how challenging it can be for student-athletes to return from injury or illness," says Dr. Michael Stuart, co-director for Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine. "We are honored to be part of this award that recognizes qualities like motivation, determination and perseverance."

**About Mayo Clinic:** Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit comprehensive organization committed to clinical practice, education and research, providing expert comprehensive care to everyone who needs healing. [Learn more about Mayo Clinic](#). [Visit the Mayo Clinic News Network](#).

**About CoSIDA (College Sports Information Directors of America):** CoSIDA was founded in 1957 and is a 3,000+ member national organization comprised of the sports public relations, media relations and communications/information professionals throughout all levels of collegiate athletics in the United States and Canada. The organization is the second oldest management association in intercollegiate athletics. To learn more, visit [cosida.com](http://cosida.com).

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