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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Don Butkus of University of St. Francis (Ill.), Eric Dungey of Syracuse University and Chappelle Russell of Temple University Named Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year 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—**Don Butkus** of University of St. Francis (Ill.), **Eric Dungey** of Syracuse University and **Chappelle Russell** of Temple University—as **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award Nominees**.

Ten times during the 2018 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**. At the end of the season, the 30 nominees will be eligible for the **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award**.

Butkus, Dungey and Russell join previous nominees **Caleb Farley** (Virginia Tech), **Cody Thompson** (Toledo), **Nate Ricci** (Minnesota–Duluth), **Antwan Dixon** (Kent State), **Tanner Mangum** (Brigham Young), **Marquez Stevenson** (Houston), **Jonathan Duhart** (Old Dominion), **Donte' Harrell** (Widener), **Antonio Wimbush** (Carson-Newman), **David Blough** (Purdue), **Jordan Miller** (Washington) and **Niall Lewison** (Otterbein).

CoSIDA members can nominate deserving student-athletes at [Comeback-Player.com](http://ComebackPlayer.com). Here's a look at this week's three nominees.

Don Butkus, a senior quarterback at University of St. Francis (Ill.), an NAIA school in Joliet, Ill., suffered a season-ending hamstring injury early in the 2017 season. After leading the Saints to a 13-9 record, including a share of the 2015 Mid-States Football Association Midwest League title, in his first two seasons as the starter, the Dyer, Ind., native was forced to watch the remainder of the 2017 season from the sidelines. He returned this fall and has been sharp, completing 82 of 145 passes for 1,245 yards with 15 touchdowns and just three interceptions. This season, Butkus ranks 11th in the NAIA with a 158.7 passer rating and has also added 89 yards and two touchdowns on the ground. Butkus, the great nephew of legendary Chicago Bears linebacker Dick Butkus, currently ranks among USF's career leaders in passing yards (5,933), passing touchdowns (55) and completions (480).

Eric Dungey, a senior quarterback for Syracuse University, broke his foot during the first offensive series at Florida State on Nov. 4, 2017. He returned to the game and nearly led Syracuse to victory, passing for 278 yards and two touchdowns, and running for 109 yards and another TD in a 27-24 loss. He missed the final three games of last season and underwent offseason surgery. By the start of fall camp, the Lake Oswego, Ore., native was back to full health and under center for the Orange. He opened the season with 184 yards passing and 200 yards rushing in a 55-42 win over Western Michigan. The dual-threat quarterback has completed 119 of 203 passes for 1,433 yards, 10 TDs and just four interceptions. He's also added 477 yards rushing and eight TDs on 92 carries in leading Syracuse to a 5-2 record.

Chapelle Russell, a junior linebacker at Temple University, has spent the better part of the past two years rehabilitating from a torn ACL. He suffered his first tear in November 2016, 10 games into his first season playing linebacker as a redshirt freshman. He was able to make it back for opening day in 2017 and quickly found his way into the starting lineup. Through nine games, he was the team's leading tackler with 70 stops. However, he again suffered a torn ACL and missed the remainder of the season. The Temple coaches recognized the Lakewood, N.J., native's hard work and toughness by awarding him a coveted single digit #3, signifying him as one of the toughest players on the team. He opened the 2018 season with 10 tackles versus Villanova and through eight games, he has been the #theStandard player of the game four times for the 5-3 Owls, recording 46 tackles, 3.5 tackles for a loss and two fumble recoveries.

All nominees are now eligible for the **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award**, presented at the end of the season. Mayo Clinic, the premier sponsor, will donate \$5,000 to the general scholarship funds for the three winners and \$2,500 in the name of six other worthy finalists. In addition, the three honorees will be recognized during a special ceremony during the 2019 Fiesta Bowl. Honorees and winners are selected by a panel of writers, editors and sports information directors from CoSIDA, AP and *Touchdown Illustrated*, and representatives of the Fiesta Bowl.

Chad Pennington, the only player twice named professional football's comeback player of the year award winner (2006, 2008), will serve as the Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award ambassador. Pennington played his college football at Marshall University and was selected in the first round of the 2000 NFL Draft by the New York Jets.

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About Mayo Clinic

The title sponsor of CoSIDA's Comeback Player of the Year Awards program, Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit medical practice and medical research group with major campuses in Rochester, Minn.; Scottsdale and Phoenix, Ariz.; and Jacksonville, Fla. The Mayo Clinic

Health System has dozens of locations in several states. Mayo Clinic was recently named the #1 hospital in the U.S. in the U.S. News & World Report rankings of top hospitals. It employs more than 4,700 physicians and scientists and 58,000 allied health staff. Learn more at www.MayoClinic.org.

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.

About Associated Press

The Associated Press is the essential global news network, delivering fast, unbiased news from every corner of the world to all media platforms and formats. Founded in 1846, AP today is the most trusted source of independent news and information. On any given day, more than half the world's population sees news from AP. On the web: www.ap.org.

About the Fiesta Bowl Organization

The Fiesta Bowl is a world-class community organization that executes innovative experiences, drives economic growth and champions charitable causes, inspiring pride in all Arizonans. As a nonprofit organization, it believes in the importance of community outreach and service. Through charitable giving, the organization strives to enhance Arizona nonprofit organizations that contribute to the success of communities through youth, sports and education. Since 1971, the Fiesta Bowl has worked to increase its footprint across the state and to benefit Arizonans year-round, during and outside of bowl season. In the month of December, the organization manages the PlayStation Fiesta Bowl, Cheez-It Bowl and the Fiesta Bowl Parade.

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