

October 30, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Travis Bassett of Bridgewater State University, J-Shun Harris II of Indiana University and Josh Poplar of Tennessee Tech 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—**Travis Bassett** of Bridgewater State University, **J-Shun Harris II** of Indiana University and **Josh Poplar** of Tennessee Tech 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**.

Bassett, Harris and Poplar 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); **Don Butkus** (St Francis Ill.); **Eric Dungey** (Syracuse), and **Chapelle Russell** (Temple).

CoSIDA members can nominate deserving student-athletes at Comeback-Player.com. Here's a look at this week's three nominees.

Travis Bassett, a senior wide receiver at **Bridgewater University**, a **Division 3 school in the Massachusetts, State Collegiate Athletic Conference** missed the entire 2017 season with two different injuries that required surgery, first for a torn labrum in his hip and then a torn labrum in his shoulder. It took both injuries six months to heal and the two separate injuries certainly complicated his rehabilitation. Through eight games, the Littleton, Mass. native lead the 5-3 Bears with 41 receptions for 501 yards and six touchdowns. In last week's heartbreaking four overtime loss Western Connecticut State he caught 8 passes for 117 yards and three touchdowns.

J-Shun Harris II, a senior wide receiver/return specialist for Indiana University, returned from his third ACL injury this season which he sustained to his right knee in game eight at Maryland last year. He had previously returned to the field in 2017 after he tore his right ACL in 2015 summer workouts and his left ACL in 2016 preseason camp. The Fishers, Ind. Native returned in style this season matching the Hoosiers' school record with his third career punt return touchdown, an 86-yarder against Ball State in week three. In helping lead Indiana to a 4-5 record, he has returned 14 punts for 148-yards and also caught 33 passes for 295 yards and two touchdowns.

Josh Poplar a junior linebacker at Tennessee Tech University suffered a stroke in his dorm room in July 2017, a week after passing the team's annual fitness test with flying colors. The Knoxville native was transported to Cookeville Regional Medical Center where he was also diagnosed with a hole in his heart that had to be surgically repaired. He missed the entire 2017 season but through hard work and perseverance he was cleared to play this season. Poplar has made the most of his second chance, racking up 74 tackles and one interception through eight games for the Golden Eagles this season.

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.

###

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.

###

Media Contacts

Doug Drotman (doug@drotmanpr.com or 631-462-1198) -- @CFB_ComebackPOY

Doug Vance (doug Vance@cosida.com or 785-691-7708)