

November 13, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mustafa Adam of Augsburg University, Jake Hansen of the University of Illinois and Deebo Samuel of the University of South Carolina 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—**Mustafa Adam** of Augsburg University, **Jake Hansen** of the University of Illinois and **Deebo Samuel** of the University of South Carolina—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**.

Adam, Hansen and Samuel 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), **Niall Lewison** (Otterbein), **Don Butkus** (St. Francis Ill.), **Eric Dungey** (Syracuse), **Chapelle Russell** (Temple), **Travis Bassett** (Bridgewater State), **J-Shun Harris II** (Indiana), **Josh Poplar** (Tennessee Tech), **Cardon Johnson** (James Madison), **Peyton Pelluer** (Washington State) and **Sam Shook** (Ohio Northern).

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

Mustafa Adam, a senior linebacker at Augsburg University, a Division III school in Minneapolis, Minn., has had to battle cancer three times in his young life, first when he was in high school, then just before he enrolled at Augsburg. The cancer forced him to miss his freshman campaign, but he did play the entire 2016 and 2017 seasons. But after the 2017 season, in which he finished second in the MIAC in tackles with 93, the cancer returned for a third time. This past winter, the

River Falls, Wis., native underwent chemotherapy and had to have his right ear amputated to prevent the cancer from spreading. Adam returned to the team once again and played in all 10 games, recording 22 tackles, including three tackles for a loss, a fumble recovery and a sack in his final collegiate game this past Saturday against Hamline University.

Jake Hansen, a redshirt sophomore linebacker at the University of Illinois, tore his ACL in training camp last year and missed the entire 2017 season. It was a crushing blow for Hansen following an impressive freshman season in which he played in all 12 games, including one start at linebacker. The year off the field only made the Tarpon Springs, Fla., native hungrier, as he opened the season with 15 tackles including a school record six behind the line of scrimmage versus Kent State. He is second on the team with 77 tackles, including 7.5 tackles for a loss, one forced fumble and one fumble recovery.

Deebo Samuel, a senior wide receiver for the University of South Carolina, broke his leg in the third game of the 2017 season and was forced to miss the rest of the year. Despite playing in just three games, he still tied for the team lead with six touchdowns while averaging 158 yards of total offense per game. The Inman, S.C., native is once again a triple threat for the Gamecocks in receiving, returning and running the football. He's played in all nine games, leads the team with 43 receptions and is second with 527 yards receiving and five touchdowns. He has also returned 20 kicks for 505 yards, including a 90-yard touchdown versus Ole Miss. He also threw a 13-yard touchdown pass and has seven carries for 24 yards.

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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