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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Elijah Gilmore of Wingate University, John Reid of Penn State University and Seth Simmer of Dartmouth College 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—**Elijah Gilmore** of Wingate University, **John Reid** of Penn State University and **Seth Simmer** of Dartmouth College 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**.

Gilmore, Reid and Simmer 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), **Sam Shook** (Ohio Northern), **Mustafa Adam** (Augsburg), **Jake Hansen** (Illinois) and **Deebo Samuel** (South Carolina).

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

**Elijah Gilmore, a junior linebacker at Wingate University, a Division II school in North Carolina** missed most of the 2017 season to have surgery to repair his lateral meniscus on Oct. 13, 2017. Due to the loss of most of his lateral meniscus and arthritic damage, his doctor recommended he hang up his cleats. After extensive rehabilitation, in May, Gilmore got a second opinion and the green light to return with no restrictions. The Tyrone, Ga. native has returned to the field with a vengeance, earning second team All-South Atlantic Conference honors while leading Wingate to an 8-3 regular season record and an NCAA Division II play-off berth.

According to defensive coordinator Rashaan Jordan “from the moment he sustained his injury, Elijah has been very determined to return to the field. His mental fortitude is what allowed him to overcome the days of doubt and rigors of rehabilitation.” Gilmore is fourth on the Bulldogs with 64 tackles and has added seven TFL and four QB sacks. In this past week’s playoff win over West Georgia he led the Bulldogs with 10 tackles and a sack.

**John Reid, a junior defensive back at Penn State University** missed the 2017 season after tearing his ACL during 2017 spring practice. It was a tough break for the Mount Laurel, N.J. native who had played in 27 games in his first two seasons and was ready for a breakout junior campaign. Rather than spend the year in the training room, Reid became a de-facto assistant coach on the sidelines during practice and games. Penn State's staff thought so much of his role that he took up a valuable travel roster spot on road trips. He believed the experience would make him a smarter, better player. Despite a minor setback at the start of the season, which forced him to miss two early-season games, he has reestablished himself as an important part of the Nittany Lions young defense. He has been on the field for more snaps every week, culminating in a key game-changing interception versus Iowa on Oct 27 and his second pick of the season this past week at Rutgers.

**Seth Simmer, a junior defensive tackle at Dartmouth College** was diagnosed with a brain tumor in the spring of freshman year. Doctors originally told him he would not play football again, but he got a second opinion at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota that assured him that if he had the surgery and recovered well, he could play again. He opted for the surgery in which 90 percent of the tumor, which had been pressing against his hearing and balancing nerves, was removed on July 2, 2017. The surgery took out his balancing nerve, forcing him to learn to walk again and caused him to lose the hearing in his left ear. After missing the entire 2017 season, the Powder Springs, Ga. native returned to the field this year contributing 11 tackles including 1.5 for a loss. His play of the year came in the showdown between 7-0 Dartmouth at 7-0 Princeton when he had a sack in the end zone for a safety, plus a fumble recovery for the Big Green,

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](http://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](http://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](http://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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#### **Media Contacts**

Doug Drotman ([doug@drotman-pr.com](mailto:doug@drotman-pr.com) or 631-462-1198) -- @CFB\_ComebackPOY  
Doug Vance ([doug Vance@cosida.com](mailto:doug Vance@cosida.com) or 785-691-7708)