

November 27, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Greg Menard of North Dakota State, Austin Tillman of Washburn University and Jordan Wyatt of Southern Methodist 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—**Greg Menard** of North Dakota State, **Austin Tillman** of Washburn University and **Jordan Wyatt** of Southern Methodist University—as **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award Nominees**.

Here's a look at this week's three nominees. For more details on all 30 nominees, visit Comeback-Player.com.

Greg Menard, a senior defensive tackle at North Dakota State University, was a pre-season All-American last year but missed the entire 2017 season due to an ACL injury sustained the opening week of fall camp. He came back to start every game this year for the 11-0 Bisons, who play Montana State this Saturday in the second round of the NCAA FCS Playoffs. The Lakeville, Minn., native has returned to form in leading the Bison defense, which is ranked No.1 in the Missouri Valley Football Conference and top 10 in FCS, with 27 tackles, 9.5 tackles for a loss, and 7.5 sacks, making him the NCAA FCS active career leader with 31.5 sacks. A two-time All-American on the field, he is also a two-time CoSIDA Academic All-American in the classroom.

Jordan Wyatt, a senior defensive back for Southern Methodist University, injured his knee in the Mustangs final regular-season game last year versus Tulane, which caused him to miss the 2017 Frisco Bowl and spring practice. The torn ACL required two surgeries and extensive off-season rehabilitation, which forced him to miss off-season workouts. Wyatt became one of the most important leaders for the Mustang football team this season. The Wylie, Texas, native returned to start in 2018 and was voted team captain this season. In addition, he was selected to wear number 23 in honor of Jerry LeVias, the first African-American to receive an athletic scholarship in the Southwest Conference. Wyatt has played in all 10 games, recording 16 tackles, 1 TFL, 1 interception and four passes defended. He was also SMU's nominee for the AFCA Good Works Team, Senior CLASS Award candidate and the Wuerffel Trophy Watch List.

Austin Tillman, a senior linebacker at Washburn University, a Division III school in Topeka, Kan., separated his right shoulder in the third game last season. He underwent surgery on Oct. 3 to repair the grade 5 AC joint separation. It was an intense healing process, as he was immobilized in a sling for six weeks. The Topeka native assumed his starting inside linebacker position and led the team with 111 tackles, 8 TFL, 2 sacks, and 1 interception. He was a second-team all-MIAA pick at linebacker after finishing third in the MIAA in tackles. Tillman finished with 304 career tackles, placing him ninth all-time at Washburn.

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 have been recognized as **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Nominees**. The 30 nominees are now eligible for the **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award**. 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.

The 30 nominees are: **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), **Deebo Samuel** (South Carolina), **Elijah Gilmore** (Wingate), **John Reid** (Penn State), **Seth Simmer** (Dartmouth), **Greg Menard** (North Dakota State), **Austin Tillman** (Washburn University) and **Jordan Wyatt** (SMU).

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

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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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