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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Cardon Johnson of James Madison University, Peyton Pelluer of Washington State University and Sam Shook of Ohio Northern 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—**Cardon Johnson** of James Madison University, **Peyton Pelluer** of Washington State University and **Sam Shook** of Ohio Northern 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**.

Johnson, Pelluer and Shook 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) and **Josh Poplar** (Tennessee Tech).

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.

**Cardon Johnson, a running back at James Madison University** is currently a graduate student in his sixth season with the Dukes due to multiple injuries during his career. Last season, after three games he suffered an Achilles injury which forced him to miss the rest of the season, the same injury that ended his 2016 season after nine games. As a redshirt freshman he was injured in spring practice and forced to miss the entire season. In 2015, his only injury-free season, Johnson lead JMU with 1,037 yards rushing and 10 touchdowns. The Newport News, Virginia native has surely returned to form this season as the team's second leading rusher with 95 carries for 354 yards and two touchdowns and ranks ninth all-time

at JMU in both rushing yards (2,442) and total touchdowns (26).

**Peyton Pelluer, a 6<sup>th</sup>-year senior linebacker at Washington State University** was a two-year starter at MIKE linebacker heading into the 2017 season before suffering a navicular fracture in his foot in the third game. Surprisingly he was granted a medical redshirt to return this year. The Sammamish, Washington native picked up right where he left off, recording three straight, 10+ tackle games versus Pac-12 rivals USC, Utah and Oregon State. For the season he leads the Cougars with 71 tackles (44 unassisted) including seven tackles for a loss, 3.5 sacks, four quarterback hits, three passes defended and a forced fumble.

**Sam Shook, a senior offensive tackle at Ohio Northern University** of the Division 3 Ohio Athletic Conference is a 3-year starter who missed the entire 2016 season and all but four games last season due to a pair of foot injuries that both required surgery and extensive off-season rehabilitation. He is the leader of an offensive line unit that has helped ONU average 34.6 points and 425.6 yards per game. The New Philadelphia, Ohio native is a two-time team captain, two-time Academic All-Conference honoree and has been the Polar Bears highest rated offensive lineman this season with a grade of 89%. He graduated from ONU with a bachelor's degree in accounting last spring and is currently pursuing his Masters' degree.

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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