



Sept. 28, 2021

**Justyn Ross of Clemson, Avery Samuels of Stetson and Corey Sutton of Appalachian State Named
2021 Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award Nominees**

NEW YORK, NY. —The College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA), in association with The Associated Press (AP), the Fiesta Bowl Organization have selected three college football student-athletes—**Justyn Ross**, a junior wide receiver at **Clemson University**; **Avery Samuels** a sophomore offensive lineman at **Stetson University**; and **Corey Sutton** a super senior wide receiver at **Appalachian State University**—as nominees for the **2021 [Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award](#)**.

Ten times during the 2021 college football season, three inspiring student-athletes from all levels of college football who have overcome injury, illness, or other challenges, are recognized as **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Nominees** by a panel of writers, editors, and sports information directors from CoSIDA, AP and *Touchdown Illustrated*. In December, three of the 30 nominees will be chosen as winners of the **Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award** and will be recognized at a special ceremony during the PlayStation® Fiesta Bowl on Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022 at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona. CoSIDA members can nominate football student-athletes until Nov. 1, 2021 at [Comeback-Player.com](#).

The previously announced nominees are: **Terrel Bernard** (LB, Baylor); **Yohance Burnett** (LB, Tulsa); **Jack Coan** (QB, Notre Dame); **Aidan Hutchinson** (DE, Michigan); **Brian Kearns, Jr** (RB, Stonehill College); and **John Mitchell** (TE, Florida Atlantic).

Here's a look at the inspiring stories of this week's three honorees:

Justyn Ross, a junior wide receiver for Clemson University was one of the most explosive receivers in college football in 2018-19. He caught 112 passes for 1,865 yards and 17 touchdowns including six receptions for 153 yards and a 74-yard TD as a freshman in the College Football Championship game versus Alabama. Poised for another big season last year, his 2020 campaign

ended in June, when being treated for a “stinger” injury to his neck at spring practice, doctors discovered a congenital fusion condition of his neck and spine that required surgery. Following surgery and a year of recovery, the Phenix City, Ala. native proved he is still a force, leading the Tigers with 22 receptions and three touchdowns through four games this season.

Avery Samuels, a redshirt sophomore offensive lineman for Stetson University sat out the 2020-21 season as seven members of his family died from COVID-19. Following the death of his uncle last April and six other relatives in the months that followed, he decided to sit out of the season and spend the time with his family. Despite the family tragedy, the 6-foot-4, 315-pound psychology major returned to the Hatters this summer and has been working his way back onto the field more each week. This past weekend, the native of Mt. Airy, Pa. played in front of friends and family as Stetson visited Princeton.

Corey Sutton, a super senior wide receiver for Appalachian State, who recorded 85 receptions for 1374 yards and 17 touchdowns in his first 22 career games, tore the ACL in his left knee in the ninth game of the 2019 season versus Texas State. The injury cost him the final three games of the season including the team’s Sun Belt Championship victory over Troy and their New Orleans Bowl win over UAB. The 6-foot-3, 205-pound native of Charlotte, NC sat out the entire 2020 season to completely rehab his knee. Through four games in 2021, he has a league-leading 28 catches, a team-leading 367 yards and two receiving TDs. This week in the nationally televised win over longtime rival Marshall, he set a career high with 10 receptions for 127 yards and a highlight-reel TD that ranked as the No. 1 play of the day on ESPN’s SportsCenter.

Past winners of the Mayo Clinic Comeback Player of the Year Award have included: **2018** – Antwan Dixon (Kent State), Seth Simmer (Dartmouth), Antonio Wimbush (Carson-Newman); **2019** – Jake Luton (Oregon State), Drew Wilson (Georgia Southern), Octavion Wilson (Salisbury University); **2020** – Jarek Broussard (Colorado), Kenneth Horsey (Kentucky) and Silas Kelly (Coastal Carolina). For a complete list of past honorees and additional details on their remarkable comeback stories, visit www.Comeback-Player.com; follow via Twitter at [@ComebackPlayrFB](https://twitter.com/ComebackPlayrFB) via the hashtag #MayoClinicCPOY; and on Instagram at [@Comeback_Player_CFB](https://www.instagram.com/Comeback_Player_CFB). Mayo Clinic does not have any role in selecting the nominees or winners of the award.

About Mayo Clinic: [Mayo Clinic](http://www.MayoClinic.org) is a nonprofit organization committed to innovation in clinical practice, education and research, and providing compassion, expertise and answers to everyone who needs healing. Visit the [Mayo Clinic News Network](http://www.MayoClinicNewsNetwork.com) for additional Mayo Clinic news. For information on COVID-19, including Mayo Clinic's Coronavirus Map tracking tool, which has 14-day forecasting on COVID-19 trends, visit the [Mayo Clinic COVID-19 Resource Center](http://www.MayoClinicCOVID-19ResourceCenter.com).

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://www.cosida.com).

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Media Contacts: Doug Drotman (doug@drotman-pr.com or 631-462-1198)
Doug Vance, CoSIDA (doug Vance@cosida.com or 785-691-7708)