

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Orange Bowl Committee
December 29, 2017



Hope Carpinello
hcarpinello@orangebowl.org
305-341-4734

WISCONSIN'S D'COTA DIXON IS THE WINNER OF THE 2017 CAPITAL ONE ORANGE BOWL-FWAA COURAGE AWARD

DALLAS (FWAA) – Wisconsin safety D'Cota Dixon is the winner of the 2017 Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award. Dixon, a 5-foot-10, 204-pound redshirt junior, overcame an unstable family situation and personal health issues to post his second straight all-Big Ten season for the 12-1 Badgers.



Click here for a [high-resolution headshot](#)

"I've always had to face trials and tribulations in some form or matter," Dixon said in a UWBadgers.com video feature in October. "Though I had relatives and family that were close, and I knew they loved me — I know they always meant the best and loved me — but I felt like nothing was ever stable. I felt like it was always somebody leaving."

Dixon had a brother convicted of attempted murder, and he was placed in foster care as his mother struggled to provide for the family.

Dixon's father and his father's girlfriend, Beth Coston, took Dixon and another brother in. But as Dixon's father's drug addiction grew intense, Coston assumed guardianship and moved the brothers away.

"I didn't really know my dad but I knew who he was, but I never had a true relationship with him, even when I was in Miami," Dixon said. "But I had comfort in my mom. She loved us vey much. She had a manic depression illness, so there would be times where she wasn't home. It was just real tough when we got taken from her, but by the grace of God it was a blessing in disguise because I do have a mother named Beth who I love very much. That's my sweetheart."

Dixon later repaired his relationship with his father, but his father passed away. Dixon and Coston were then evicted from their home during Dixon's senior year of high school. Dixon's girlfriend, Grace, and her mother took Dixon in.

--more--

“The time that I had with him, that solid probably from seventh grade to ninth grade, was the best years ever,” Dixon said. “So it just hit me. It hurt me so much when he died my freshman year in high school, and really for me I felt like it was like: *Here we go again*. I was kind of just real numb and just real angry. “I didn’t go to school for like two weeks. I was real mad, just frustrated.”

In the spring of 2016, Dixon spent a week in the hospital with a life-threatening infection that left him in pain and unable to walk. He recovered in time to start the season opener, which he punctuated with an interception with 57 seconds left to seal a win against No. 5 LSU. Dixon started all 14 games for the Badgers, who went 11-3 and won the Cotton Bowl.



He recorded 60 tackles, four interceptions and four pass break-ups en route to third-team All-Big Ten honors, in addition to Academic All-Big Ten honors.

Dixon picked up where he left off in 2017, fighting through a hamstring injury to play in 10 games, start eight and earn first-team All-Big Ten honors from the league’s coaches. (He was named second-team all-conference by the media.) He tallied 52 tackles, including 3.5 for loss and 1.5 sacks, to go with one interception, three breakups, one hurry and one forced fumble. He posted a game-best 12 tackles in a Sept. 30 win against Northwestern in the Big Ten opener, including a safety in the final minute to help preserve the victory — a victory that ended up being the deciding factor in the Big Ten West race. Dixon was again an Academic All-Big Ten honoree, and the No. 6 Badgers ran the regular-season table before the Big Ten title game. They entered bowl season with the nation’s No. 1 defense (253.2 yards per game).

“This is a tremendous honor for D’Cota,” Wisconsin coach Paul Chryst said. “I really admire the way he approaches and appreciates life. With what he has gone through, for him to have such a positive outlook and be so willing to help others is a real testament to his character and his faith. He is intent on maximizing all of his opportunities. The best thing I can say about D’Cota is that if you spend any amount of time around him, he makes you want to be a better person, because of how he carries himself and his genuine care for others.”

Though Dixon had eventually moved with his brother and Coston to Oak Hill, Florida, he is a South Florida native. And he will be returning to the area for the Badgers’ finale, as they take on No. 11 Miami on Dec. 30 in the Capital One Orange Bowl.

“I feel like my hardships and trials have built me to who I am today and I’m proud of them,” Dixon said. “I wouldn’t take nothing back. I wouldn’t change one thing, not one single event that ever happened in my life. I’m grateful for them, in all honesty.”

The Courage Award was first presented by the Football Writers Association of America (FWAA) in 2002. A select group of writers from the FWAA vote on the winner each year. The requirements for nomination include displaying courage on or off the field, including overcoming an injury or physical handicap, preventing a disaster or living through hardship. James Conner will be included in festivities during Capital One Orange Bowl week and receive his trophy at an on-field presentation during the Capital One Orange Bowl game between No. 6 Michigan and No. 11 Florida State on Dec. 30.

Previous winners of the Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award are Pittsburgh running back James Conner (2016), Miami offensive lineman Hunter Knighton (2015), Duke offensive lineman Laken Tomlinson (2014), San Jose State defensive lineman Anthony Larceval (2013), Clemson wide receiver Daniel Rodriguez (2012), Michigan State offensive lineman Arthur Ray Jr. (2011), Rutgers defensive tackle Eric LeGrand (2010), the University of Connecticut football team (2009), Tulsa's Wilson Holloway (2008), Navy's Zerbin Singleton (2007), Clemson's Ray Ray McElrathbey (2006), the Tulane football team (2005), Memphis' Haracio Colen (2004), San Jose State's Neil Parry (2003) and Toledo's William Bratton (2002).

About the Orange Bowl

The Orange Bowl is a 360-member, primarily-volunteer non-profit sports organization that promotes and serves the South Florida community. With its primary mission since being created in 1935 to bring tourism to South Florida through an annual football game and events, it has also maintained a legacy of charitable contributions and community outreach. Orange Bowl community outreach efforts are comprised of four pillars: youth sports, fundraising and community events, academic programs and scholarships, and legacy gifts. The Orange Bowl features a year-round schedule of events culminating with the Capital One Orange Bowl on December 30, 2017. For more information on the 2017-18 Orange Bowl events, including promotional and volunteer opportunities through the Ambassador Program presented by Panera Bread, log on to orangebowl.org. Follow Orange Bowl: @OrangeBowl, Facebook and Instagram.

Founded in 1941, **the Football Writers Association of America** consists of 1,400 men and women who cover college football. The membership includes journalists, broadcasters and publicists, as well as key executives in all the areas that involve the game. The FWAA works to govern areas that include game-day operations, major awards and its annual All-America team. For more information about the FWAA and its award programs, contact Steve Richardson at tiger@fwaa.com.