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Minnesota Placeholder Casey O'Brien Is Third Nominee for 2019 Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award



MIAMI LAKES, FL. (www.orangebowl.org) – Minnesota's Casey O'Brien is this week's nominee for the 2019 Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award. O'Brien, a redshirt sophomore walk-on holder, was diagnosed with osteosarcoma when he was 13. He has survived it four times.

"Growing up, my entire life had revolved around sports. I was always going from one practice to the next," O'Brien said this summer, when he delivered the keynote speech at the Big Ten Football Kickoff Luncheon. "At 13 years old, I was told that I needed a full knee replacement and nine months of chemotherapy. This meant I had to give up all the sports that I had known and loved. I was told that I would be lucky to walk, much less jog again, and that my football career was over. Or so they thought."

O'Brien underwent 18 rounds of chemotherapy, an eight-and-a-half hour knee replacement and bone replacement surgery. He spent nearly 90 nights in the hospital. Six months later, during O'Brien's sophomore year of high school, his cancer relapsed in both of his lungs, which led to three lung surgeries and seven months of chemotherapy.

"This was devastating news, but the circumstances I was placed in were not going to dictate my life, and my behavior," O'Brien said in his speech. "I wanted to play football again, and I wasn't going to take no for an answer. So, after a complete left knee replacement which included metal rods into my femur and tibia — please don't ask me about going through security at the airport and while still receiving chemotherapy treatment — I convinced my doctors to let me move from quarterback to placeholder."

Cancer has returned twice since O'Brien entered college, but he has not missed a practice, as he has taken chemo pills and worn a specifically made shirt with a pad sewn in it to protect a medical port in his chest.

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In 2018, O'Brien was named Academic All-Big Ten team and was a Big Ten Distinguished Scholar. This spring, he competed for a starting job for the Golden Gophers, who are currently 4-0.

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. The winner of the award will be included in festivities during Capital One Orange Bowl week and receive his trophy at an on-field presentation.

Previous winners of the Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award:

2018 Kyle Richard – SUNY Cortland

2017 D'Cota Dixon – Wisconsin

2016 James Conner – Pittsburgh

2015 Hunter Knighton – Miami

2014 Laken Tomlinson – Duke

2013 Anthony Larceval - San Jose State

2012 Daniel Rodriguez - Clemson

2011 Arthur Ray - Michigan State

2010 Eric LeGrand - Rutgers

2009 University of Connecticut Football Team

2008 Wilson Holloway - Tulsa

2007 Zerbin Singleton - Navy

2006 Ray Ray McElrathbey - Clemson

2005 Tulane Football Team

2004 Haracia Colen - Memphis

2003 Neil Parry - San Jose State

2002 William Bratton - Toledo

2019 Courage Award Nominees:

- [Week 1 – Blake Anderson](#)
- [Week 2 – Ashtyn Davis](#)

<http://bit.ly/2019Courage3>

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 Monday, December 30, 2019. For more information on the 2019-2020 Orange Bowl events, including promotional and volunteer opportunities through the Ambassador Program presented by Panera Bread, log on to www.orangebowl.org or follow the @OrangeBowl on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat.

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