

NEWS RELEASE

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& COLLEGE HALL OF FAME, INC.

College Football's 2006 National Scholar-Athlete Class *17 winners comprise the list of 2006 Draddy Trophy Finalists*

MORRISTOWN, N.J., October 26, 2006 – Selected as the best and the brightest from the college gridiron, The National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame (NFF) today announced the 17 members of the 2006 National Scholar-Athlete Class, who will vie as the finalists for the Draddy Trophy, presented by HealthSouth.

DIVISION I-A

AWARDEE	SCHOOL	POS.	MAJOR	HOMETOWN
Brian Daniels	University of Colorado	OG	Finance	Superior, Colo.
Rhema Fuller	University of Connecticut	DT	Finance	Cocoa, Fla.
Jay Henry	West Virginia University	LB	Finance / Accounting	Tulsa, Okla.
Chris Leak	University of Florida	QB	Sociology	Charlotte, N.C.
Brian Leonard	Rutgers University	FB	Labor & Employment Rels.	Hailesboro, N.Y.
Carl Pendleton	University of Oklahoma	DT	Sociology	Sapulpa, Okla.
Paul Posluszny	Penn State University	LB	Finance	Aliquippa, Pa.
Joe Thomas	University of Wisconsin	OT	Business	Brookfield, Wis.
John Wendling	University of Wyoming	S	Business Administration	Rock Springs, Wyo.

DIVISION I-AA

Ed McCarthy	Yale University	OL	History	Fairfield, Conn.
Luke Palko	Saint Francis Univ. (Pa.)	WR	Accounting	Imperial, Pa.
Kristian Smith	Alabama A&M University	OL	Telecommunications	Alpine, Calif.

DIVISION II

Michael Klobucher	Ferris State Univ. (Mich.)	LB	Applied Biology	Grand Haven, Mich.
Ryan Meredith	Pittsburg State Univ. (Ka.)	DE	Management	Pittsburg, Kan.

DIVISION III

Aaron Lewis	Carnegie Mellon Univ. (Pa.)	DB	Business Administration	Englewood, Ohio
P.J. Theisen	Univ. of St. Thomas (Minn.)	WR	Accounting	Elko, Minn.

NAIA

Brad Cook	St. Ambrose Univ. (Iowa)	C	Economics / Finance	Bettendorf, Iowa
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With a 3.7 average GPA, 13 of the players have earned all-conference recognition on the field and 15 of them have served as captains of their teams. Nominated by their schools, which are limited to one nominee each, candidates must be a senior or graduate student in their final year of eligibility, have a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, have outstanding football ability as a first team player and have demonstrated strong leadership and citizenship.

“We take great pride in providing each member of the scholar-athlete class with a coveted \$18,000 scholarship for their post-graduate studies,” said NFF President Steven J. Hatchell. “They have set the standard for their teammates and for all who play sports. By highlighting their achievements, we hope to inspire future generations of student-athletes to higher levels of achievement in all aspects of their lives.”

Selected by the NFF Awards Committee, comprised of former coaches, Hall of Famers and college administrators, the 17 National Scholar-Athlete Award recipients will be honored at the 49th NFF Awards Dinner on December 5 at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City.

“After thorough review of 148 outstanding candidates representing schools from all levels of collegiate play, the committee’s deliberations resulted in the selection of an exceptional class of 17 scholar-athletes,” said Robert E. Mulcahy III, chairman of the NFF Awards Committee and director of athletics at Rutgers University. “Knowing the importance and prestige of these awards, the committee takes the utmost care in making the selections, and I applaud them for their efforts.”

Each will receive an \$18,000 post-graduate scholarship, and one of the 17 will be announced as the recipient of the 2006 Draddy Trophy, which recognizes an individual as the absolute best scholar-athlete in the nation. Established to honor former NFF Chairman Vincent dePaul Draddy, a Manhattan College quarterback who developed the Izod and Lacoste brands, the award comes with a stunning 24-inch, 25-pound bronze trophy and increases the winner’s scholarship to a total of \$25,000.

ABOUT HEALTHSOUTH

HealthSouth is one of the nation's largest providers of outpatient surgery, diagnostic imaging and rehabilitative healthcare services, operating facilities nationwide. HealthSouth can be found on the Web at www.healthsouth.com.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL FOUNDATION & COLLEGE HALL OF FAME

With 120 chapters and 12,000 members nationwide, The National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame, a non-profit educational organization, runs programs designed to use the power of amateur football in developing scholarship, citizenship and athletic achievement in young people. The NFF presents the MacArthur Trophy, the Draddy Trophy, presented by HealthSouth, and releases the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) Standings. NFF programs include the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Ind., Play It Smart, the NFF Center for Youth Development Through Sport at Springfield College (Mass.), the NFL-NFF Coaching Academy, and scholarships of over \$1 million for college and high school scholar-athletes. Learn more at www.footballfoundation.org.

Bios for the 2006 National Scholar-Athlete Award Winners

(In alphabetical order)

Brad Cook

Center, Saint Ambrose University (Iowa)

Recipient of the John H. McConnell National Scholar-Athlete Award

The anchor of the Saint Ambrose University offensive line, Brad Cook epitomizes excellence both on the athletic field and in the classroom, earning the distinction as the first National Scholar Athlete in his school’s history.

A 2005 NAIA Academic All-America selection, Cook has twice earned First Team Academic All-Conference honors and is a member of the Alpha Chi and Delta Mu Delta National Honor Societies. An Economics/Finance major, he is a perennial member of the Saint Ambrose Dean’s List.

A 2005 Second Team All-Conference performer, Cook has started every game of his collegiate career and has twice been named Offensive Lineman MVP by his team. Anchoring an offensive line that has only allowed two sacks the entire season, he is an undeniable leader of the undefeated Fighting Bees.

A two-time team captain, Cook’s leadership extends beyond the football field as a volunteer in the university’s spring clean-up project, schoolbook drive and at the John Lewis Food Shelter serving meals. A leader in the Christmas Gift Giving Program, he contributes as a member of the Unity Council and numerous leadership seminars.

Brian Daniels

Offensive Guard, University of Colorado

Recipient of the William V. Campbell National Scholar-Athlete Award

Successful in all aspects of life, Brian Daniel's performance has earned high praise from Colorado head coach Dan Hawkins who has called him "a representative of the best of college athletics, both on the field and in the classroom."

A Dean's List member, Daniels is a two-time First Team Academic All-Conference selection and a member of the Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society. A Rhodes Scholar Finalist, he ranks in the Top 10 percent of Colorado's prestigious school of business.

A dominant force on the offensive line, Daniels has twice earned All-Conference Honorable Mention recognition and was a member of the Freshman All-America team in 2003. A member of the All-MayDay Team for his toughness, Phil Steele's *College Football* tabbed him the No. 4 offensive guard in the nation. A 2006 Pre-Season Second Team All-America selection by *collegefootballnews.com*, Daniels appears on the Outland Trophy Watch List.

Dedicated to his community, Daniels makes numerous visits to local hospitals before home games; participates with the Read With The Buffs program; and plays in Children's Donor Flag Football Games.

James Hansen, the 1992 Draddy Trophy winner, was the last NFF National Scholar-Athlete Award Honoree from Colorado. Daniels becomes the sixth National Scholar-Athlete for the Buffs.

Rhema Fuller

Defensive Tackle, University of Connecticut

A dedicated student and dominant defensive tackle, Rhema Fuller becomes the first National Scholar-Athlete in the history of the University of Connecticut football program.

Majoring in finance, Fuller already received his undergraduate degree with Cum Laude honors in May 2006. A four-time Dean's List member, he has twice earned Academic All-Conference honors and *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-District recognition. Earlier this year, Fuller received the Donald Kinsman Award, presented to the top two student-athletes in the entire school.

A top defensive player for the Huskies, Fuller has recorded 22 tackles, six tackles for a loss, 3.5 sacks, and a fumble recovery after the first seven games of his senior campaign. A team captain and three-year team starter, he made a career-high 33 tackles in 2005.

Active on campus and in his community, Fuller participates as a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and serves as a teacher's assistant for third grade and middle schools students in the subject of math. He also mentors boys in juvenile detention as part of the Positive Steps program. A volunteer in MS walks, he serves as a student guide on Big Brothers & Big Sisters visits to the UConn campus.

Jay Henry

Linebacker, West Virginia University

Recipient of the Robert A. Simms National Scholar-Athlete Award

One of the greatest scholar-athletes in the history of West Virginia University, Jay Henry has proven himself as a defensive leader in the Big East Conference while maintaining a perfect 4.0 grade point average in the classroom.

A 2005 *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-America selection, Henry has already completed his undergraduate Finance degree and is currently working towards a second in Accounting. A three-time Academic All-Conference pick, he claimed the Anson Mount National Scholar-Athlete Award and the Presidential Award for excellence in scholarship. Named Scholar-Athlete of the Year by the *Daily Athenaeum*, Henry is a member of the Athletics Director's Honor Roll.

A team captain that can play all three linebacker positions, Henry's flexibility has contributed to the 10th ranked scoring defense in the nation. A member of the 2006 Pre-Season Ronnie Lott IMPACT Award Watch List, he has helped guide the Mountaineers to three consecutive conference championships.

Voted the "Ideal Mountaineer" by his coaches for demonstrating great leadership, Henry volunteers with the Special Olympics and has made presentations to the YMCA of Charleston on work ethics and to the Boys and Girls Club of Parkersburg. A participant in the Read-A-Loud program, Henry has also received the Apostle Award for his numerous leadership qualities. Henry becomes the fifth NFF National Scholar-Athlete for the Mountaineers and the latest since Jeffrey Berk in 2004.

Michael Klobucher

Linebacker, Ferris State University (Mich.)

Recipient of the E. Douglas Kenna National Scholar-Athlete Award

A leader on the football field, in the classroom and in his local community, Michael Klobucher has excelled in every facet of college life and now becomes the first National Scholar-Athlete in Ferris State University history.

An Applied Biology major, Klobucher has maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average and has twice earned First Team Academic All-Conference honors. A Dean's List member, he was named to the 2005 *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District First Team. A recipient of the FSU President's Academic Award, Klobucher also received the Helen Ferris Varten Award for having the highest GPA on the football team.

A defensive nightmare for FSU opponents, Klobucher has already recorded 65 tackles this season, including a team-high 16 tackles against Michigan Tech. A two-time team captain, he has twice led his team in tackles for the season, amassing over 300 for his career. Klobucher was named the 2005 team MVP and Most Valuable Defensive Skill Player by his teammates.

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Klobucher volunteers as an FSU football team tutor, at the Guiding Light and Muskegon Rescue Mission and several physical therapy clinics.

Christopher Leak
Quarterback, University of Florida
Recipient of the National Football League Scholar-Athlete Award

One of the most electrifying quarterbacks on the Division I-A scene, Chris Leak's athletic prowess has played a significant role in maintaining Florida's place in the national spotlight during the last four seasons. Off the field, he has established himself as a scholar and community leader.

Having registered a perfect 4.0 grade point average in the fall of 2003, Leak earned a spot on the SEC Academic Honor Roll in 2004. A competitor in every aspect of his life, he will complete his undergraduate Sociology degree in only three and a half years.

The current I-A active leader in touchdown passes, Leak has accumulated over 9,700 career-passing yards. Through the first seven games of Florida's 2006 campaign, Leak has passed for over 1,500 and 15 TDs. The 2006 team captain, he has thrown a touchdown pass in all but three of his 40 career starts and has 29 career games with 200 or more passing yards. In 2005, he was the only quarterback in the nation to lead his team to a Top-15 finish while throwing over 350 pass attempts with only six interceptions.

Extremely active in his community, Leak participates as a member of the Gators' Leadership Committee and the Gator Spirit Campus Beautification Project. A Jump Rope for Heart volunteer, he assists with the UF intramurals program, Gator Tracks Delivery, Kids Day and Chomp the Vote. He is the fifth Gator to claim a National Scholar-Athlete Award and the first since Draddy Winner Danny Wuerffel in 1996.

Brian Leonard
Fullback, Rutgers University

Highly regarded as one of the nation's premier fullbacks, Brian Leonard has helped lead a renaissance with the Rutgers University football program. As the Scarlet Knights continue their rise to national prominence, Leonard also remains a stellar role model off the field, collecting academic praise and playing a major role in the community.

A Labor & Employment Relations major, Leonard has claimed Academic All-Conference honors three times and a spot on the *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District First Team in 2005.

Poised to break numerous Rutgers records in 2006, Leonard has twice earned First Team All-America honors by *Pro Football Weekly*. A two-time First Team All-Conference selection, *Sports Illustrated* recognized him as one of the "most underrated players," contributing as a tenacious blocker and threat to run or catch the ball from the backfield. Leonard has rushed for over 2,500 yards and 1,700 receiving yards in his career. A 2006 team captain, he has been instrumental in teammate Ray Rice's No. 2 national ranking in rushing.

Active in his community, Leonard has participated in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life walk and Read Across America. A volunteer in the opening ceremonies of the New Jersey Special Olympics, he has traveled to several local hospitals to visit with children and hand out gifts. Leonard also serves as a speaker for high school athletics events and football camps. He becomes Rutgers' sixth National Scholar-Athlete and the first since Nathaniel Jones in 2003.

Aaron Lewis

Defensive Back, Carnegie Mellon University (Pa.)
Recipient of the F.M. Kirby National Scholar-Athlete Award

Epitomizing the term "scholar-athlete," Carnegie Mellon's Aaron Lewis has earned his share of awards and accolades both academically and athletically. CMU head coach Rich Lackner refers to Lewis as "the consummate team player" who is "the best I have ever coached."

A Business Administration major, Lewis earned *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-America honors in 2005. A recipient of the Presidential Scholarship, he has twice been named to the *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District team. Regularly appearing on the CMU Dean's List, Lewis is a member of the Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society.

A three-time First Team All-Conference performer, Lewis has led his team in tackles for three consecutive seasons and is on track to do the same this year. He already has three interceptions and three forced fumbles this year, contributing to the undefeated Tartans squad. Named UAA Rookie of the Year in 2003, Lewis has been selected as a 2006 Pre-Season First Team All-America by numerous publications. A tireless performer, he has started every game of his collegiate career.

A 2006 team captain, Lewis is a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and volunteers with the local chapter of Big Brothers & Big Sisters. An assistant treasurer for the Beta Theta Pi Fraternity, he assists a youth advisor in activities for a local synagogue. Lewis becomes the second National Scholar-Athlete for the Tartans, joining 1987 honoree Bryan Roessler.

Ed McCarthy

Offensive Lineman, Yale University
Recipient of the Harold Alfond National Scholar-Athlete Award

Widely regarded as one of the top offensive lineman in the nation, Yale's Ed McCarthy has also excelled academically by tackling the rigors of an Ivy League curriculum with aplomb.

A history major, McCarthy has twice earned First Team Academic All-League honors and *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District recognition.

Showing immense versatility, McCarthy has started games at center, offensive guard and offensive tackle in his career. In the 2006 pre-season, he was a Division I-AA First Team All-America selection and named the top Division I-AA offensive tackle in the nation by *The Sports Network*. A looming presence at 6-foot-5, 305 pounds, McCarthy earned First Team All-Conference honors in 2005 and Second Team recognition in 2004. In 2003, he became the first offensive lineman in Ivy League history to claim a major award when he was named Rookie of the Year.

Dedicated to his community, McCarthy contributes more than 40 hours of community service each year, including work in the Benefits Unit to help poor and mentally ill individuals obtain social security and Medicare benefits. Recently, he served as an intern for the Bridgeport Public Defender's Office and the New Haven Legal Assistance, providing counsel for accused criminals who cannot afford their own attorney. McCarthy becomes the ninth National Scholar-Athlete for the Bulldogs and the first since 2001 honoree Peter Lee.

Ryan Meredith

Defensive End, Pittsburg State University (Kan.)

A remarkable talent both on the football field and in the classroom, Ryan Meredith becomes the first National Scholar-Athlete in the history of the Pittsburg State University football program.

A Management major, Meredith earned *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-America honors in 2005 and Second Team honors in 2004. A three-time First Team Academic All-Conference pick, he is a member of the MIAA (Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association) Commissioner's Honor Roll and the Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society. The runner-up for the MIAA Male Student-Athlete of the Year, Meredith is also an MIAA Presidential Scholar.

One of the top defensive ends in the nation, Meredith leads PSU in tackles for loss, adding 41 tackles and two sacks for the Gorillas this season. A two-time First Team All-Conference pick, he has amassed over 200 career tackles and 25 sacks. A two-time team captain, Meredith helped lead PSU to the Division II National Championship Game in 2004.

A campus leader, Meredith is the president of the PSU chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and is highly involved in several FCA Youth Rally speaking engagements. He also devotes considerable time to Pittsburg YMCA Youth Football Clinics.

Luke Palko

Wide Receiver, Saint Francis University (Pa.)

Recipient of the Jefferson Walker Kirby National Scholar-Athlete Award

Arguably the greatest student-athlete in the history of Saint Francis University and its first National Scholar-Athlete, wide receiver Luke Palko has tirelessly dedicated himself to his studies while establishing himself as one of the nation's elite on the gridiron.

An Accounting major, Palko became only the third student-athlete in school history to earn *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-America honors. Named NEC (Northeast Conference) Football Scholar-Athlete of the Year, he earned a spot on the Division I-AA Athletics Director's Association Academic All-Star Team the NEC Academic Honor Roll twice.

A starter every game, Palko has amassed over 2,000 career receiving yards and was named as part of the nation's No. 1 wide receiver tandem by *The Sports Network* in 2006. The brother of Pitt's starting quarterback and fellow 2006 Draddy semifinalist Tyler Palko, Luke entered the year ranked No. 2 in the nation with 217 career receptions – all-time records for both the school and conference. He also takes on punting responsibilities for the Red Flash.

Highly community-minded, Palko serves as the president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and attended the NCAA National Leadership Conference. A breakfast server at Loretto's St. Michael's Church, he helped generate donations to purchase a new mascot on campus and volunteers his time with the Special Olympics and Relay For Life.

Carl Pendleton

Defensive Tackle, University of Oklahoma

A man of remarkable character, Oklahoma's Carl Pendleton has established himself as a community leader, academic scholar and key defensive player while battling family hardships.

A Sociology major, Pendleton has maintained a 3.86 grade point average and has twice earned First Team Academic All-Conference recognition, despite the rigors of taking legal guardianship of his nine-year-old brother. A Dean's List member, he claimed the Jay Meyers Outstanding Student-Athlete Award and earned a spot on the Big-12 Commissioner's Honor Roll. A large presence on the OU defensive line at six-foot-five, 285 pounds, Pendleton made key contributions as a starter on Oklahoma's 2004 Big-12 Champion and Orange Bowl team that played for the National Championship.

A participant in the 2006 NCAA Leadership Conference, Pendleton participated as a finalist in the OU Josh Lee Public Speaking Competition. A Sunday School teacher, he serves as a motivational speaker and volunteers with Big Brothers & Big Sisters. Pendleton becomes the eighth National Scholar-Athlete for the Sooners and the first since 2003 honoree Renaldo Works.

Pendleton's dedication has earned high praise from head coach Bob Stoops. "He has balanced family responsibilities with a broad range of campus involvement and still became a starter in one of the nation's premier programs," Stoops said. "I respect him as a person and trust him as much as any player I have ever coached."

Paul Posluszny

Linebacker, Penn State University

**Recipient of the William Pearce / Joseph V. Paterno National Scholar-Athlete Award
Funded by William A Schreyer**

Widely regarded as one of the top linebackers in the country, Penn State's Paul Posluszny carries his on-field excellence into the classroom and the community.

A Finance major, Posluszny earned *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-America honors in 2005. A Dean's List member, he has twice received First Team Academic All-Conference recognition and *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-District honors. Posluszny is on schedule to graduate in only three and a half years.

A two-year team captain, Posluszny's remarkable 2005 season earned him First Team All-America status, the Butkus Award as the nation's top linebacker and the Bednarik Award as the nation's top defensive player. Already this season, he has amassed 70 tackles, including a season-high 13 against Illinois. Named 2006 Pre-Season Consensus National Defensive Player of the Year, Posluszny claimed 2005-06 Penn State Male Athlete of the Year honors after leading the Nittany Lions to a share of the 2005 Big Ten Title.

A community leader, Posluszny has volunteered his time at the Pennsylvania State Summer Special Olympics, Student-Athlete Reading Program and The Second Mile, a local charitable organization.

Posluszny becomes the 15th Penn State player to win a National Scholar-Athlete Award and the first since Aaron Collins in 1997.

Kristian Smith

Offensive Lineman, Alabama A&M University

**Recipient of the Coach Eddie Robinson National Scholar-Athlete Award
Funded by the George M. Steinbrenner Family and the New York Yankees**

A dedicated and hardworking leader of the Alabama A&M University offensive line, Kristian Smith produced a record of athletic and academic excellence that has earned him the distinction of being the school's first National Scholar-Award winner in history.

A Telecommunications major, Smith maintained a superb 3.87 grade point average during college, and he claimed Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year honors in 2005. Having already graduated Summa Cum Laude, he routinely appeared on the university's Dean's List and Honor Roll throughout his collegiate tenure. A recipient of the Outstanding Leadership in Academics Award, Smith was also named Most Outstanding Male Speaker.

Voted the 2005 Most Inspirational Player by his teammates, Smith has started every game but two. A 2006 team captain, he was named to the 2006 pre-season All-Conference First Team.

Extremely active on campus and in his community, Smith sings in the AAMU Gospel Choir and assists as a tour planner and a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. A member of the National Broadcasting Society, he attended the NCAA Student Leadership Conference and is the student coordinator of New Concepts, an on-campus marketing firm.

P.J. Theisen

Wide Receiver, University of Saint Thomas (Minn.)

A two-sport standout at the University of St. Thomas, P.J. Theisen has possessed the perfect blend of academic excellence, athletic prowess and community involvement.

An Accounting major, Theisen earned *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-America honors in 2005 – a feat he also accomplished as a star in track & field. A Dean's List member, Theisen was named First Team Academic All-Conference four times.

A 2006 team captain, Theisen earned a 2005 All-America Honorable Mention and was named West Region Return Specialist of the Year. Although plagued by injury this season, he led the conference with 63 receptions for 998 yards in 2005, including five consecutive games with 100 or more yards. Theisen also tied a 19-year old school record with four touchdown receptions against Hamline last year.

A member of the 2006 AFCA Good Works Team, Theisen is extremely active with St. Thomas' track & field program where he is a five-time All-America and two-time MIAC Most Valuable Player. A volunteer with the Red Ribbon Ride, he assists with the Athletes Committed to Educating Students program and the New Prague youth football and track camps. A helper with the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Theisen also makes several public speaking engagements.

Theisen becomes the second player for the Tommies to win a National Scholar-Athlete Award, joining 2002 winner Andrew Hilliard.

Joseph Thomas
Offensive Tackle, University of Wisconsin
Recipient of the Coach Lou Saban National Scholar-Athlete Award
Funded by George M. Steinbrenner III

Arguably the nation's greatest offensive tackle, Joe Thomas has proven to be an immovable force on the University of Wisconsin offensive line. An academic scholar and community leader, his influence stretches far beyond the football field.

A Business major, Thomas is a three-time First Team Academic All-Conference selection and a two-time *ESPN The Magazine* First Team Academic All-District pick.

An intimidating physical specimen at 6-foot-8, 313 pounds, Thomas earned First Team All-America status and was named a Lombardi Award semifinalist in 2005. Starting every game the past two seasons and named the nation's No. 2 offensive tackle this pre-season, he has greatly contributed to P.J. Hill's sixth-ranked rushing attack. A 2006 Pre-Season First Team All-America selection, Thomas is a member of the Lombardi and Outland Award Watch Lists and is projected to be among the top three overall selections in the 2007 NFL Draft.

A team captain, Thomas has served as a volunteer auctioneer to raise money for St. Jude's Children's Hospital. A visitor to sick children at the UW Children's Hospital, he mentors a Special Olympics shot putter and serves on a church youth group board.

Thomas becomes the fourth Badger to win a National Scholar-Athlete Award and the first since James Leonhard in 2004.

John Wendling
Safety, University of Wyoming

A team leader, athletically, academically and in his local community, John Wendling continues to be a role model for his University of Wyoming teammates and campus.

A Business Administration major, Wendling is a three-time First Team Academic All-Conference selection and was named to the 2005 *ESPN The Magazine* All-District Second Team. A Dean's List member, he is the recipient of the Ryan E. Wilson and Alfred M. Pence Athletic Scholarships.

Contributing to the nation's third-ranked defense, Wendling leads the team in fumble returns and ranks second in tackles. As a 2006 team captain and his third year as a starter, Wendling has been named a 2006 pre-season First Team All-Conference selection. He has twice earned All-Conference Honorable Mention honors and guided the Cowboys to a victory in the 2004 Las Vegas Bowl.

Eager to help in his community, Wendling participated in the 2006 Youth Football Camp and the University of Wyoming Sports Festivals for Youth. A participant in a 2006 "Say No to Tobacco" radio advertisement, he has volunteered with Skate for Kids, Christmas for Kids and Athletes for Literacy.

Wendling becomes the fourth player from Wyoming to win a National Scholar-Athlete Award and the first since Trenton Franz in 2004.