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2015 BRONKO NAGURSKI TROPHY FINALISTS NAMED

DALLAS (FWAA) – Five finalists for the **2015 Bronko Nagurski Trophy** were announced on Thursday by the **Football Writers Association of America** and the **Charlotte Touchdown Club**.

Vying for the honor of National Defensive Player of the Year are, in alphabetical order: Duke safety **Jeremy Cash**, Clemson end **Shaq Lawson**, Temple linebacker **Tyler Matakevich**, Penn State end **Carl Nassib** and Alabama linebacker **Reggie Ragland**.

The winner will be announced Dec. 7 and presented the Bronko Nagurski Trophy at a gala banquet sponsored by ACN at the Westin Hotel in Charlotte, N.C. Auburn coach Gus Malzahn will give the keynote address. This year's banquet marks the 21st anniversary of the event being held in Charlotte.

In addition, the FWAA and Charlotte Touchdown Club will hand out the **Bronko Nagurski Legends Award** presented by Florida East Coast Railway. This year's recipient is Ohio State linebacker **Randy Gradishar**, a member of the 1973 FWAA All-America team and a College Football Hall of Famer and former All-Pro for the Denver Broncos.

The award is named after the legendary Bronko Nagurski, who dominated college football at the University of Minnesota as a bruising fullback and defensive tackle from 1927-29. He could have been an All-American at any position and was the best player wherever the coaches put him.

Nagurski led Minnesota to the Big Ten title in 1927 and a three-year record of 18-4-2. He went on to lead the fabled Chicago Bears to three NFL titles. During one game at Wrigley Field, he once broke a defensive player's shoulder, knocked another out and ran into a brick wall and actually cracked it after a game-winning touchdown run.

The FWAA has named a National Defensive Player of the Year since the 1993 season. Of the five schools represented among the finalists, only Clemson has had a previous winner, Da'Quan Bowers in 2010. While Alabama and Penn State have had finalists for the award before, these are first-time Bronko Nagurski finalists for both Duke and Temple. Alabama has a finalist for a fifth straight year.

A look at the five 2015 Bronko Nagurski Trophy finalists, as selected by the FWAA All-America Committee:

Jeremy Cash, S, Duke (6-2, 210, Sr., Miami, Fla.): A second-team FWAA All-America selection last season, Cash has come back strong in 2015 and is tied for third in the Atlantic Coast Conference in tackles per game at 8.8. He also is the only defensive back in the Top 100 in FBS in tackles for loss per game and is second in the country behind Penn State end Carl Nassib with 17.5 (for 79 yards in losses). In addition, Cash has broken up three passes, recovered one fumble, registered eight quarterback hurries and forced three fumbles. His coach David Cutcliffe says: "I don't know if there is a better defensive player from a production standpoint in the country."

Shaq Lawson, DE, Clemson (6-3, 270, Jr., Central, S.C.): The big-play tackler for the nation's top-ranked team in the CFP poll, Lawson is one of the strongest players in college football and is a standout against the run. He has 16.5 tackles for loss, which is among the Top 10 in the country. He has also broken up a pass and made 12 quarterback hurries. In the victory over Notre Dame he had 3.5 tackles for loss when he was matched up against Notre Dame offensive tackle Ronnie Stanley, a clear victory for Lawson.

Tyler Matakevich, LB, Temple (6-1, 232, Sr., Stratford, Conn.): The current career leader in tackles in the FBS is on target to record more than 100 total tackles in each of his four seasons at Temple. He is the first first-team defensive All-American in school history and is the only player in the FBS to lead his team (8-2 overall) in tackles every game this season. He leads all FBS



linebackers with five interceptions (47 return yards) and he has 11.5 tackles for 56 yards in losses, including four sacks for 25 yards in losses.

Carl Nassib, DE, Penn State (6-7, 272, Sr., West Chester, Pa.): A former preferred walk-on at Penn State, Nassib has added weight and strength to become one of college football's best defenders. His coach James Franklin describes him as "big, long, explosive, athletic." Nassib leads the FBS in sacks (15.5), tackles for loss (19.5) and forced fumbles (6). He has recorded at least one sack in each game this season and has five multi-sack games in 2015. He is one forced fumble away from tying the school record.

Reggie Ragland, LB, Alabama (6-2, 252, Sr., Madison, Ala.): Very active off the field in community service, Ragland, a team captain, has a team-leading 82 tackles. He has 5.5 tackles for 20 yards in losses, five pass breakups, three quarterback hurries and two forced fumbles. He has led the team in tackles in six of the Crimson Tide's 10 games. Alabama's defense, after giving up 43 points in a loss to Ole Miss, has been stellar as opponents have averaged just 11.8 points per game in the last seven contests, all Alabama victories.

Celebrating its 75th year, the **Football Writers Association of America**, a non-profit organization, consists of more than 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 gameday 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 or 214-870-6516.

The Bronko Nagurski Trophy is a member of the **National College Football Awards Association**. The NCFAA encompasses the most prestigious awards in college football. The 22 awards boast more than 700 years of tradition-selection excellence. Visit ncfaa.org to learn more about our story.

ABOUT THE CHARLOTTE TOUCHDOWN CLUB AND ITS SPONSORS

The **Charlotte Touchdown Club** is a non-profit organization founded in 1990 for the purpose of promoting high school, collegiate, and professional football in the Charlotte, N.C., region. The club's activities and services focus community attention on the outstanding citizenship, scholarship, sportsmanship, and leadership of area athletes and coaches. For more information, contact John Rocco (704-347-2918 or jrocco@touchdownclub.com). The official website of the Charlotte Touchdown Club is touchdownclub.com.

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