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MIAMI'S KNIGHTON WINS 2015 CAPITAL ONE ORANGE BOWL-FWAA COURAGE AWARD

DALLAS (FWAA) – Miami offensive lineman **Hunter Knighton** is the winner of the **2015 Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award**.

Knighton, a 6-foot-6, 300-pound redshirt sophomore, returned to action for the Hurricanes this season less than 19 months after suffering a heat stroke that nearly killed him.

"It's just a great feeling that everyone's hard work in this whole thing paid off," Knighton said. "I got to prove that you can come back from these sorts of things, and a lot of people who've had these types of things happen medically, they want to come back but they're not allowed to."

On Feb. 24, 2014, Knighton collapsed during conditioning drills. Knighton did not know it at the time, but he had been fighting the flu. His body temperature rose to 109 degrees. He spent 12 days in a coma. He lost 55 pounds. He underwent surgery to repair his paralyzed vocal chords. A Pottstown, Pa., native, Knighton, the second of four children, said his mother took off several months of work to move near him in Florida to help with his recovery. He was later evaluated at the Korey Stringer Institute in Connecticut, which is named for the late Vikings lineman who died of heatstroke in 2001.

"This is a tremendous honor for Hunter and I could not be more thrilled that he will be recognized on college football's biggest stage," said Miami interim head coach Larry Scott. "Hunter has shown a tremendous amount of courage over the past 12 months and he is truly deserving of this award. The work ethic he has shown to get back on the field and play a major role on our team has been truly inspirational to everyone associated with our program."

Knighton's ensuing hurdles were as much mental as they were physical. He said he became much more spiritual and learned about resiliency, as he fought through good days and bad days to get back to where he once was.

Knighton regained his weight, but simple things were — and still are — more difficult to come by. For example, it takes him longer to take notes in class now, he said, a byproduct of the hit his brain took. Still, the economics major has made significant progress in that area, and he hopes to go for his MBA at Miami upon receiving his undergraduate degree.

Knighton, who said he is no longer on medication, returned to the field for the start of fall camp this year, running with the second-team offensive line and looking from the get-go to pick up where he had left off when he last took practice reps nearly two years ago.

“It’s like just catching up,” Knighton said. “I haven’t had a full go in the offseason and stuff like that, so that’s my biggest thing, is really getting my strength back and really getting into it. I’m really proud of myself for what I’ve accomplished. This really being my first year in college football, I feel like I’ve put myself in a good spot. Now I just want to accomplish all the goals I set out when I signed to come to UM.”

Among those goals is helping Miami win an ACC championship. Knighton saw playing time in all 12 games this season for the Hurricanes, who went 8-4 and 5-3 in the ACC. They close their season Dec. 26 against Washington State in the Hyundai Sun Bowl in El Paso, Texas.

Another goal? To be recognized for his play on the field. Knighton, a center, appreciates the attention his story has drawn — he also won the Brian Piccolo Award, which the ACC gives to its most courageous player — but he came to “The U” to make a name for himself on the gridiron, which he will have two more years to do.

After fighting for his life, Knighton values that opportunity more than most.

“Just getting this much recognition for these awards and stuff for my play on field,” Knighton said of his remaining goals at Miami. “It’s nice to be honored for something like this, but I came here to play football, and I really just want to be recognized for the athlete I am.”

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 are 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 363-member, primarily-volunteer non-profit sports organization that promotes and serves the South Florida community. The Orange Bowl features a year-round schedule of events culminating with the College Football Playoff Semifinal at the Capital One Orange Bowl on December 31, 2015. Other Orange Bowl core events include the MetroPCS Orange Bowl Basketball Classic, Orange Bowl Youth Football Alliance presented by Sports Authority, Orange Bowl International Tennis Championships, Orange Bowl International Youth Regatta, Orange Bowl Swim Classic and Orange Bowl Paddle Championships. For more information on the 2015-16 Orange Bowl events, including promotional and volunteer opportunities through the Ambassador Program presented by Panera Bread, log on to www.orangebowl.org. Follow Orange Bowl: [@OrangeBowl](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

About the FWAA

Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2015, 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.

2015 Capital One Orange Bowl Courage Award Nominees:

- **Sept. 16: Bobby Swigert, Boston College**
- **Sept. 23: Jake Olson, USC**
- **Sept. 30: Anthony Zettel, Penn State**
- **Oct. 7: Leonard Fournette, LSU**
- **Oct. 14: Cheatham Norrils, Toledo**
- **Oct. 21: J.B. Grimes, Auburn**
- **Oct. 28: D.J. Foster, Arizona State**
- **Nov. 4: Demetrious Nicholson, Virginia**
- **Nov. 11: Jerry Kill, Minnesota**
- **Nov. 18: Mitchell Meyers, Iowa State**
- **Nov. 25: Hunter Knighton, Miami**
- **Dec. 2: Justin Hansen, Colorado State**

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***Editor's Note: High quality photos of nominee available upon request.**