



NATIONAL COLLEGIATE BASEBALL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

(June 10, 2021)

ncbwa.com

JUNG, KOPPS, LEITER, NELSON, ROCKER TABBED AS FINALISTS FOR 2021 DICK HOWSER TROPHY

DALLAS – Five future 2021 consensus All-America selections and youngsters who led their respective schools to NCAA play this spring are finalists for the 34th Dick Howser Trophy presented by The Game Headwear in balloting by the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association in conjunction with the Dick Howser Trophy committee and the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce.

Texas Tech second baseman Jace Jung, Arkansas relief ace Kevin Kopps, Vanderbilt pitching standout Jack Leiter, Florida State catching stalwart Matheu Nelson and Vanderbilt starter Kumar Rocker are the five finalists for the prestigious Howser Trophy.

This marks the third time that two Howser Award finalists have come from the same school, all from Vanderbilt. In 2013, Pitcher Tyler Beede and second baseman Tony Kemp made the list and in 2015, the Commodores once again placed two players as finalists for the coveted award, former major league pitcher Carson Fulmer and current Atlanta Braves shortstop Dansby Swanson.

The winner will be announced on Friday, June 18, first on MLB Network and then at a national news conference via Zoom call at a time to be determined just prior to the 74th NCAA College World Series at TD Ameritrade Park in Omaha, Nebraska.

Each finalist symbolizes the major principles of character, leadership, desire and competitive spirit exhibited by Dick Howser, the All-America shortstop, head coach at Florida State and manager of the 1985 World Series Champion Kansas City Royals. He also is the namesake of Florida State's Dick Howser Stadium.

Jung, the Big 12 Conference Player of the Year, leads the league in several categories, including home runs with 21, runs-batted-in with 67 and slugging percentage at .766. He has reached safely in all 54 games for the Red Raiders who host Stanford this weekend in the Lubbock Super Regional. The Jung name is familiar at Tech and nationally as Jace's older brother Josh Jung also was an All-America infielder and the first-round draft choice in 2020 by the Texas Rangers.

Jace Jung is a San Antonio, Texas, resident and paced the Red Raiders to a 3-0 record (now 39-15 overall) to sweep the first round NCAA Lubbock Regional with victories over Army West Point, North Carolina and UCLA.

Kopps also is a finalist for the NCBWA Stopper of the Year Award with some of the top relief stats in modern NCAA history. He came on in the third inning to toss a career-high seven innings in relief and to pitch the No. 1 nationally Razorbacks to a clinching, 6-2 triumph over Nebraska at the NCAA Fayetteville Regional to lead UA into the Fayetteville Super Regional against NC State.

The Sugar Land, Texas, senior righthander already was named Collegiate Baseball 2021 Player of the Year and has earned All-Southeastern Conference and All-America laurels. The SEC Pitcher of the Year leads all Razorbacks hurlers with 79 2/3 innings pitched (all out of the bullpen), a 0.68 ERA, 120 strikeouts and 11 saves. He has been a part of three combined shutouts as well, has allowed just six runs (all earned), and opponents are hitting just .156 against him.

Leiter started the season at 7-0 for a Vanderbilt squad that has been ranked as high as No. 1 nationally and has been dominant throughout the year. The sophomore righthander from Summit, New Jersey, comes from a long family of pitchers, including his father Al Leiter (19-year veteran lefty in the majors), uncle Mark and cousin Mark Jr.

Jack Leiter, earlier in '21, tossed a 16-strikeout no-hitter against South Carolina in SEC activity and then hurled seven more no-hit innings against Missouri with 10 strikeouts. In four of his first five wins opponents had one run or fewer, and Leiter has been in a pitched battle with teammate Rocker for NCAA season strikeout leadership. Currently, the sophomore right has 146 ahead of Rocker's 143 as Vandy prepares to host East Carolina in the Nashville Super Regional.

Nelson, a sophomore from Largo, Florida, ended the season with 23 home runs – tied for first in NCAA Division I. He led the Seminoles to third place in the NCAA Oxford Regional and contention for the Atlantic Coast Conference crown for most of '21 with a .330 batting average, 17 doubles and a .723 slugging percentage.

The All-ACC stalwart follows in the footsteps of 2008 FSU Dick Howser Trophy winner and Major League Rookie of the Year and All-Star catcher Buster Posey and has been rated as one of the top backstoppers in the history of the program from offensive and defensive standpoints. Nelson also made just three errors in 602 chances for a .995 fielding percentage.

Rocker has dominated SEC hitters for three seasons with the Commodores as well as throwing the first no-hitter in NCAA Super Regional annals in 2019 with a 19-strikeout night. Vandy went on to down Michigan in the NCAA World Series for the national title as he closed that season at 12-5, a 3.25 ERA and 114 strikeouts in 99 2/3 frames as a freshman.

The junior righty from Athens, Georgia, has been among national leaders again this spring with a 12-3 overall mark, 2.65 ERA and 144 strikeouts – second nationally to teammate Jack Leiter. Rocker, the son of 1988 Vince Lombardi and Outland Trophy winner Tracy Rocker of Auburn (also in the NFF College Hall of Fame), already has first team All-America and All-SEC honors on his 2021 resume.

Recent finalists for the Dick Howser Trophy have included the likes of Florida starting pitcher Brady Singer (2018 winner), Texas second baseman Kody Clemens, Auburn pitcher Casey Mize, Georgia Tech catcher Joey Bart, Clemson outfielder Seth Beer (2016 winner, first freshman to receive Dick Howser Trophy), Wake Forest third baseman Will Craig, Louisville utility player Brendan McKay, Kent State pitcher Eric Lauer, and Texas A&M third baseman Boomer White, Arkansas outfielder Andrew Benintendi (winner), UCLA relief pitcher David Berg, Vanderbilt starting pitcher Carson Fulmer, Vanderbilt shortstop Dansby Swanson and Miami (Fla.) third baseman David Thompson; and 2019 finalists catcher Adley Rutschman ('19 Howser Trophy recipient) of Oregon State, 1B Andrew Vaughn of California, OF JJ Bleday of Vanderbilt, pitcher Alek Manoah (just made his MLB debut with the Toronto Blue Jays on May 21) of West Virginia and pitcher Noah Song of Navy.

The Howser Trophy was created in 1987, shortly after Howser's death. Previous winners of the Howser Trophy are Mike Fiore, Miami, 1987; Robin Ventura, Oklahoma State, 1988; Scott Bryant, Texas, 1989; Alex Fernandez, Miami-Dade Community College South, 1990; Frank Rodriguez, Howard College (Texas), 1991; Brooks Kieschnick, Texas, 1992 and 1993; Jason Varitek, Georgia Tech, 1994; Todd Helton, Tennessee, 1995; Kris Benson, Clemson, 1996; J. D. Drew, Florida State, 1997; Eddy Furniss, LSU, 1998; Jason Jennings, Baylor, 1999; Mark Teixeira, Georgia Tech, 2000; Mark Prior, P, USC, 2001; Khalil Greene, SS, Clemson, 2002; Rickie Weeks, 2B, Southern U., 2003; Jered Weaver, P, Long Beach State, 2004; Alex Gordon, 3B, Nebraska, 2005; Brad Lincoln, P/DH, Houston, 2006; David Price, P, Vanderbilt, 2007; Buster Posey, C, Florida State, 2008; Stephen Strasburg, P, San Diego State, 2009; Anthony Rendon, 3B, Rice, 2010; Taylor Jungmann, P, Texas, 2011; Mike Zunino, C, Florida, 2012; Kris Bryant, 3B, San Diego, 2013; A.J. Reed, Kentucky, 2014; Andrew Benintendi, Arkansas, 2015; Seth Beer, Clemson, 2016; Brendan McKay, Louisville, 2017; Brady Singer, Florida, 2018; and Adley Rutschman, Oregon State, 2019.

The trophy was not awarded in 2020 due to the COVID-19 shortened season.

Statistics on the Finalists for 2021 (Through June 10)

Pos.	Name, School, Class	Avg.	G	AB	R	H	2B-3B-HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB-SBA
2B	Jace Jung, Texas Tech, Fr.	.343	54	201	54	69	10-0-21	67	48	43	4-6
C	Matheu Nelson, Florida State, So.	.330	53	194	50	64	17-0-23	66	31	58	4-6

Pos.	Name School, Class	W-L	ERA	APP	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
RP	Kevin Kopps, Arkansas, Sr.	12-0	0.68	31	0	0	11	79.2	43	6	6	15	120
SP	Jack Leiter, Vanderbilt, So.	9-3	2.22	15	15	1	0	89.0	39	26	22	38	146
SP	Kumar Rocker, Vanderbilt, Jr.	12-3	2.65	16	16	1	0	98.1	56	32	29	33	144

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