



## **NATIONAL COLLEGIATE BASEBALL WRITERS ASSOCIATION**

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### **NCBWA NAMES ITS 2021 DISTRICT PLAYERS OF THE YEAR**

**DALLAS** – The National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association announced its District Players of the Year for all nine districts for the 2021 season. This season's honorees include

**District 1** (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania)

**Nicholas Sinacola, Maine**

**District 2** (Connecticut, West Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, District of Columbia)

**Kyler Fedko, Connecticut**

**District 3** (Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida)

**Matheu Nelson, Florida State, Jack Leiter and Kumar Rocker, Vanderbilt**

**District 4** (Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland)

**Connor Norby, East Carolina**

**District 5** (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin)

**Andrew Taylor, Central Michigan**

**District 6** (Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota)

**Christian Encarnacion-Strand, Oklahoma State**

**District 7** (Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana)

**Jace Jung, Texas Tech; Kevin Kopps, Arkansas**

**District 8** (Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Montana)

**Paul Skenes, Air Force**

**District 9** (California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, Arizona, Alaska)

**Aaron Zavala, Oregon**

Earlier this week, Nelson, Leiter, Rocker, Norby, Jung, Kopps, Skenes and Zavala were named to the Golden Spikes semifinal list by USA Baseball.

Jung, Kopps, Leiter, Nelson and Rocker were also tabbed by the NCBWA as finalists for the Dick Howser Trophy.

Sinacola was a strikeout machine his junior season at Maine (school's first NCBWA DPOY) and was the America East Conference Pitcher of the Year. The righthander made 12 starts and struck out 139 batters over 79 1/3 innings. He fanned 15.8 batters per nine, ranking second in the NCAA. Sinacola finished with a 9-3 mark, posted a 2.04 earned run average and held opponents to a .208 batting average.

Fedko, who helped UConn (school's third NCBWA DPOY) to the Big East regular season and tournament championships, was honored as the conference's Player of the Year. He hit a league-leading .398, belted 12 home runs and knocked in a team-best 53 runs as the Huskies played in the South Bend Regional.

Matheu Nelson (Florida State) and Kumar Rocker and Jack Leiter, both of Vanderbilt, were honored as District Three's Player of the Year.

Nelson was the ACC Player of the Year after helping the Seminoles to an appearance at the Oxford Regional earlier this month. FSU reached the regionals after winning the ACC Championship against Miami. Nelson hit .330 while making 53 starts. His 23 home runs were a conference-high, as were his 66 RBI.

Rocker, meanwhile, led Vanderbilt, who hosts East Carolina in a Super Regional, with 12 wins and posted a 2.65 ERA. Rocker was a first-team All-SEC selection and his 144 strikeouts ranked second in the SEC. In conference play, Rocker's seven wins in 10 starts led the Commodores as did his 95 strikeouts.

Leiter combined with Rocker to give Vanderbilt (school's seventh and eighth NCBWA DPOY) one of the top 1-2 punches not only in the SEC but the nation. The SEC Newcomer of the Year paced the league with 146 strikeouts entering this weekend's Super Regional. Leiter also was third in the SEC with a 2.22 ERA and opposing bats hit a meager .129 against him.

Norby was the American Athletic Conference Player of the Year and leads East Carolina (school's second NCBWA DPOY) with a .418 batting average, 15 home runs and 51 RBI heading into this weekend's Super Regional in Nashville. Norby's 100 hits tie him for third on ECU's single-season list.

Just a freshman, Taylor spun an 11-4 record in 15 starts for Mid-America Conference champion Central Michigan (school's first NCBWA DPOY) and was honored as the league's Pitcher and Freshman Pitcher of the Year. Taylor finished the season with a 1.81 ERA and struck out 125 batters in 94.1 innings, averaging 11.9 per nine innings. He held opponents to a .189 batting average.

Encarnacion-Strand was a first-team All-Big 12 honoree in 2021 and finished his sophomore season as Oklahoma State's (school's fourth NCBWA DPOY) triple crown winner. In 56 games, he hit .361 with 15 home runs and 66 RBI and his 35 extra base hits tied for the conference lead.

In District 7, Jung and Kopps shared Player of the Year honors following impressive seasons in the field and on the mound, respectively. This marks the second NCBWA District Player of the Year honors for Texas Tech and Arkansas.

Jung enters this weekend's Super Regional with Stanford hitting .343 with a team-leading 21 home runs and 67 RBI. Just a freshman, Jung was named the Big 12 Player of the Year and earned first-team all-conference honors.

Kopps was the SEC Pitcher of the Year and a first-team All-SEC selection and enters this weekend's Super Regional with NC State with 12 wins, 11 saves and an 0.68 earned run average in 31 appearances. As a reliever, Kopps leads the staff with 79 2/3 innings and has struck out 120 batters, while walking just 15. He's allowed just seven extra base hits and opponents are hitting a meager .156 against him.

In the Mountain West Conference, Skenes made an immediate impact for Air Force (school's second NCBWA DPOY), being named the league's Freshman of the Year as well as a first-team All-MWC honoree at catcher. He finished his rookie campaign with a .410 batting average, 21 doubles, 11 home runs and 43 RBI. On the mound, he made 18 appearances and racked up 11 saves.

Zavala, a sophomore outfielder for Oregon (school's first NCBWA DPOY), is the program's first position player to reach the semifinals of the Golden Spikes Award list. In 2021, he finished with a .392 average, scored 64 runs, hit nine home runs and drove in 38 runs.

#### 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
3B	Christian Encarnacion-Strand, Oklahoma State, So.	.361	56	227	47	82	17-3-15	66	20	50	4-6
OF	Kyler Fedko, Connecticut, So.	.398	52	196	57	78	14-2-12	53	28	37	7-11
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
2B	Connor Norby, East Carolina, So.	.418	59	239	64	100	15-0-15	51	32	32	18-21
C	Paul Skenes, Air Force, Fr.	.410	48	188	49	77	21-0-11	43	22	45	0-3
OF	Aaron Zavala, Oregon, So.	.392	55	199	64	78	14-3-9	38	50	31	11-13

Pos.	Name School, Class	W-L	ERA	APP	GS	CG	SHO	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OPP BA
SP	Jack Leiter, Vanderbilt, So.	9-3	2.22	15	15	1	1/1	0	89.0	39	26	22	38	146	.129
SP	Kumar Rocker, Vanderbilt, Jr.	12-3	2.65	16	16	1	0/3	0	98.1	56	32	29	33	144	.160
SP	Nicholas Sinacola, Maine, Jr.	9-3	2.04	12	12	5	1/1	0	79.1	59	20	18	23	139	.208
SP	Andrew Taylor, Central Michigan, Fr.	11-4	1.81	15	15	5	2/2	0	94.1	64	21	19	24	125	.189
RP	Kevin Kopps, Arkansas, Sr.	12-0	0.68	31	0	0	0/3	11	79.2	43	6	6	15	120	.156
RP	Paul Skenes, Air Force, Fr.	1-1	2.70	18	0	0	0/1	11	26.2	20	10	8	9	30	.208

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