

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Kentucky's T.J. Collett Wins 2021 Senior CLASS Award for Baseball

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. (June 18, 2021) - Kentucky first baseman T.J. Collett has been selected as the 2021 Senior CLASS Award® winner in NCAA® Division I baseball.

The award, chosen by a vote of Division I baseball coaches, national baseball media and fans, is given annually to the most outstanding senior student-athlete in Division I baseball. Collett is the third student-athlete from the University of Kentucky to win the Senior CLASS Award, following Troy Squires (2018 baseball) and Katie Reed (2019 softball).

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*®, the Senior CLASS Award focuses on the total student-athlete and encourages students to use their platform in athletics to make a positive impact as leaders in their communities. To be eligible for the award, a student-athlete must be classified as an NCAA Division I senior and have notable achievements in four areas of excellence: classroom, community, character, and competition.

"My experience at the University of Kentucky has prepared me for whatever life throws at me," said Collett, who led Kentucky to a 29-23 record this season. "First, the standard set in our program by the coaches on the field has taught me what it means to give all that I have for my teammates. Second, the academic support given to me throughout my undergraduate degree and master's program allowed me to realize my full potential outside of sports. My education was a constant reminder that being a baseball player was just a small part of who I am as a person."

Collett arrived in Lexington in 2017 by way of his home of Terre Haute, Indiana. He had an injury-marred first season, resulting in only 20 games played for a Wildcat team that made their first-ever Super Regional appearance. Collett used a clean bill of health to explode onto the

scene during the first half of his sophomore year. In 34 games, he batted .304 with 38 hits, 10 home runs, 34 RBIs, and 27 runs scored. Collett tallied a career best .413 OBP but missed the final 20 games of the season to injury. He committed to recovering once more and was able to start in 40 of his 47 games played during his junior year. Collett had another tremendous season, batting .259 with 44 hits, 10 home runs, 40 RBIs and 26 runs scored. He was again off to an excellent start through 17 games last spring before the abrupt end to the season. Collett held a .290 batting average, recorded 20 hits, five home runs, 17 RBIs, and 13 runs scored.

Electing to return in 2021, Collett put together his best season to date. He started all 52 games for the Wildcats and notched a .301 batting average to go along with 59 hits, 16 home runs, 48 RBIs, and 39 runs scored. Collett tallied a career-best .607 slugging percentage and led the team in home runs, RBIs, and OPS (1.008). He was named the Player of the Week on April 26th by the SEC, NCBWA, and Collegiate Baseball.

For his career as a Wildcat, Collett hit .280 with 163 hits, 145 RBIs, and 106 runs scored. He also notched an impressive .373 OBP and .549 SLG% throughout his five years. Collett sits second on the Kentucky leaderboards in career home runs (42) and 10th in RBIs.

“T.J. has been an indispensable member of our program from the moment he stepped foot on campus, as much because of who he is off the field as his talent on it,” said Nick Mingione, who has been the head coach of the Wildcats for the last five years. “He has been a tremendous teammate, an exceptional student, and displayed a relentless servant’s heart in his work in the community. He is all that is right with college athletics.”

Collett graduated from the University of Kentucky last spring with a degree in communications. He was named to the SEC First-Year Academic Honor Roll in 2017 and SEC Academic Honor Roll from 2018-2020 for his persistence in his studies. Collett continued his diligence in the classroom this year, as he was able to complete his master’s degree in communications.

Arriving in Lexington in 2017, Collett quickly worked to create a better community for his peers. He has worked extensively with NEGU (Never Ever Give Up), the Jessie Rees Foundation. They connect families of young cancer patients, bring awareness to their stories, offer them resources, and send them messages of encouragement. Collett has worked with NEGU to

bring these children and their families to games to experience special activities on the field and in the dugout. He has also led an effort where his Wildcat teammates deliver joy jars filled with toys, games, and other items to young cancer patients. Collett was inducted into UK Athletics' Frank G. Ham Society of Character and named Mr. Wildcat last year, awarded to those who have displayed all-around excellence in athletics, academics, character, and service. He also received the 2019-20 Brad Davis SEC Community Service Award and is a two-time SEC Community Service Team member (2018, 2019).

"The athletics department and coaching staff welcomed my dream and vision of helping children with cancer in partnership with the Jessie Rees Foundation," said Collett. "It shows what our program stands for and believes in. Ultimately, I learned that confidence in yourself comes from within and who you surround yourself with. The University of Kentucky has provided me the confidence to be great in all aspects of life."

"T.J. Collett has been extremely dedicated in all aspects of being a student-athlete while in Lexington," said Erik Miner, Executive Director of the Senior CLASS Award. "His commitment in the classroom, in the community, and on the diamond make him a truly deserving recipient of this award. We are proud to offer our congratulations to T.J. Collett and the University of Kentucky for this incredible achievement."

For more information on each of the finalists, visit seniorCLASSaward.com.

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2021 Senior CLASS Award Baseball First Team All-Americans

Darren Baker, California

T.J. Collett, Kentucky

Alex Kachler, North Florida

Evan Russell, Tennessee

Rankin Woley, Auburn

2021 Senior CLASS Award Baseball Second Team All-Americans

Scotty Dubrule, Mississippi State

Brett Harris, Gonzaga

Jake Mulholland, Oregon State

Zach Pettway, UCLA

Andy Thomas, Baylor

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ABOUT THE AWARD

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Senior CLASS Award honors the attributes of senior student-athletes in four areas: community, classroom, character and competition. The award program is designed exclusively for college seniors who are utilizing their complete athletic eligibility, remaining committed to their university and pursuing the many rewards a senior season can bring. Premier Sports Management manages the award.

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