



DICK HOWSER TROPHY COMMITTEE

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Arkansas' Benintendi Chosen as 29th Dick Howser Trophy Recipient

OMAHA, Neb. – Arkansas do-it-all outfielder Andrew Benintendi, arguably having the best offensive season in Razorback history, is the 29th recipient of the Dick Howser Trophy, presented by Easton Foundations, as college baseball's Player of the Year.

Benintendi was honored Saturday at TD Ameritrade Park - home of the 2015 College World Series – as the first winner from the school in the prestigious history of the Howser Trophy.

The Dick Howser Trophy, given in memory of the former Florida State University All-America shortstop and Major League player and manager who died of brain cancer in 1987, is regarded by many as college baseball's most prestigious award. Criteria for consideration for the trophy include performance on the field, leadership, moral character, and courage, qualities which were exemplified by Dick Howser's life.

Benintendi is among the Top 15 in seven different NCAA Division I categories and enters the '15 NCAA World Series with a nation-co-leading 19 home runs, 55 RBI, a .380 batting average, .715 slugging percentage, a .489 on-base percentage, 158 total bases, and 23 stolen bases.

The 2015 Southeastern Conference Player of the Year also has become just the third student-athlete in SEC annals to lead the conference in home runs and batting average along with Rafael Palmeiro of Mississippi State in 1984 and Jeff Abbott of Kentucky in 1994. He also recently led the Razorbacks to their eighth all-time trip to the NCAA World Series and fourth trek since 2004 under head coach Dave Van Horn after winning the NCAA Fayetteville Super Regional over Missouri State.

The Cincinnati, Ohio, sophomore started 60 of Arkansas' 65 games as a freshman for the 2014 NCAA Regional qualifiers and raised his average some 104 points from one season to the next. He was largely responsible for UA's 2015 offense being one of the most potent since the 1989 NCAA World Series squad under head coach Norm DeBriyn and follows in the tradition of Razorback hitting standouts Kevin McReynolds, Johnny Ray, Tom Pagnozzi, Bubba Carpenter, and James McCann, among others.

The 5-10, 180-pound SEC Player of the Year also has a grocery cart of 2015 honors with many more to come. He has been named to four All-America teams, including the NCBWA first unit, was the NCBWA District Player of the Year and a first team All-SEC selection.

He also has become the first sophomore to capture the Dick Howser Trophy since Rice's Anthony Rendon (now a two-year regular with the National League Washington Nationals) in 2010. Benintendi is the third SEC standout to capture the top honor in college baseball since 2012 along with Florida's Mike Zunino in '12 and Kentucky's A.J. Reed, in 2014. He is the seventh SEC player in history to take top laurels.

He helped keep the Razorbacks in contention for the rugged SEC Western Division title, leading Arkansas to a strong regular season finish and victories in the Stillwater (Okla.) Regional and Fayetteville Super Regional. He provided the winning margin and key safeties in most of UA's 20 conference wins in 32 starts and played key defense with a .987 career fielding percentage since 2014.

The 2015 Louisville Slugger Collegiate Baseball National Player of the Year had the most home runs in a season by a Razorback since Danny Hamblin hammered 22 in 2007 for Dave Van Horn's squad. He was the seventh player selected overall in this week's Major League Baseball draft by the Boston Red Sox.

"Andrew Benintendi exhibits all the founding tenets of the Dick Howser with his ability, leadership, character, and courage on and off the field," said Howser Trophy chair David Feaster of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce. "The fact that he is just a sophomore speaks well how he has developed his baseball talents and has demonstrated great leadership as a young player. His performance at Arkansas and in the very competitive Southeastern Conference in 2015 has been remarkable."

Benintendi was one of five fellow collegiate stars who were 2015 Howser Trophy finalists along with UCLA relief ace and 2013 NCBWA Stopper of the Year David Berg, Vanderbilt starting pitcher Carson Fulmer, Vandy shortstop Dansby Swanson, and Miami (Fla.) third baseman David Thompson.

A Florida native, Howser was twice an All-America shortstop at Florida State (1957-58), then head coach of the Seminoles in 1979 after a career as a Major League player and coach. After one year in the college ranks, he returned to the majors to manage the New York Yankees and Kansas City Royals and won the World Series with the Royals in 1985. The baseball stadium on the Florida State campus is named for Howser.

NCBWA membership includes writers, broadcasters and publicists. Designed to promote and publicize college baseball, it is the sport's only college media-related organization, founded in 1962.

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; and Andrew Benintendi, Arkansas, 2015

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