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April 2, 2021



HOUSTON'S KELVIN SAMPSON IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2021 JOHN MCLENDON NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD

BOSTON, MA -- University of Houston head coach Kelvin Sampson is the recipient of the 2021 John McLendon award, which is presented annually to the top collegiate head coach and includes Division I, Division II, Division III, NAIA and NJCAA.

Despite losing four starters from last year's squad, Kelvin Sampson has guided Houston to a 28-3 record and the program's first trip to the Final Four since 1984.

Much like Coach McLendon, Sampson is a trailblazer in his own right. Born and raised in North Carolina, Sampson is the only Native American to ever to lead a program to the Final Four and he has now done it twice.

“It’s really no surprise that Kelvin Sampson has returned the Houston Cougars to national prominence,” said Joe Dwyer President of CollegeInsider.com. “Winning this award only further validates what most people in college basketball already know, Kelvin Sampson has been an outstanding coach for a long time.”

Houston finished 14-3 in the American Athletic Conference and had several players receive All-Conference honors. Junior guard Quentin Grimes was named the league's Player of the Year. Senior guard DeJon Jarreau was honored as the Defensive Player of the Year, while senior forward Justin Gorham was recognized as its Most Improved Player. Additionally, Gorham and Jarreau joined sophomore guard Marcus Sasser on the Second Team.

The four All-Conference selections were the most for the Cougars since five Cougars -- Derrick Daniels, David Diaz, Sam Mack, Bo Outlaw and Craig Upchurch -- were named to the 1992 All-Southwest Conference Second Team.

Since the 2017-18 season, Sampson has led the Cougars to a 104-23 overall record, two American Athletic Conference regular season titles and two NCAA Tournament appearances. The Cougars are also the winningest Division I men's basketball program in the state of Texas with 147 victories, 12 ahead of second-place Baylor.

The John McLendon Award is named after one of the true legends of the sport. A trailblazer and one of the true pioneers of the game, McLendon became the first African American coach to win an integrated national championship. His team went on to win the NAIA Division I Men's Tournament in 1957, 1958 and 1959, making him the first coach in history to win three consecutive NAIA championships.

In 1962 he became the first African American head coach in a major professional league (ABL) with the Cleveland Pipers. In 1966 he became the first African American head coach of predominantly white university, when he took over the Cleveland State program. He led the team to their best record in school history.

In 1969, McLendon was hired by the Denver Rockets and became the first African American head coach in the American Basketball Association. After a brief stint with the Rockets, McLendon ended his 25-year professional coaching career with a winning percentage of .760 and a lifetime career average of 523 victories and 165 losses.

