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HOUSTON'S JOSEPH TUGLER RECIPIENT OF 2025 LEFTY DRIESELL AWARD

The top defensive player in division I college basketball

SAN ANTONIO, TX -- Houston's Joseph Tugler is the recipient of the 2025 Lefty Driesell award, which is presented annually to the top defensive player in division I college basketball.

Tugler finished the regular season ranked third in the Big 12 and 23rd nationally with 2.0 blocks per game. He also pulled down 5.6 rebounds per contest. The 6-foot-8 sophomore is the anchor for a Houston team that is No. 1 in college basketball in defensive efficiency.

"Joseph Tugler is the kind of defensive anchor that every coach dreams of -- relentless, disciplined, and a game-changer on that end of the floor," said James Wilhelmi, Senior Analyst of CollegeInsider.com. "His ability to protect the rim and set the tone defensively makes him more than deserving of the Lefty Driesell Award. Simply put, he's a difference-maker."

Tugler has blocked at least one shot in all but three games with multiple blocks games in 18 games. He swatted eight shots against Alabama at the Players Era Festival, becoming the first Cougar to accomplish that feat since the 2005-06 season.

The Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year became only the sixth Cougar in school history to block 8+ shots in a single game, joining center Emmanuel Adeife, center Anwar Ferguson, forward Dwight Jones, center Hakeem Olajuwon and forward Bo Outlaw.

The Lefty Driesell award is named in honor of the legendary coach who spent over four

decades as a head coach.

Driesell won 786 games in 41 years at Davidson, Maryland, James Madison, and Georgia State. He ranks eighth on the NCAA career Division I coaches victories list and his teams at each stop were known for playing tenacious defense. From 1969-1986 at Maryland, his teams posted a 348-159 record, won two Atlantic Coast Conference regular season titles and one tournament title.

Driesell also led Davidson, Georgia State and James Madison to the NCAA tournament, making him one of three coaches to reach the NAAs with four different programs. His teams won a total of 16 regular season championships and six tournament championships.

Charles "Lefty" Driesell passed away on Feb. 17, 2024. He was 92.

LEFTY DRIESELL AWARD FINALISTS

Jadin Akins	6-4	Sr.	Michigan State
Zack Austin	6-7	Sr.	Pittsburgh
Ace Baldwin Jr.	6-1	Sr.	Penn State
TJ Bamba	6-5	Sr.	Oregon
Luke Bamgboye	6-10	Fr.	VCU
Jared Billups	6-4	Sr.	George Mason
Johni Broome	6-10	Sr.	Auburn
Alex Condon	6-11	So.	Florida
LJ Cryer	6-1	Sr.	Houston
Cooper Flagg	6-9	Fr.	Duke
Hayden Gray	6-4	Sr.	UC San Diego
Magoon Gwath	7-0	Fr.	San Diego State
Chucky Hepburn	6-2	Sr.	Louisville
Sion James	6-6	Sr.	Duke
Kobe Johnson	6-6	Sr.	UCLA
Denver Jones	6-4	Sr.	Auburn
Ryan Kalkbrenner	7-1	Sr.	Creighton
Tamin Lipsey	6-1	Jr.	Iowa State
Jahmai Mashack	6-4	Sr.	Tennessee
Bez Mbeng	6-4	Sr.	Yale
Stevie Mitchell	6-3	Sr.	Marquette
Micah Peavy	6-8	Sr.	Georgetown
Kadary Richmond	6-6	Sr.	St. John's
J'Wan Roberts	6-8	Sr.	Houston
Mitchell Saxen	6-10	Sr.	Saint Mary's

Devion Smith	6-0	Sr.	St. John's
JOSEPH TUGLER	6-8	So.	HOUSTON
Amari Williams	7-0	Sr.	Kentucky
Malcolm Wilson	7-0	Sr.	Queens
Zakai Zeigler	5-9	Sr.	Tennessee

PREVIOUS AWARD WINNERS

Boo Buie, Northwestern (2024); Caleb McConnell, Rutgers (2023); KC Ndefo, Saint Peter's (2022); Davion Mitchell: Baylor (2021); Juvaris Hayes, Merrimack (2020); Matisse Thybulle, Washington (2019); Jevon Carter, West Virginia (2018); Jevon Carter, West Virginia (2017); Vashil Fernandez, Valparaiso (2016); Darion Atkins, Virginia (2015); Elfrid Payton, UL-Lafayette (2014); Tommy Brenton, Stony Brook (2013); Anthony Davis, Kentucky (2012); Kent Bazemore, Old Dominion (2011); Jarvis Varnado, Mississippi State (2010).

ABOUT COLLEGEINSIDER.COM

Established in 1996, CollegeInsider.com has been at the forefront of promoting college basketball online. In the July 27, 1998, issue of ESPN the Magazine, College Insider was ranked No. 24 on the magazine's list of *99 Things to do Before you Die*. College Insider created the Mid-Major Top 25[®], the measuring stick for men's and women's programs outside of the proverbial power leagues, and has 18 national awards presented annually, including the Lute Olson Award, Lou Henson Award, and the John McLendon Award. The CollegeInsider.com All-Access series has been nominated for 5 Emmy Awards and won 2013 Emmy, for its' feature on New York City Basketball (Iona, LIU-Brooklyn and Manhattan). CI also created *This Game No Secret*, which debuted during the 2016 CIT and now has become an annual event, which has included programs like Duke, Houston, Miami, Ohio State, Ole Miss, Texas and Virginia.

NOTE: Portions of the press release came from University of Houston releases.

