

# Heart of a Tiger: Tiger athletes earn national Academic All-American honors

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By Tisa Mason

HAYS, Kan. - In 1952, a group known as the College Sports Communicators (CSC) created a new accolade called the "Academic All-America" program to recognize student-athletes who excel in the classroom and athletic competition. The program is known today as the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) Academic All-American program, and to qualify for consideration, a student-athlete must be a starter or play an important role as a reserve or substitute with at least a 3.30 cumulative grade point average (on a 4.0 scale) at their current institution.

This academic year, ten Tiger athletes earned Academic All-American honors. This was the most in the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and by far the most in FHSU's history. Fort Hays State has produced 68 Academic All-America selections since our first selection in 1975.

Creating an Academic All-Americans legacy at FHSU is no small task. It takes great coaches who recruit and develop superb talent and faculty who challenge and mentor our student-athletes. It also takes dedicated professional staffers like Ryan Prickett, the sports information director for Tiger Athletics. This year, he was the prime mover behind this remarkable rise in Academic All-Americans. Ryan puts the nomination packages together each year, and the process is extensive. To create a nomination package for a worthy student-athlete, Ryan creates a summary write-up of their accomplishments that he submits for consideration to the voting members of CoSIDA. As a voting member, Ryan says he reviews several hundred nomination packages each year and makes just a handful of selections.

"We are limited in the number of individuals I am allowed to nominate in each sport, and it fluctuates a bit from sport to sport," Ryan said. "Since all of the schools that are members of the College Sports Communicators group can vote on the Academic All-America team, competition is fierce." Ryan stays in close contact with Tiger Athletics coaches throughout the school year as part of his nomination process.

2023 Academic All-America selectee, women's golfer Morgan Brasser, said she cried when she heard the news. "It's tough to describe how good this felt," Morgan said. "I struggled on the golf course my first couple of years, but things just seem to have come together this year."

Sprinter Hayden Albright and Javelin thrower Addie Berens were surprised to learn of their Academic All-America selections. They had no idea their coaches and Ryan were positioning them as candidates.

"I wasn't really looking for the recognition. I know that studying hard and competing at the highest level is what I need to do," said Hayden, an informatics major from Kingman, Kan.

Addie came to FHSU from little Tampa, Kan. (population just over 100) to pursue her dream of becoming an elementary school teacher. Coach McCullough didn't recruit her, but that didn't stop her from asking him if she could join the Team as a walk-on athlete. Addie went on to

compete at Nationals during her freshman year. She, too, was surprised when she learned of her selection.

“I didn’t know it was a “thing,” Addie said. “It’s a definite honor. It feels good to know our athletics program goes to these lengths to recognize our performance in track and the classroom.”

Track and Field coach Jason McCullough, an accomplished student-athlete himself at FHSU, was a five-time Academic All-America selectee. This year, Coach McCullough’s men’s and women’s teams’ six Academic All-America honors were the most for any Tiger Athletics team. He thinks the close-knit culture that defines Tiger Athletics is the primary driver behind the remarkable number of Academic All-America selections this year. He said:

*“We value not only the athletic successes of our student-athletes as competitors, but we also value the successes they exhibit in the classroom and as good human beings. I want to bring attention to other principles we cultivate in our student-athletes: commitment to excellence, dedication, teamwork, attitude, and total belief in yourself, your teammates, and your coaching staff.”*

Congratulations to our 2023 Academic All-America selectees listed below. Each of you is a superb ambassador for your sport, Tiger Athletics, and Fort Hays State University.

#### **2023 CoSIDA Academic All-Americans**

- Baseball – Ed Scott
- Football – Alex Schremmer
- Men’s Track and Field – Ryan Stanley, Hayden Albright, Ethan Lang, and Xavier Robinson
- Women’s Golf – Morgan Brassler
- Women’s Soccer – Isabel Robbe
- Women’s Track and Field – Mattie Rossi and Addie Berens

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