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JOHN R. WOODEN AWARD® PRESENTED BY WENDY'S® REVEALS 2015-16 PRESEASON TOP 50

LOS ANGELES (November 17, 2015) – The John R. Wooden Award presented by Wendy's announced its Preseason Top 50 today on ESPN's SportsCenter and on ESPN.com. Chosen by a preseason poll of national college basketball experts, the list is comprised of 50 student-athletes who are the early front-runners for college basketball's most prestigious individual honor.

The Wooden Award Preseason Top 50 features three returning Wooden Award All Americans: Ron Baker (Wichita State), Malcolm Brogdon (Virginia) and Kyle Wiltjer (Gonzaga). The list also highlights stars from the 2015 NCAA Tournament: Grayson Allen of NCAA National Champion Duke; two players from NCAA Runner-Up Wisconsin, Nigel Hayes and Bronson Koenig; Gonzaga's Kyle Wiltjer, and Domantas Sabonis; Notre Dame's Zach Auguste; Michigan State's Denzel Valentine. Other notables include Daniel Hamilton, a 2014 Wooden Award High School Player of the Year while at St. John Bosco High School and Kris Dunn of Providence, who finished last season ranked third nationally in assists per game (7.5).

Several universities boast multiple players on the list. Indiana (James Blackmon, Jr., Yogi Ferrell and Troy Williams) and Kentucky (Skal Labissiere, Jamal Murray and Tyler Ulis) lead the honors with three candidates apiece, while Baylor, California, Duke, Gonzaga, Iowa State, Maryland, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Virginia, Wichita State and Wisconsin each have two players each on the Preseason Top 50.

The trend of recognizing outstanding freshman continues with seven named to the list: Jaylen Brown of California; Brandon Ingram of Duke; Skal Labissiere and Jamal Murray of Kentucky; Ben Simmons of Louisiana State; Malik Newman of Mississippi State; and Jalen Brunson of Villanova.

The Top 50 nominees represent 10 conferences. The Big Ten leads all conferences with 10 selections, followed by the ACC (9), and the Big 12 (7), SEC (7), Pac-12 (5), Big East (4) and WCC (3). The American and Missouri Valley Conference each have two players selected and the Atlantic 10 has one player selected.

The players on the list are considered strong candidates for the 2016 John R. Wooden Award presented by Wendy's. The Wooden Award National Advisory Board will select 25 players to the Midseason Top 25 in early January. In early February, the John R. Wooden Award will announce one final leading candidate list—the Late Season Top 20—prior to the selection of 15 players to the National Ballot. Nearly 1000 voters will rank order 10 of those 15 players, who have been qualified as meeting the standards set forth by Coach Wooden. Voting will open prior to the start of the NCAA Tournament and will allow voters to take into consideration performance during the early round games. The Wooden Award All American Team will be announced the week of the "Elite Eight" round of the NCAA Tournament. The winner of the John R. Wooden Award will be announced during the ESPN College Basketball Awards Show presented by Wendy's on Friday, April 8, 2016.

About the John R. Wooden Award

The 40th annual presentation of the John R. Wooden Award will take place during the ESPN College Basketball Awards Show presented by Wendy's. Texas Tech Head Men's Basketball Coach, Tubby Smith, will be presented with the Legends of Coaching trophy during the show as well. The Wooden Award Weekend, April 7-9, 2016, will honor the male and female Wooden Award winners, the top 5 All Americans, and the Legends of Coaching recipient, Coach Tubby Smith.

(more)

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Wooden Award 2-2-2-2

Created in 1976, the John R. Wooden Award is the most prestigious individual honor in college basketball. It is bestowed upon the nation's best player at an institution of higher education who has proven to his or her university that he or she is making progress toward graduation and maintaining a minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA. Previous winners include such notables as Larry Bird ('79), Michael Jordan ('84), Tim Duncan ('97), Candace Parker ('07 and '08), Kevin Durant ('07), Maya Moore ('09 and '11), Trey Burke ('13) and Doug McDermott ('14). Wisconsin's Frank Kaminsky won the 2015 John R. Wooden Award presented by Wendy's.

Since its inception, the John R. Wooden Award has contributed close to a million dollars to universities' general scholarship fund in the names of the All-American recipients. The Award has also sent more than 1,000 underprivileged children to week-long college basketball camps in the Award's name. Additionally, the John R. Wooden Award partners with the Special Olympics Southern California (SOSC) each year to host the Wooden Award Special Olympics Southern California Basketball Tournament. The day-long tournament, which brings together Special Olympics athletes and the All Americans, takes place at the Los Angeles Athletic Club the weekend of the John R. Wooden Award presentation.

Follow the candidates and get the latest news throughout the season by liking the Wooden Award Facebook page or following @WoodenAward on Twitter and Instagram. For more information on the John R. Wooden Award, please contact Ernest Baskerville at 213-630-5231 or via email at woodenaward@laac.net.

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2015-16 John R. Wooden Award Presented by Wendy's Preseason Top 50 Nominees

Name	Height	Class	Position	University	Conference
Grayson Allen	6-5	Soph.	G	Duke	ACC
Zach Auguste	6-10	Sr.	F	Notre Dame	ACC
Ron Baker [#]	6-4	Sr.	G	Wichita State	Missouri Valley
DeAndre' Bembry	6-6	Jr.	F	St. Joseph's	Atlantic 10
James Blackmon, Jr.	6-4	Soph.	G	Indiana	Big Ten
Malcolm Brogdon [#]	6-5	Sr.	G	Virginia	ACC
Jaylen Brown	6-7	Fr.	F	California	Pac-12
Jalen Brunson	6-3	Fr.	G	Villanova	Big East
Kyle Collinsworth	6-6	Sr.	G	BYU	WCC
Kellen Dunham	6-6	Jr.	G	Butler	Big East
Kris Dunn	6-4	Jr.	G	Providence	Big East
Perry Ellis	6-8	Sr.	F	Kansas	Big 12
Yogi Ferrell	6-0	Sr.	G	Indiana	Big Ten
Rico Gathers	6-8	Sr.	F	Baylor	Big 12
Anthony Gill	6-8	Sr.	F	Virginia	ACC
Daniel Hamilton	6-7	Soph.	G/F	Connecticut	The American
A.J. Hammons	7-0	Sr.	C	Purdue	Big Ten
Nigel Hayes	6-8	Jr.	F	Wisconsin	Big Ten
Buddy Hield	6-4	Sr.	G	Oklahoma	Big 12
Danuel House	6-7	Sr.	G	Texas A&M	SEC
Brandon Ingram	6-9	Fr.	G/F	Duke	ACC
Demetrius Jackson	6-1	Jr.	G	Notre Dame	ACC
Brice Johnson	6-10	Sr.	F	North Carolina	ACC
Damian Jones	7-0	Jr.	C	Vanderbilt	SEC
Bronson Koenig	6-4	Jr.	G	Wisconsin	Big Ten
Skal Labissiere	6-11	Fr.	F	Kentucky	SEC
Jake Layman	6-9	Sr.	F	Maryland	Big Ten
Caris LeVert	6-7	Sr.	G	Michigan	Big Ten
Nic Moore	5-9	Sr.	G	SMU	The American
Monte Morris	6-3	Jr.	G	Iowa State	Big 12
Jamal Murray	6-4	Fr.	G	Kentucky	SEC
Malik Newman	6-3	Fr.	G	Mississippi State	SEC
Georges Niang	6-8	Sr.	F	Iowa State	Big 12
Marcus Paige	6-2	Sr.	G	North Carolina	ACC
Gary Payton II	6-3	Sr.	G	Oregon State	Pac-12
Jakob Poeltl	7-0	Soph.	F	Utah	Pac-12
Taurean Prince	6-8	Sr.	F	Baylor	Big 12
Xavier Rathan-Mayes	6-4	Soph.	G	Florida State	ACC
Domantas Sabonis	6-11	Soph.	F	Gonzaga	WCC
Ben Simmons	6-10	Fr.	F	LSU	SEC
D'Vauntes Smith-Rivera	6-3	Sr.	G	Georgetown	Big East
Kaleb Tarczewski	7-0	Sr.	C	Arizona	Pac-12
Isaiah Taylor	6-3	Jr.	G	Texas	Big 12
Melo Trimble	6-3	Soph.	G	Maryland	Big Ten
Tyler Ulis	5-9	Soph.	G	Kentucky	SEC
Denzel Valentine	6-5	Sr.	G	Michigan State	Big Ten
Fred VanVleet	6-0	Sr.	G	Wichita State	Missouri Valley
Tyrone Wallace	6-5	Sr.	G	California	Pac-12
Troy Williams	6-7	Jr.	F	Indiana	Big Ten
Kyle Wiltjer [#]	6-10	Sr.	F	Gonzaga	WCC

[#] indicates player selected as a 2014-15 Wooden Award All American

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