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# Five finalists for Honda-Broderick Cup announced

Four members of NCAA Division I team national champions and one individual national champ are finalists for the Honda-Broderick Cup, which goes to the Collegiate Woman Athlete of the Year.

The finalists were announced Monday from among 12 individual sports winners. The Honda-Broderick Cup will be awarded June 22 in New York.

## *The finalists:*

- [Jennifer Barringer](#), Colorado (track and field).
- [Nicole Fawcett](#), Penn State (volleyball).
- [Courtney Kupets](#), Georgia (gymnastics).
- [Danielle Lawrie](#), Washington (softball).
- [Renee Montgomery](#), Connecticut (basketball).

Voting for individual sports awards and to select the finalists was from among more than 1,000 NCAA-member institutions. The winner will be selected by the Collegiate Woman Athlete of the Year board of directors.

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## **Jenny Barringer**

Senior Jenny Barringer of Colorado is used to first-place finishes. The NCAA champion in the steeplechase and recordholder in six other events is a finalist for the Honda-Broderick Cup.

"To rise to the top of such a fabulous group of women is really quite an honor," Barringer said. "I've looked at the women who have been honored with the top track and field award over the past years, and it's really special to be among some of those great names."

In addition to dominating at the college level, Barringer ran on the world's biggest stage, competing in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Barringer placed ninth in the steeplechase in Beijing, setting an American record of 9:22.26.

"It's a very humbling experience to find yourself in a whole community full of world-class athletes," Barringer said. "In your hometown or in college athletics you may be the top dog, but to find yourself in a whole community of elite people is really something special."

Though her college career will be over after cross country season in the fall (she says she plans to return), Barringer said she will always be a runner.

"I'm excited to hopefully continue on as a professional," she said. "Whether I run professionally or go on to another career, running is always going to be a part of my life."

*By Cory Francer*

### **Nicole Fawcett**

Nicole Fawcett walked off the Qwest Center floor in Omaha four years ago following a 3-2 loss to Stanford in her first collegiate volleyball match. Little did she know that four years later, her college volleyball career would end on that same floor, against Stanford. The only difference was this time she was hoisting the second of back-to-back national title trophies.

Fawcett has one more chance to add an award to her long list of collegiate accomplishments. Fawcett has been named one of five finalists for the Honda-Broderick Cup, given to the top collegiate female athlete.

"I mean, I was already blown away when I even got selected just for volleyball," Fawcett said. "So being a finalist is just such an amazing compliment. You look at all the athletes around and how many there are, and there's so many great athletes. To be in that select few, you couldn't ask for nicer recognition."

The three-time, first-team All-American began her college career that night against Stanford and immediately burst onto the national scene. She finished the match tied for a team-high 17 kills. But as a team the Nittany Lions struggled to get anything going offensively and hit .175 as a team and lost 3-2.

"We got absolutely blown out of the water," Fawcett said. "We looked like we'd never seen the game of volleyball before in our lives when we first started as freshmen."

But how quickly things changed. Penn State went on to finish the 2005 season 31-3, and Fawcett was the National Freshman of the Year. During her career Fawcett helped anchor one of the most successful runs in NCAA volleyball history. From 2005-2008 the Nittany Lions finished 135-8, including a 78-2 record in the Big Ten.

Penn State finished 2008 38-0, joining Long Beach State University (1998), Nebraska (2000) and Southern California (2003) as the only teams to finish the season undefeated. Penn State has a 64-match winning streak, longest in Division I history.

In 2006 outside hitter Megan Hodge arrived at Penn State to complement Fawcett. During their three seasons together, Hodge and Fawcett combined for more than 3,000 kills.

Hodge will be a senior next season.

"Volleyball is a team sport," Fawcett said. "You win everything because of your team. We, I guess, really stressed that my senior year. I really gained an understanding about what a team really is and about helping each other. It's not about winning and being a good player, it's about how good a teammate you really are."

*By Brent Foster*

### **Courtney Kupets**

For world champion and Olympic medalist Courtney Kupets, one more trophy shouldn't be a big deal. Her gymnastics career has spanned two decades and earned her a lifetime of bragging rights, but Kupets, who turns 23 next month, remains humble when discussing what it's like to be a Honda-Broderick Cup finalist for the second time.

"Out of all the sports it's crazy to think that I'm someone up for it," she said. "It just makes me go, 'Are you serious?' Everyone works so hard, and for only one gymnast to be a finalist and for it to be me is just awesome."

Kupets is the only gymnast to win at least one national title in each of the five events, and she finished her collegiate career as the all-time leader in NCAA individual championships with nine. That, combined with her performance at the 2004 Olympics, makes for a quite impressive resume, but it's not that simple. Kupets had her most successful season after tearing her Achilles tendon last year, the second time she had done so.

Suzanne Yoculan, Georgia gymnastics coach for 26 years, called Kupets the best gymnast she has seen: "She's so

consistent and mentally tough. For her to win four national titles and be ranked No. 1 after coming off an injury speaks volumes about her talent and mental strength."

*By Jill Shatzen*

### **Danielle Lawrie**

When the No. 2 pitcher on Washington's softball team quit in September, coach Heather Tarr was left with a hole in the rotation behind ace Danielle Lawrie. Upon hearing the news, Lawrie walked into her coach's office and said just one thing: "I can pitch every game if you want me to."

Tarr worried that Lawrie's right arm might not hold up for a whole season.

"We were always wondering if one pitcher could actually carry us to a championship," Tarr said.

The coach got her answer this month as Lawrie led the Huskies to two victories against top-seeded Florida to take home the program's first Women's College World Series title. Lawrie pitched 442/3 innings in Washington's six WCWS games, earning five wins. Lawrie appeared in 52 of the Huskies' 63 games in 2009, and her 42 wins and 3522/3 innings were the most in Division I.

"She literally put this team on her back," Tarr said.

The 22-year-old from British Columbia deflected praise when told she is a finalist for the Honda-Broderick Cup, given to the top college female athlete.

"It's nice to have the achievement, but if your team isn't there with you, you can't really do well," Lawrie said. "Everyone contributes. I'm just the one that has the ball in my hand."

*By Robert Klemko*

### **Renee Montgomery**

After an undefeated season and an NCAA title in her senior year at Connecticut, Renee Montgomery continues to expand her resume. She is one of five finalists for the Honda-Broderick Cup, given to the athlete deemed the collegiate woman athlete of the year.

Montgomery is used to being part of the talented few; she is one of three Huskies players to reach 1,500 points and 500 assists for her career. She also is the only player in Connecticut history to rank in the team's top 10 in points (1,977), assists (500), steals (266) and three-pointers (251).

She has 147 career starts, 139 of them in a row — the most consecutive starts not only in team history but also in Division I. She became the first person to have her jersey added to the "Huskies of Honor" by the school while an active player, all on her way to graduating as a communications major with a 3.1 grade-point average.

Montgomery was selected by the Minnesota Lynx with the fourth overall pick of the WNBA draft in April, and she has played in every game this season.

"It was a great feeling," she told news reporters at the draft, "to hear your name being called after years and years of hard work. To just hear your name called and know that you're now a professional athlete."

*By Eric H. Lewis*

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