

Contact Information:

College Insider, Inc.
Natalie Rivers
(781) 414-1698
natalie_rivers@collegeinsider.com

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2025-26 LUTE OLSON AWARD EARLY SEASON WATCH LIST

The top players in division I college basketball

BOSTON, MA -- CollegeInsider.com has announced the 'Early Season Watch List' for the 2025-26 Lute Olson award, which is presented annually to the top player in division I college basketball.

The award is named in honor of Hall of Fame coach Lute Olson, who won 776 games in 34 seasons, 24 of which were spent at the University of Arizona. During that stretch he led the Wildcats to 11 Pac-10 Conference titles, 23 consecutive NCAA Tournaments, four Final Four appearances and a National Championship in 1997.

Olson is one of just 25 head coaches in NCAA history to win 700 or more games (all divisions) and ranks ninth on the Division I career victories list. He finished with a winning percentage of .731 and is the all-time winningest coach in Arizona history with 587-190 record (.755). He was named Pac-10 Coach of the Year seven times.

Olson also guided Arizona to 20 consecutive 20-win seasons and is one of only three coaches in NCAA history to record 29 or more 20-win seasons.

In 2002, Olson was enshrined into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Coach Olson passed away on August 27, 2020.

The recipient of the annual award is determined by a 10-member voting committee, which consists of current and former head coaches, as well as two senior staff members of collegeinsider.com.

The 2026 award will be announced in Indianapolis, IN, site of the men's Division I Basketball Championship.

LUTE OLSON AWARD EARLY SEASON WATCH LIST

Darius Acuff Jr.	6-3	Fr.	Arkansas
Christian Anderson	6-2	So.	Texas Tech
Chad Baker-Mazara	6-7	Sr.	USC
Cameron Boozer	6-9	Fr.	Duke
Jaden Bradley	6-3	Sr.	Arizona
Ryan Conwell	6-4	Sr.	Louisville
AJ Dybantsa	6-9	Fr.	BYU
Zuby Ejiofor	6-9	Sr.	St. John's
Jeremy Fears Jr.	6-2	So.	Michigan State
Ja'Kobi Gillespie	6-1	Sr.	Tennessee
Graham Ike	6-9	Sr.	Gonzaga
PJ Haggerty	6-4	Jr.	Kansas State
Keyshawn Hall	6-7	Sr.	Auburn
Joshua Jefferson	6-9	Sr.	Iowa State
Trey Kaufman-Renn	6-9	Sr.	Purdue
Yaxel Lendeborg	6-9	Sr.	Michigan
Tamin Lipsey	6-1	Sr.	Iowa State
Nick Martinelli	6-7	Sr.	Northwestern
Duke Miles	6-2	Sr.	Vanderbilt
Boopie Miller	6-0	Sr.	SMU
Koa Peat	6-8	Fr.	Arizona
Darryn Peterson	6-6	Fr.	Kansas
Labaron Philon, Jr.	6-4	So.	Alabama
Emanuel Sharp	6-3	Sr.	Houston
Braden Smith	6-3	Sr.	Purdue
Hannes Steinbach	6-11	Fr.	Washington
Darrion Williams	6-6	Sr.	NC State
Bruce Thornton	6-2	Sr.	Ohio State
JT Toppin	6-9	Jr.	Texas Tech
Caleb Wilson	6-10	Fr.	North Carolina

PREVIOUS AWARD WINNERS

Cooper Flagg, Duke (2025); Zach Edey, Purdue (2024); Jaime Jaquez Jr., UCLA (2023); Johnny Davis, Wisconsin (2022); Luka Garza, Iowa (2021); Payton Pritchard, Oregon (2020); Ja Morant, Murray State (2019); Jalen Brunson, Villanova (2018); Caleb Swanigan, Purdue (2017); Denzel Valentine, Michigan State (2016); Cameron Payne, Murray State (2015); Doug McDermott, Creighton (2014); Shane Larkin, Miami (2013); Doug McDermott, Creighton (2012); Kemba Walker, Connecticut (2011); Sherron Collins, Kansas (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.

