



## **SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR NOMINATION**

**Individual/Team Name:** Norfolk Tides

**Sport:** Baseball

**Connection to Virginia:** AAA Affiliate for the Baltimore Orioles  
Based in Norfolk, VA

### **2023 Achievement(s):**

- 2023 AAA National Champions
- 90-59 record, International League regular season champions
- Defeated the Durham Bulls in best-of-3 series to win the International League Championship
- Defeated Oklahoma City from the Pacific Coast League to win the AAA National Championship
- 90 wins set a AAA franchise record
- Buck Britton – 2023 International League Manager of the Year
- 2023 Minor League Team of Year – Baseball America

## Will Driscoll

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**From:** Virginia Sports Hall of Fame <info@vasportshof.com>  
**Sent:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** Will Driscoll  
**Subject:** Sportsperson of the Year Award Entry

**Name of Team**

Norfolk Tides

**Sport(s)**

Baseball

**Connection to Virginia**

AAA Affiliate for the Baltimore Orioles, based in Norfolk, VA

**Significant Athletic Achievement in 2023**

2023 AAA National Champions

**Nominee Contact Information (email or phone)**

Joe Gregory, [JGregory@norfolktides.com](mailto:JGregory@norfolktides.com)

If there are any additional accolades, accomplishments, or comments you would like the Hall of Fame to consider as it reviews your nomination, please list them here (500 words

or less). Please include links to articles or news stories, and online biographical information in the space provided

<https://www.milb.com/news/norfolk-tides-win-triple-a-national-championship>  
<https://www.pilotonline.com/2023/10/01/tides-hold-on-to-win-triple-a-national-championship-game-adding-glory-after-international-league-title/>

Please include any documents that details the student's academic and athletic achievements, and community contributions; this includes letters of support/recommendation and student essay.

 [Tides.jpg](#)

**Nominator Name**

Howard Gordon

**Nominator Email**

[hgordon@williamsmullen.com](mailto:hgordon@williamsmullen.com)

**Nominator Phone Number**

(757) 478-7881

**All nomination materials must be received together**

Acknowledged



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Via: Electronic Mail:

Will Driscoll, Executive Director  
Virginia Sports Hall of Fame  
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Re: Sports Person of the Year Award

Dear Will:

It is my honor to nominate the 2023 Norfolk Tides, with Joe Gregory, General Manager, Buck Britton, Manager and Ken Young, General Partner of Tides Baseball, to be the recipient of the Sports Person of the Year Award for 2023. Clearly the Tides' accomplishments, beginning in April of 2023, and culminating in late September as both the Champions of the International League and then of Triple A Baseball entitles the team and its management to this Award.

The Tides' sportsmanship and the entire organization's respect for and positive impact on Hampton Roads is exemplary. Attendance at Tides' games in 2023 set an all time record. Winning 90 games and the first half of the International League season contributed to this success. However, the quality of the baseball and the major league prospects playing at Harbor Park positively affected sports and the sports culture of Hampton Roads.

The Tides are a first class operation; from the care taken to the field, to its treatment of the players and, most importantly, its fans. The Tides could not be better. This was further verified as the Tides were honored by Baseball America as the Minor League Team of the Year.

Based on the accomplishments of the Tides and its organization, both on and off the field, I hope that the Hall's Awards Committee will agree with me that the Norfolk Tides should be recognized as the Sportsperson of the Year for 2023.

Very truly yours,



Howard E. Gordon

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SPORTS

## Norfolk Tides hold on to win Triple-A National Championship, adding glory after International League title



Tides manager Buck Britton (15) hoists the trophy after Norfolk defeated the Durham Bulls 7-0 in Game 3 of the International League Championship Series, at Harbor Park. He and his players got to a hoist the Triple-A championship trophy later that week in Las Vegas. BILLY SCHUERMAN/STAFF



By **STAFF REPORTS**

PUBLISHED: October 1, 2023 at 2:19 a.m. | UPDATED: October 1, 2023 at 2:57 p.m.

**LAS VEGAS** – While many of his teammates took batting practice before Saturday night's Triple-A National Championship Game, Colton Cowser stood in the Norfolk Tides' dugout at Las Vegas Ballpark and watched.

According to Tides radio broadcaster Pete Michaud, Cowser was tired of hitting home runs in BP and wanted to save something for the game.

Did he ever.

He slugged a 455-foot grand slam to center field Saturday night in the seventh inning, giving the Tides the lead for good on their way to a 7-6 victory over the Oklahoma City Dodgers in the one-game playoff for honors among the 30 affiliates at American minor league baseball's highest level. Cowser was named the game's MVP.



Connor Norby, who reached base in all five of his plate appearances, powered a two-run homer in the top of the ninth to put Norfolk ahead 7-2. That helped enable the Tides to survive the Dodgers' stirring, four-run comeback in the bottom of the ninth.

Norfolk Tides

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.@norby\_connor launched a two-run bomb in the 9th, providing much needed insurance against an incredible Oklahoma City club.

Norby absolutely showed out in the Triple-A Championship, finishing 3-for-3, 2 R, HR , 2 RBI, 2 BB

#RisingTide

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2:09 AM · Oct 1, 2023



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Just two nights before, the Tides [won the International League crown](#) in Game 3 of a series that attracted more than 20,000 fans to Harbor Park over a three-night span. That gave them the honor to fly to Nevada to face the Pacific Coast League champion Dodgers before a mostly neutral crowd of 8,556, though some Tides fans were gathered behind the first-base dugout as many of their supporters at home likely watched on MLB Network.

Facing eight Oklahoma City pitchers in nine innings, the Tides went ahead in the third inning. Norby singled and went to third when pitcher John Rooney threw wildly on a pickoff attempt. Cowser then was hit by a pitch, putting runners at first and third.

Dodgers third baseman Miguel Vargas threw out Norby at home after fielding Coby Mayo's grounder. Mayo tried to steal second and got in a rundown, enabling Cowser to score the night's



In the Dodgers' sixth, Vargas socked reliever Mike Baumann's first pitch for a double, then scored the go-ahead run on Jonny Deluca's one-out single to left.



Mike Caudill/The Virginian-Pilot

Norfolk Tides outfielder Colton Cowser, shown rounding third base earlier this season, hit a grand slam Saturday night and was named the Triple-A National Championship Game's MVP. MIKE CAUDILL/FREELANCE

Facing a 2-1 deficit, the Tides took control in the seventh. Lewin Diaz lined a one-out double off reliever off Alec Gamboa. Pinch hitter Maverick Handley walked before Jackson Holliday, Baseball America's Minor League Player of the Year, flew to left for the second out.

Norby drew a walk, loading the bases, before Cowser fell behind 0-2 in the count. Tides manager Buck Britton had called the Triple-A title game the "cherry on top," and that's when Cowser provided a cherry "bomb" to give the Tides a 5-2 lead.

**Norfolk Tides**  
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**GO-AHEAD GRAND SLAM ALERT**

After going down 0-2 early, [@CowserColton](#) crushes a go-ahead grand slam 455 ft. to center field!

Cowser is flat out icy 🧊🧊🧊🧊

Tides lead 5-2 entering the 7th inning stretch!

[#RisingTide](#)

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Norby's homer in the ninth, which brought home Handley, seemed to give Norfolk a safe five-run margin, but the Dodgers provided a scare to Tides fans who were awake as September turned into October by going past midnight on the East Coast.

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.@norby\_connor launched a two-run bomb in the 9th, providing much needed insurance against an incredible Oklahoma City club.

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Reliever Nick Vespi, who closed the IL Championship Series on Thursday night, walked Jorbit Vivas but retired the next two hitters on outfield flies.

Drew Avans hit an RBI single, and Michael Busch belted a two-run homer to right to cut Norfolk's lead to 7-5. That prompted Britton to bring on reliever Joey Krehbiel, who yielded a homer to Vargas that trimmed the margin to 7-6.

Krehbiel then struck out Ryan Ward swinging to set off Norfolk's second celebration in three nights.

**Norfolk Tides**  
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FINAL | Norfolk 7, Oklahoma City 6

THE NORFOLK TIDES ARE YOUR 2023 TRIPLE-A CHAMPS!!

A well deserved season for an unreal squad!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

What a time to be alive in [#Birdland](#)

[#RisingTide](#)

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Veteran reliever T.J. McFarland, once a teammate of Britton's, gained the victory with 1 1/3 shutout innings of relief. After winning their first IL title in 38 years, the Tides had taken their first Triple-A crown in 40 years – while the parent Baltimore Orioles were preparing for the playoffs as American League East champions.

The return flight east was scheduled to leave at 6 a.m., according to Michaud, and there's no way many in the traveling party slept.



## Tides nab Triple-A National Championship crown

No. 2 Orioles prospect Cowser slugs decisive slam, wins MVP

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of the seventh.

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This scenario was nothing new for MLB's No. 14 overall prospect, who has been optioned from the Majors twice in the past two months, and the Norfolk Tides, who were a loss away from elimination in the International League Finals earlier in the week.

And the result was just as familiar.

Cowser drilled a 455-foot grand slam to give the Orioles' affiliate the lead for good, securing himself MVP honors as Norfolk edged Oklahoma City, 7-6, in the Triple-A National Championship on Saturday at Las Vegas Ballpark.



"It's something we've worked for the whole year," Cowser said. "Of course it ended up being close, but hey, that's how we've been playing it all year. So proud of our guys, proud of our staff, proud of organization. It's a really, really great feat that we just accomplished."

The Orioles' No. 2 prospect got the Tides' first hit of the night with a single in the first, quickly followed by a stolen base. Cowser entered the game 1-for-13 in the postseason, but that sole knock was a double in the IL Finals clincher against Durham.

"For a guy that's been struggling for a little bit to get down 0-2 against the lefty -- a tough lefty [Alec Gamboa] - and to come through, I'm so happy for him," Norfolk manager Buck Britton said of Cowser. "So proud of him. He just continues to grind, and he deserved a moment like that."

Cowser provided solid protection behind Connor Norby in the Tides' lineup. The Orioles' No. 7 prospect capped a three-hit night with what proved to be a vital two-run homer in the ninth with the Dodgers mounting a four-run final frame.

"Norby's been a dog all year for us," Britton said. "The year that he's had has been unbelievable. [He] sometimes flies under the radar a little bit with all the prospects we have here, but [his homer] ended up being the game-winner. We needed seven, and Norby seems to always be the right man in that spot to deliver for us, and it's incredible."

Norfolk, which boasted four of MLB's Top 50 overall prospects in its starting lineup Saturday -- including **No. 1 overall** Jackson Holliday -- claimed International League championship honors for the first time in 38 years on Thursday. The club won a franchise-record 90 games during the regular season and featured many key contributors to Baltimore's 2023 AL East division-winning squad.

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"I knew going in we were gonna have a lot of talent, but there was a lot of pressure to make sure that we got these guys to perform at a high level," Britton said. "They bought in, they made it easy for me. I love these guys.

"It's a real special feeling to be a part of their journey on the way up, and I can't wait to see what these guys do in the future."

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CONNOR NORBY, KYLE STOWERS, COLTON COWSER, COBY MAYO, JACKSON HOLLIDAY AND JOEY ORTIZ(SHAYNA GOLDBERG)

Reliever T.J. McFarland, whom the Orioles signed on July 22, got the win after working around a hit and a walk with two strikeouts in 1 1/3 scoreless innings.

The Dodgers got pitching help from rehabbing Los Angeles hurlers Yency Almonte and Ken Giles. Offensively, they were led by MLB's No. 44 overall prospect Michael Busch, who homered and doubled. Following Busch's ninth-inning blast, third baseman Miguel Vargas crushed a solo shot to make it a one-run game before Joey Krehbiel secured the final out for the Tides.

"Resiliency. And that's what we did," Norby said. "We've done it all year. We've had our ups and we've had our downs. We didn't make it easy on ourselves against Durham. And we didn't make it easy on ourselves tonight, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

"The way we handled ourselves all year and the way we battled through adversity all year and this team is just unreal. Unbelievable."

The latest ring marks the first Triple-A title for the franchise since the Tidewater Tides won the Triple-A World Series in 1983 as a Mets affiliate. The last Orioles Triple-A club to win the final Minor League title of the year



was the Rochester Red Wings, who snagged the Junior World Series in 1971.

**Norfolk Tides**  
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Speechless

2:17 AM · Oct 1, 2023



3.7K



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This championship is the latest accolade for an Orioles farm system that has been ranked No. 1 since the 2021 midseason rank. Gunnar Henderson is a strong candidate for AL Rookie of the Year, while Baltimore has its own exciting pennant chase.

“They draft a great group of guys and guys that come to work and want to work and just generally good guys that want to be around each other all the time,” Norby said. “We do more things off the field [together] than

we do on the field. It's such a close, close group all the way down to the bottom. That's who this org is and that's what they try to develop a lot off the field."

*Kelsie Heneghan is a writer for MiLB.com. Follow her on Twitter @Kelsie\_Heneghan.*

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