

Analyzing the TOP 10 Greatest Kentucky Horseshoe Pitchers In The Junior Boy's Division!

Continuing with the theme of comparing the greatest Kentucky players from each Division, we move to the Junior Boy's of Kentucky. Unlike previous lists, this one proved to be a tough comparison with factoring in progression of skill, age ranges and players of different eras and all done in shorter stints in this Division as the Juniors start horseshoes at different age and skill levels, then move on to the Men's. This list has been compiled by Robert Taylor with added thoughts and input from other knowledgeable and insightful KHPA minds. Here we go!

#1

Ronnie Meredith

3-time Kentucky State Junior Boy's Champion from 1990-92 and posted a 77.8% ringer average in 1992, a record which stood for many years. Ronnie also has the highest State game ever pitched in the Division at 95%. Ronnie's high arcing backswing is often mentioned as one of the unique characteristics in his pitching delivery. Ronnie is in a very small club of Junior Boys that have beaten 80% in a tournament and Ronnie did it a few times, notably, an 83.1% tourney in 1992 against some very tough competition. Ronnie had a 5-year run in the

Surprised?.. you shouldn't be.

Ronnie is noted for being a Division, qualifying For three World Championship classes with a best finish of 3rd in 1991. Ronnie was the champ of his World prelim class in 1992 and finished 7th in the Championship averaging 76%. The best example of Ronnie's stability and skill on court was his 3rd place showing in the 1991 World Championship, narrowly losing 2 games, pitching nothing below 72.2, with a 78.7% overall average!!



1991 RONNIE MEREDITH	9-2	469	596	78.7
Opponent	Score	R	SP	%
1. Karl Hix	41/0	30	34	88.2
2. Donnie Irby	41/8	26	36	72.2
3. Lionel McMahan	41/11	28	36	77.8
4. Tim Hytrek	44/15	28	38	73.3
5. Doug Macha	41/28	45	62	72.6
6. David Carley	42/6	24	32	75.8
7. Jeff Poutanen	40-39	67	88	76.1
8. Mark Mauthe	42/31	53	64	82.8
9. Vorn Ven	32/40	64	82	78.0
10. John Walters	41/8	44	50	88.0
11. Jim Walters	36/40	60	74	81.1



2008-2016. Coming in at the number two slot is Kentucky's most decorated Junior Boy, Tyler Howard! Tyler was destined for greatness from the first time he ventured into the KHPA at age 5. Tyler has real natural talent and during his nine year run in the Boy's Division, he racked up 2 World Championships and 7 State Championships. Tyler was too skilled for his own good at times, with the ability to pitch every turn in the book, sometimes hampering his focus but Tyler also had another gear that few possess and that is the ability to just zone in and put the hammer down! Tyler's best state average was 74.1% in 2015. Tyler also

Tyler Howard #2

broke 80% in 2014 at the Ted Sauer Open with an 80.7% tourney. Tyler won his first Boy's World Championship in 2015 going 8-1, working his way through a 3-way playoff, averaging 72.96%! An example of Tyler at his best was his 2016 World Championship run, where he averaged 76.3% overall and found that extra gear in the playoff rematch against Kentucky's Seth O'Nan. Tyler put the hammer down!!

2016 TYLER HOWARD	7-1	316	414	76.3
Opponent	Score	Rgrs	Shs	%
1. Gunnar David	44/14	39	52	75.0
2. Hayden Lee	40/16	29	40	72.5
3. Aaron Hanes	41/4	30	36	83.3
4. Devin Wetzel	41/25	33	46	71.7
5. Seth O'Nan	30/40	46	68	67.6
6. Dayton Campbell	41/28	57	72	79.1
7. Travis Sluys	42/16	45	58	77.5
Playoff. Seth O'Nan	40/4	37	42	88.1

Comments...

Deciding the top two spots was a tough and tight comparison between Ronnie & Tyler. I enlisted a panel of 5 trusted pitching minds to give feedback and review all of the major statistics. The deciding factors were the higher top end percentage levels, tournament performance, competition levels and age range. Ronnie's Junior career ended at age 16 and Tyler's ended at age 18. Tyler's world titles came at ages 17 & 18. These were the NHPA rules of these two different eras. Ronnie had a higher top end in skill by stats posted and Tyler had more titles won. Arguments can be made for either as your number 1 and both boys stand out as our greatest achievers!

#3 Seth O'Nan

2016-present. Moving from Cadets to Junior Boy's for the 2016 year, Seth O'Nan would hit the ground running. In his first Ky. event of 2016, Seth would post a 62% average! At the 2016 World, Seth won his prelim class with a 71.4% average and qualified for the Boy's Championship. Seth finished in 2nd place after losing to Tyler Howard in a playoff game. Seth was also 2nd to Tyler at the State Tourney with a 67.1% average. In 2017 Seth would take another leap forward and capture both of those titles! Seth was 7-0 at the World, averaging 72.9% and took his first state title at 4-1 for 55.5%. Seth had another strong year in 2018 with a runner-up finish in the World, narrowly losing his final game 36-40. Seth finished at 6-1 with a 72.3% average. Seth's high tourney was at the Lewis/Stiles where he finished 8-0 with an average of 79.7% a high game of 95%! Seth successfully defended his State Title in 2018 with an 81.5% tourney. Seth is a pitching dynamo! Look for another strong season in 2019!



Ben Webb

#4

2006-2015. When Ben started Pitching he had no natural talent and for his first two seasons he was just a happy-go-lucky kid that enjoyed pitching. It wasn't until 2009 that Ben's competitive drive began to show itself. Ben finished that year with a 29.7% Natstat and would follow that up in 2010 with a 45.1% Natstat. Ben would practice hard through the 2012 season and produce two State Boy's runner-up finishes. From there forward, Ben would achieve a #1 in the World ranking, capture two state titles in 2013 for 69.0% & 2014 for 79.1% and become a premier World Boy's contender. Ben qualified for the Boy's World Championship four times, finishing 3rd in 2013, averaging 68.7%, 3rd in 2014 averaging 69.3% and a best 2nd place in 2015 losing in a playoff game 106 shoe marathon 37-42 against Tyler Howard. Ben's high tourney ever was 84.8% in 2015, at Russell Springs. Ben averaged 74.7% in the 2015 World and was the winner of his prelim class with a 75.2% average.



#5

Tony Hankins

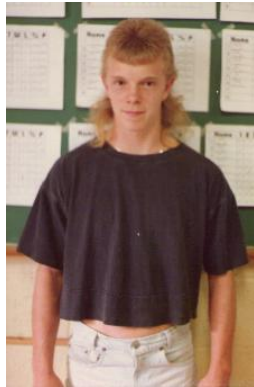


1979-1986. Tony Hankins' Junior progress started a little slower than some as he grew up in the sport through his Dad, John. Tony progressed well in 1985, pitching some tourneys up into the high 50% bracket. Tony made a good run at the 1985 State, losing in a playoff game to Duane McClurg. Tony averaged 59.7% in the runner-up slot, 4 tenths better than McClurg. Tony's 1986 final season would be his break-out year. Tony posted some impressive tournament numbers; Grassy Lick- 65.4%, Jessamine Co. 78.0%, Vanceburg- 71.0%, Tollesboro-

72.4%, Metro Classic- 72.9%. Elmer Webb Classic- 66.9% and 73.9% in the Millville Open. Tony would also capture the Junior Boy's World Championship in 1986 with a 13-2 record and average of 66.5% in a tough field of competitors. Tony capped off the year with his lone Boy's State Championship, going undefeated in six games with an average of 58.5%.

Greg Nalley #6

Dropping into the number six spot is Greg Nalley from Bardstown, KY. Greg participated in the Junior Boys Division from 1988-1991, capturing a state title in 1989. Greg was often over the 70% mark with his quick 1 ¼ turn. He posted the highest 2nd place percentage in KY Junior Boy's state tournament history with an impressive 73.3% in 1990.



In his lone World Tournament as a Junior, Greg finished 7th in 1990 against tough world championship competition with a solid 67.8% average. After leaving the Junior Division, Greg would go on to win a state title in the Men's Division in 1999 with a 70.3% average. He had a natural knack for throwing ringers and always stepped up his game a notch when it mattered the most.

Comments...

The Top 6 Juniors are a notch above the bottom 4. All six boys could average above the 70% mark and did so on many occasions. Positions 1 & 2 are pretty solidly above positions 3-6, which could be debated for a different line-up. Seth gets props for a fast strong start in the Division, Ben's foundation rocks are his willingness to battle strong against the tough competition as well as posting 3 strong seasons of play. Tony's World Title and a strong final year carry a lot of weight on his tally card. As Seth continues his title onslaught, he could challenge those top 2 spots in the future!

#7

Ricky Bell

1976-1980 Ricky Bell claimed 5 consecutive state boy's titles during these years. One impressive stat is that Ricky won all five of his state titles against multiple competitors, and in 26 total games, he did not lose a single one! Ricky's highest state ringer percentage was 63.2% in 1979. Ricky qualified for the Junior Boy's World Championship in 1979 and posted a 9th place finish, going 4-7 with an average of 56.9%. Ricky was a pretty solid percentage pitcher during all five Junior seasons ranging from the 40's up to the low 60's. Ricky's 2nd best state percentage was 59.0% in 1978. Pitching was a family affair with the Bell's, as Ricky's mother, sister and brother all won State Championships in their respective divisions.



Wesley Kemper #8

1995-2002. Wesley has 6 Boy's State Championships, the 2nd most in the Division. Wesley captured a Division B World Tournament Class title in 1999 finishing with 16 wins and 1 tie with an average of 57.65%. Wesley's peak year was in 2000, pitching a 64.6% tourney in the Ky. Out Of State Open and hitting a 66.3% tourney and a Class A win at the Ky. Indoor Open. Going into the 2000 World, Wesley carried an average of 61.4% and finished 9th in his Division A prelim with an average of 59.67%. Interest wained for Kemper in his final two seasons. By 2002, he only competed at the Millville Open & The State Singles winning his 6th and final state at 42.0%



#9

Jarrett Keith

2016-Present. Jarrett Keith has progressed in his pitching during his three years as a Kentucky junior to achieve a top ten ranking in the world. Jarrett began his horseshoe trek with a 23% first tourney, to a NATSTAT of 37.4% after his first season. In 2017, Jarrett would continue to develop his style and increase his average to 42.6%. It was in 2018 that Jarrett's progression made a huge leap forward. Jarrett would pitch all regular season tourneys in Kentucky but one and break 60% on four outings including his season high at the State Tournament of 64.9%. Jarrett has been the State Boy's runner-up the last two seasons. Jarrett also had a strong showing in his first World Tourney, qualifying for the Boy's Championship Class with a 5th place finish and an average of 59.2%. If his progression rate continues, look for Jarrett to be a real contender in 2019!



Comments...

I feel pretty comfortable with the order of positions 7 through 9. Ricky gets the edge with position 7 due to his proven Championship experience. I didn't have a lot of regular season stats with which to draw from on Ricky due to a lack of Junior results for that era. Wes Kemper had comparable averages and titles but lacked the competition during his State Title runs due to few entrants in the Boy's Division. Jarrett is an up and comer and will possibly surpass more numbers if his skill level increases as expected. Jarrett was impressive in his ability to battle strong against Seth and the other top World contenders during the 2018 season.

Alex Humes #10



2007-2013. Alex was a tough Junior horseshoe pitcher, finishing runner-up in the Ky. Boy's State three times. Alex battled two of the State's best in Tyler Howard & Ben Webb. In 2010, Alex moved his average into the 50's and had an awesome pitch in the State Doubles at 68.7%. Alex had a good 2011 season, carrying off a 64.3% tourney in Etown at the Omar Blacketer with a high game of 86%. The 2012, season saw Alex switch from a flip to a turn and produce a high tourney of 59.4% and qualify for his lone World Championship Class appearance, finishing 6th with a 54.9% average. In 2013, Alex's tourney bests were 59.5%, 59.0% & 59.7%, with the latter being his 7th and final State appearance.

Honorable Mentions...

Position 10 is debatable. The spot went to Alex Humes for his tough competition level and his ability to pitch many tourneys right at the 60% mark. Duane McClurg is a proven State Champ and won his State Title in a playoff game versus a tough Tony Hankins. McClurg



Averaged 59.3% in his 1985 State Title Run. McClurg was also able to break 60, Hitting a 61.2% tourney at the 1985 Vanceburg Open.

Another pitcher that deserves mention is Jeremiah Mullins. Jeremiah is a 4-time State Jr. Champion and reached the high 50's level of play. Jeremiah averaged 57.5% for his 2004 State Title and 58.3% in 2005 State Doubles Title with Dad, Walter. Through no fault of his own, Jeremiah did not have any competition to push his game to the next level. In his final Junior season, 2007, Jeremiah had lost interest and only pitched one event.

