

Analyzing the TOP 10 Greatest Men's Kentucky Horseshoe Pitchers

I thought it would be interesting to compile a list of Kentucky's All-Time Top 10 Men's players. I would like to begin by saying some of these players are really close in comparison and all of these players are elite pitchers. This list is for conversation and recognition of Kentucky's finest. The list was compiled by KHPA Historians Tony Hankins & Robert Taylor.

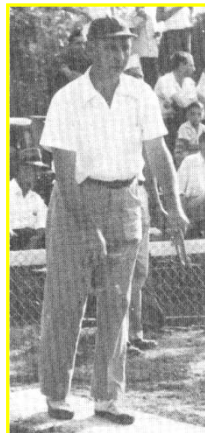
#1 Don Titcomb

Topping our list is the great Don Titcomb! Don is only Men's player in Kentucky that could call himself World Champion. Don was the 1960 Men's World Champion going 33-2 with an average of 84.8%. From 1953-1960 Don averaged above the 80% mark seven times in World Championship Class play with 3 runner-up finishes to go with his 1960 Championship. Don

moved to Kentucky in 1993 and staying until late 1996, competing in three Kentucky State Championships and winning two, with stiff completion from Charlie Meredith & Ron Powell. Don was 9-1 pitching 76.0% in 1993 and 8-1 pitching 74.0% in 1994.

James "Pop" Johnson #2

The name Pop Johnson evokes legendary status. "Pop" is the only Men's pitcher ever to break the 80% mark in Kentucky State Championship play. Johnson is a 4-time State Champ from 1947-1950. In 1949, Johnson finished with a record average of 82.5%. Pop Johnson qualified for the Men's World Championship Class ten times with a career best finish of 6th in 1952, averaging 77.4%. Johnson



stopped the longest World Tournament winning streak in history by defeating Fernando Isais 50-47 in a 108 shoe marathon. Johnson was also the Men's Intermediate World Champion in 1974 and the National Amateur Champion in 1945.

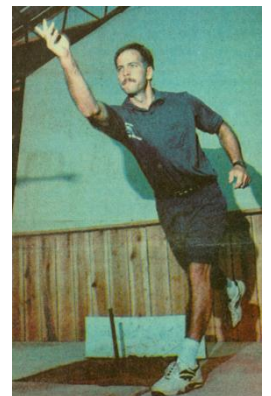
#3 Charlie Meredith

Charlie Meredith is the All-Time winner in Men's State Titles with eight: 1990, 1992, 95-98, 2012-13. Charlie has defeated some of the State's best in Don Titcomb, Ron Powell & Tony Hankins for his State Titles. Charlie holds the 3rd highest State average pitched in Kentucky at 79.2%. Charlie has qualified for the World Championship Class on more than five occasions with a career

Best 5th place finish in 2012, with 10 wins and 5 losses, averaging 72.1%. Charlie has surpassed the 80% barrier many times in tournament play with his soft 1 ¼ turn!

Ron Powell #4

Ronnie Powell hit the Kentucky Horseshoe scene in 1985 and by 1986 he had already claimed his first state championship. Powell would follow that up with three more consecutive titles 1987-89. Powell averaged over 70% in each of his title runs with a tough 77.8% average in the 1989 state. Powell would win his 5th and final Men's Title in 1991, posting a 79.7% average which ranks as the second all-time Men's State Tournament average pitched. Ron qualified for the Men's World Championship Class from 1989-1993 with a career best 6th place finish in 1990, averaging 76.1%.



#5 Jack Fahey

Rounding out the top 5 is “Kentucky Jack” Fahey. From 1976-1980 Jack posted a dominate run of five successive Men’s State Championships. Fahey posted 52 wins to only 3 losses during this five year stretch and averaged over the 70% mark each year with a high 76.9% in 1980. Fahey qualified for the World Championship Class ten times from 1975-1984 with a best finish of 7th in 1978

With 28 wins and 7 losses, averaging 75.0%. Jack averaged 76.4% in the 1979 World & 76.8% in 1981.

Comments...

Concluding the top 5 Kentucky All-time players, you could certainly entertain arguments as to a different order of these great players! The top 5 are definitely a notch above the bottom 5 in skill level as their percentage range would indicate but not necessarily in overall achievement. The difference between some of these listed positions is minimal. One commonality amongst the top 5 players is that once they reached their peak range, they were very consistent during their pitching careers, dipping only slightly with time or age.

Bill Henn**#6**

Bill Henn ranks #1 on the all-time list of Men’s State Championship games won at 172 wins and Bill is most likely our most well represented champion of all-time. He was a ringer force that won seven Men’s Titles in three different decades, 1969, 71-75 & 1984. Bill pitched over 70% in two of his states and a high of 72.0%.

Bill qualified for the Men’s World Championship Class in 1973 and finished with 21 wins, 14 losses and an average of 74.3%. Bill pitched for 22 years in the Men’s State Championship and was a tough player. Bill was the only player to post a win against Jack Fahey in the 1977 State and in Kentucky tourneys during the early 1970’s, Bill got the better of Pop Johnson on occasion. Bill’s average seemed to peak in the range of 74-75%.

#7 Tony Hankins

With a body of work that would appear to shadow that of our previous great on our list we come to Tony Hankins. Tony has 27 State Men’s Championship appearances And six titles to his credit: 2001-03, 05, 07 & 2009.

Tony’s breakout performance came in the 2001 State when he averaged 70.9%. Tony also beat the 70% mark in 2009 when he averaged 70.7%. Tony has a knack for getting focused in and battling tough with best players around. If he gets his head in the game he is capable of beating anyone. Tony has pitched in the World Championship Class four times with a best finish of 8th in 2003 with 12 wins, 11 losses at 70.4%.

**Matt Guy****#8**

Alexandria’s Matt Guy is the only player on this list to not have one a state title but his skill with the steel cannot be ignored. In The 1997 Ky. Indoor Open Matt Guy did what few in Kentucky have ever done by breaking the 80% barrier.

Matt averaged 83.5% for five games. Matt has also posted several regular season tourneys over 70%. Matt made some strong runs in the State Championship with



three runner-up finishes and five third place efforts. Perhaps Matt's best effort was in 1991 when he only lost one game to Ron Powell even though he pitched a 75.0% game. He finished in 2nd with an overall average of 69.8%. Matt battled Tony Hankins tough in 2001 and finished 3rd overall with a 69.1% average. Matt qualified for the 2003 World Championship Class and finished 18th with an average of 65.9%. If Matt Guy were to capture the elusive state title he could definitely project further up in the rankings.

#9 Walter Mullins

Coming in at the #9 slot is a two-time State Champion, Walter Mullins. Walter is the 2004 and 2006 Champ and has six 2nd place finishes. The only thing that can keep this champion from moving up the list is that he has yet to cross the 70% threshold. In the 1999 State Walter was one ringer short at 69.8% and pushes the mark many times. Walter is a tough competitor and has battled with the State's best including, Hankins, Guy, Meredith & Powell. Walter has qualified for the Men's World Championship Class on two occasions, 2009 & 2012. Walter's best effort was an 8th place finish in 2012 with a 67.99% average. Walter has one of the prettiest 1 ¼ turns in the state and has 16 State Championship appearances



Comments...

Our players found from positions 6-9 are fairly close in comparison separated in percentage level from the top five. Positions 6-9 have remained pretty consistent during their pitching years with some occasional dip from time to time. Filling in the #10 slot is a very tough decision. Many Kentucky players have hit into the upper ranges of 60% and deserve consideration which I will discuss at the lists' end. With two players seeming to rest on equal ground I will declare the #10 spot a tie and spotlight both players. I can find no clear advantage for either player.

#10 (TIE) Ed Curran

Ed Curran made 10 appearances in the Men's State Championship and had three high level years from 1970-72. 1972 was Ed's highest State Percentage performance at 71.4% When he placed 2nd to Bill Henn. Ed had 14 wins and only 1 loss, losing to Bill 43-52. Ed achieved a remarkable feat in 1972 by winning the Men's World Class D title by setting a percentage record for that class at 77.8%!!! Ed would switch his pitching style in following years from a ¾ turn to a 1 ¾ turn and his percentage slid into the high 50's and low 60's in State tourneys after 1972. Ed was the 1985 State Champion.



Ed Henry #10 (TIE)



Ed Henry pitched in the Men's State Championship 10 times and finished in the top three positions in eight of those trips. Ed's highest State percentage was 69.5% in 1985. Ed's lone win in the State Championship came in 1983 on what was a down tournament for Ed on percentage. Ed second best State attempt was in 1982. Ed averaged 69.0% and finished 2nd to Rube Blevins.

Closing Comments...

Other players that deserved consideration for making the bottom slots on the list were: **Stan Lovelace**, Stan was able to beat 70% on occasion with one publication listing his personal best at 73.3%. **Greg Nalley** beat 70% in his 1999 State Title but has had a short career to compare as has many others. **Rube Blevins** a 2-time champ, 81 & 82. **Elmer McCoy**, **Harry Henn**, **Jeff Henn**, **Jim Noble**, **John Stevenson**, **Bob Hudnall**, **Len Salings** and many other tough players.