

# Eight athletes earn academic recognition

Eight Colby Trojans athletes have been recognized by the National Junior College Athletic Association for the 2011-12 Academic Student-Athlete Awards.

The awards were previously known as Academic All-American honors. The association has revamped its academic awards as follows:

- Pinnacle Award for Academic Excellence, (4.0 grade average on 4.0 scale).
- Award for Superior Academic Achievement (3.80 to 3.99 grade

average).

- Award for Exemplary Academic Achievement (3.60 to 3.79).

Colby College Pinnacle Award recipients are Lindsey Campbell, Arvada, Colo. softball, and Carson Konrade, Spearville, men's basketball.

Superior Academic Achievement Award recipients are Mitchell Ackerman, Spearville, men's basketball, and Vincent Dillard, Sanford, Fla., men's basketball.

Exemplary Academic Achievement Award recipients are James

Leonard, Crosby, Texas, men's cross country, men's indoor track and field; Vanessa Loya, El Paso, Texas, women's cross country, women's indoor track and field and women's outdoor track and field; Austin Russell, Canada, baseball; and Marty Wendel, Ingalls, men's basketball.

Now entering its 75th year, the association is the second largest national intercollegiate athletic organization in the U.S., with over 500 member schools in 43 states.

# Colby softball players receive all-league honor

Six Colby High softball players have been selected by the Great Western Athletic Conference for All-League honors this year.

Junior Kenzie Curry, a pitcher; junior Janessa Williams, third base; and senior Morgan Bell, outfield, were named to the all-league team.

Junior Karly Kriss, first base; junior Bailey Ter-

rell, second base; and sophomore Haileigh Shull, shortstop, received honorable mention.

The Colby varsity squad finished its season in May with 15 wins and 7 losses, ending its postseason at the regional tournament in Pratt with a win and a loss.

# Miami Heat wins the title, beats Thunder in 4-1 series

By Brian Mahoney  
*AP Basketball Writer*

MIAMI — Music blared and confetti fell, the only celebration LeBron James really wanted in Miami.

Not that one two summers ago, the welcoming rally where he boasted of multiple titles, perhaps without realizing how hard it would be to win just one.

He dreamed of this moment, with teammates surrounding him and the NBA championship trophy beside him.

"You know, my dream has become a reality now, and it's the best feeling I ever had," James said.

James had 26 points, 11 rebounds and 13 assists, leading the Miami Heat in a 121-106 rout of the Oklahoma City Thunder on Thursday night to win the NBA Finals in five games.

Ripped and ridiculed for the way he announced he was leaving Cleveland and taking his talents to South Beach, it's all worth it now for James.

Best player in the game. Best team in the league.

And now, NBA champion.

"I'm happy now that eight years later, nine years later since I've been drafted, that I can finally say that I'm a champion, and I did it the right way," James said. "I didn't shortcut anything.... It's a great moment for myself."

And for his teammates, who watched the Dallas Mavericks celebrate on their floor last year.

James left the game along with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh for good with 3:01 remaining for a round of hugs and the start for a party he's been waiting for since arriving in the NBA out of high school as the No. 1 pick of the 2003 draft. James hopped up and down in the final minutes, shared

a long hug with opponent Kevin Durant, and then soaked in the "MVP! MVP!" chants during the raucous postgame.

He was a choker last year, the guy who came up small in the fourth quarter, mocked for "shrinking" in the moment while playing with what he called "hatred" in trying to prove his critics wrong.

He came to Miami seeking an easier road to the finals but found it tougher than he expected, the Heat coming up empty last year and nearly getting knocked out in the Eastern Conference finals this time by Boston. Facing elimination there, James poured in 45 points on the road to force a Game 7 and the Heat won it at home.

This time, with a chance to clinch, the Heat took control in the second quarter, briefly lost it and blew the game open again in the third behind their role players. James content to pass to wide-open 3-point shooters while the Thunder focused all their attention on him.

The disappointment of losing to Dallas in six games a year ago vanished in a blowout of the demoralized Thunder, who got 32 points and 11 rebounds from Durant.

Bosh and Wade, the other members of the Big Three who sat alongside James as he promised titles at his Miami welcoming party, both had strong games. Bosh, who wept as the Heat left their own court after losing Game 6 last year, finished with 24 points and Wade scored 20. The Heat also got a huge boost from Mike Miller,

who made seven 3-pointers and scored 23 points.

That all made it easier for James, the most heavily scrutinized player in the league since his departure from Cleveland, when he announced he was "taking his talents to South Beach" on a TV special called "The Decision" that was criticized everywhere from water coolers to the commissioner's office. James has said he wishes he handled things differently, but few who watched the Cavs fail to assemble championship talent around him could have argued with his desire to depart.

In Miami he found a team that didn't need him to do it alone, though he reminded everyone during this sensational postseason run that he still could when necessary. He got support whenever he needed it in this series, from Shane Battier's 17 points in Game 2 to Mario Chalmers' 25 in Game 4.

In the clincher it was Miller, banged up from so many injuries that he limped from the bench to scorer's table when he checked in. He made his fourth 3-pointer of the half right before James' fast-break basket capped a 15-2 run that extended Miami's lead to 53-36 with 4:42 remaining in the first half.

The Thunder made a remarkably early trip to the finals just three years after starting 3-29, beating the Mavericks, Lakers and Spurs along the way. With Durant, Russell Westbrook, Serge Ibaka and James Harden all 23 or younger, the Thunder have the pieces in place for a lengthy stay atop the Western Conference.



## Rookies practice defense

Girls from the purple team in the rookie girls softball league practiced last week at the Colby ball fields. Their coach hit ground balls and pop flies to each girl to help them prepare for a real game and the girls threw the ball to first base to try and get the "runner" out.

KAYLA CORNETT  
Colby Free Press

# West aims to extend win streak in 39th Annual Shrine Bowl

Coaches, players and hundreds of Kansas Shriners are gearing up for the 39th Annual Shrine Bowl All-Star game at 7 p.m. Saturday, July 28, at Welch Stadium at Emporia State University.

West-team coach Brian Hill of Garden City says there is some good-natured pressure to extend the West's winning streak of six in a row.

"I've already heard about it some 30 or 40 times from Shriners," he said. "It's a very prideful thing, I think, for people here in the west. Shriners understand that the game is for a great cause and raised a lot of money and awareness (for Shriners Hospitals), but in the end there's a reason they keep score, and we want to come out on the winning end."

Hill says he's not sure what's more motivating, the pressure to keep the streak alive, or the desire of the east to win for the first time since 2005.

He will not only welcome 34 of the West's top players to camp

on Friday, July 20, he'll also welcome an all-star staff of coaches. One coach from each Kansas high school football classification is selected as an assistant coach for each Shrine Bowl team, and this year's west staff includes two coaches whose teams won state titles in 2011 and another who earned a runner-up trophy.

The West staff includes Brandon Clark, Derby (6A); Ryan Corneliusen, Hays (5A); Greg Slade, Rose Hill (4A); Matt Biehler, Conway Springs (3A); and Jon Webster, LaCrosse (2-1A). Slade and Biehler coached their teams to state championships in November. Webster's team was the 2-1A runner up. Garden City, Derby and Hays also earned playoff berths last year.

Hill says coaching an all-star game is different than coaching a high school team, partly because the Shrine Bowl players were the best on their teams, and as such, played more than many of their teammates.

"The one thing I noticed last year (as an assistant Shrine Bowl coach)", he said, "is how quickly these kids pick things up. They're knowledgeable and the intensity of practice is really impressive to watch."

He said the biggest challenge is getting the players to come together as a team in a short amount of time.

"We need to get the kids to put their egos aside and understand that they're all-stars," he said, "but at the same time we have to play as a team when that Saturday rolls around."

Tickets and additional information are available at [www.kansasshrinebowl.com](http://www.kansasshrinebowl.com) or by calling (800) 530-5524.

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