



# 2021 NCAA Coach of the Year Finalists Announced

**April 14, 2021** - The United States Fencing Coaches Association is pleased to the finalists for the 2020-21 Men's Team Coach of the Year awards. Award winners will be announced during the week of April 19-23<sup>rd</sup>. The finalists have been placed on a ballot that has been sent to all USFCA member programs to vote on award winners.

Representing programs across divisions, the USFCA presents awards the following collegiate coaching awards: Men's Team Coach of the Year, Division III Men's Team Coach of the Year, Men's Team Assistant Coach of the Year, and Division III Men's Team Coach of the Year.

This year's finalists include numerous coaches and programs who have achieved program-best results and accomplishments. These are all the more impressive given the nature of this season and the challenges created by the pandemic. A breakdown of each finalist's contributions and accomplishments is included below.

## **Men's Team Coach of the Year Candidates**

### **Juan Ignacio Calderon – UCSD**

Coach Calderon led the UCSD men's team to a sixth finish at NCAA Championships and a seventh place finish as a combined team. The team posted individual finishes of ninth and twenty-first in men's epee, tenth and seventh in men's foil, and thirteenth and fourteenth in men's saber. The seventh place finish as a combined men's and women's team is a program-best finish at NCAA Championships. In addition, this is the first time in school history that UCSD has qualified a full twelve fencers to NCAA Championships.

In conference competition, the UCSD men's team won the Western Fencing Conference Championships with individual finishes of second, fifth, and sixth in men's epee; second, third and fourth in men's foil; and fourth, fifth, and seventh in men's saber.

In regular season competition, the team finished the season with a 6-0 record in dual meet competition. The UCSD program also produced two Arthur Ashe Jr. Sport Scholars. Miya Coimbra for Women and Brandon Chien for Men. The only two fencers awarded this season and only the second and third UCSD students athletes to ever receive this honor.

In addition to competitive success, Coach Calderon demonstrated significant commitment to the Collegiate Fencing Community over the past year. As part of the Coaches Exploratory Committee he led the establishment of the current USFCA Coaches Committee. Following the establishment of that Committee, he redirected his efforts as the new Western Fencing Conference Commissioner. He established the board of a foundation within the conference to develop new varsity fencing teams in the West. That foundation launched the 10by30 initiative to have 10 varsity fencing programs in the West by 2030.

### **Omar Elgeziry – Air Force**

Coach Elgeziry led the Air Force men's team to an eighth place finish at NCAA Championships and a ninth place finish as a combined team. Individually, the team had finishes of seventh and twenty-second in men's epee, eighth and twentieth in men's foil, and sixteenth and twentieth in men's saber. This is the first time in program history that Air Force qualified a full squad of six men's fencers to NCAA Championships.

In conference competition, the Air Force men finished second at the Western Conference Championships with individual finishes of first, third, and seventh in men's epee; first, fourth, and sixth in men's foil; and first, third, and eighth in men's saber.

During the regular season, Coach Elgeziry was instrumental in making sure that many of our sport's West Region teams had a season amidst the pandemic by hosting a two-day event at the

Air Force Academy. The Air Force men's team finished the regular season with a 6-6 record in dual meet competition.

### **Jason Henderson – NJIT**

Coach Henderson led the NJIT men's team to a fourth place finish at NCAA Championships and a fourth place finish as a combined team. Individually, the team had finishes of third and eighth in men's epee, ninth and eleventh in men's foil, and twelfth and twenty-first in men's saber.

With their fourth place finish as a combined men's and women's team, Coach Henderson helped NJIT secure their first NCAA team trophy in school history for any sport.

In addition, the team had five National Collegiate All-Americans and the NCAA Elite 90 Award winner for Fencing.

### **Gia Kvaratskhelia – Notre Dame**

Coach Kvaratskhelia led the Notre Dame men's team to a first place finish at NCAA Championships and secured the NCAA Championship as a combined team. With this championship, the Notre Dame Fencing Team now has the most championships of any sport at Notre Dame.

Individually, the team had finishes of second and fifth in men's epee, first and second in men's foil, and first and second men's saber.

During the regular season, the team finished undefeated with a record of 11-0 in dual meet competition.

## **Division III Men's Team Coach of the Year**

### **Eric Momberg – Lawrence**

Coach Momberg took over the Lawrence program during the pandemic and was able to produce strong individual results with a reduced roster. The team qualified a men's saber fencer to NCAA Championships, but Lawrence's travel policy related to covid would not allow him to compete. This was Lawrence's first qualifier to NCAA Championships since 2016. In addition, Coach Momberg produced two All-Americans.

In conference competition, the team finished fourth as a men's team in the Central Collegiate Fencing Conference

### **Vince Paragano – Drew**

Coach Paragano led the Drew men's team to an eleventh place finish at NCAA Championships and a sixteenth place finish as a combined team. Individually, the team had finishes of twentieth and twenty-third in men's epee, twenty-second and twenty-fourth in men's foil, and fifteenth and twenty-fourth in men's saber.

This was the first time in program history that Drew had qualified more than two fencers to NCAA Championships and was the first qualifier since 2014. Drew was the only the Division III team to compete at the NCAA Championships. In addition, Coach Paragano produced six All-Americans.

In regular season competition, the team finished with a record of 13-6 in dual meet competition.

## **Men's Team Assistant Coach of the Year**

### **Lucia Procopio – Wayne State**

Coach Procopio took charge of the Wayne State as interim coach mid-season after Coach Jerzy Radz's retirement in December. She helped lead the team to a fifteenth place finish as a men's team at NCAA Championships and an eighteenth place finish as a combined team. Individually, the team had finishes of eighteenth in men's epee and nineteenth in men's foil.

Despite not being able to field a saber squad, the men's team finished second in the Central Collegiate Fencing Conference. By weapon squad, the team finished as Men's Epee Squad Co-Champions and Men's Foil Squad Co-Champions.

Coach Procopio was also the recipient of the CCFC Men's Team Assistant Coach of the Year award.

### **Will Randolph – North Carolina**

Coach Randolph helped lead the North Carolina men's team to a seventh place finish at NCAA Championships and a sixth place finish as a combined team. As the team's saber coach, he helped the men's saber fencers finish sixth and ninth individually at the Championships.

During conference competition, Coach Randolph helped lead the men's team to a second place finish in the Atlantic Coach Conference Championships and helped his men's saber fencers secure individual finishes of second and third. The team finished 5-4 in dual meet competition during the season.

### **Alexei Sintchinov – Penn State**

Coach Sintchinov helped lead the Penn State men's team to a second place finish at NCAA Championships and a second place as a combined team. As the team's epee coach, he helped the men's epee fencers finish first and third individually at the Championships. Additionally, he helped lead the team to a regular season record of 6-3 in dual meet competition.

### **Chiara Tranquilli – Air Force**

Coach Tranquilli helped lead the Air Force men's team to an eighth place finish at NCAA Championships and a ninth place finish as a combined team. As the team's foil coach, she helped secure individual finishes of eighth and twentieth in the men's foil competition. Through her leadership, she helped the Air Force team qualify a full men's squad of six fencers to NCAA Championships for the first time in program history.

In conference competition, she helped the team secure a second place finish at the Western Conference Championships and helped the men's foil fencers secure individual finishes of first, fourth, and sixth. The team finished 6-6 in dual meet competition during the season.

## **Division III Men's Team Assistant Coach of the Year**

### **Michael Bindas – Drew**

Coach Bindas helped lead the Drew men's team to an eleventh place finish at NCAA Championships and a sixteenth place finish as a combined team. As the team's foil and epee coach, he helped secure individual finishes of twentieth in and twenty-third in men's epee and twenty-second and twenty-fourth in men's foil. Coach Bindas helped lead the Drew team to a program-best finish at NCAA Championships and qualify a full squad of six men for the first time in program history.

During regular season competition, the team finished with a record of 13-6 with victories over Division I programs NJIT, Sacred Heart, and Lafayette.