

Cory Tilton

49ers Senior Exceeds Expectations, Leaves His Mark

Written by Kristen Litchfield; photos courtesy of Charlotte Media Relations

No. 25 Charlotte's Cory Tilton was one of 30 finalists for the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award. The annual award is for outstanding senior NCAA Division I student-athletes who excel in the community, classroom, and in competition. The award honors those seniors that had a four-year commitment to their university. From doubt to excellence, Cory Tilton rose against the odds from a redshirt freshman without a roster spot to a senior team leader.

Tilton was a recruited walk-on by Charlotte upon graduation from Green Hope High School in Cary, NC. As a walk-on, there was a slim chance of becoming a

full-time starter. Tilton was determined to get a spot on the roster and worked hard so that he could continue to pursue the game he loves.

"My first year there wasn't even a spot for me on the roster. Thankfully, Coach Hibbs let me stick around and be around the team," said Tilton. "The thing that motivated me most was all the people who were doubting me. Not a lot of college coaches thought I could play quality baseball at the next level. Everyone who didn't believe in me made my drive that much stronger."

During his redshirt season in 2007, Tilton absorbed the college game and continued to work hard. In 2008, his hard work paid off as he earned a spot on the roster and appeared in 48 games with 31 starts. While seeing action at the plate, he went on a six-game hit streak, recording multiple hit games in five of those six. In his first collegiate season, he also made two appearances on the mound where he pitched an inning in each. Tilton was honored as the Atlantic 10 Rookie of the Week twice.

The Cary native got off to a rocky start during his sophomore season after only recording three hits in his first 27 at bats. However, as the season progressed he recorded a season-long eight game hit streak and was second on the team with 13 doubles.

In 2010, Tilton was just one of three players on the roster to start in all 56 of the Niners games. He led the team with 28 multi-hit games and was second in the Atlantic 10 Conference with 27 stolen bases. He committed only one error in 178 chances last season.

So far this season, Tilton leads the No. 25 Charlotte 49ers in RBI and runs with 37 and 30, respectively. As of April 13th he had a batting average of .311, and has successfully stolen 18 bases on 20 attempts.

Despite not having a spot on the roster in his first year, Tilton has made an impact on the 49ers program. He is grateful to be a part of the team and to be playing college baseball. He said one of his favorite things about his team is the bond they all share.

"These guys are going to be guys that are lifetime friends," he said. "You can't get that sort of relationship from many places."

Not only has Tilton been successful on the field, but he has also excelled in the classroom. The finance major maintains a 3.81 GPA and has made the Chancellor's List six times. However, playing baseball and keeping up with schoolwork can be a challenge and communicating with professors has





been a critical component of his success.

"In the spring, you've really got to work out with your professors when you're missing class," said Tilton. "I'm missing 10 of my Wednesday/Friday classes this semester and missing both tests so I had to work out with my professor other times outside of classes, practice and games that I could meet with him to take the tests."

Recently, Tilton received admission to Beta Gamma Sigma, which puts him in the top 10 percent of all business students at UNC Charlotte. Beta Gamma Sigma is an international honor society that recognizes business students.

The Lowe's Senior CLASS Award committee not only looks for student-athletes who have standout performances on and off the field, but also those who give back to the community. During Tilton's career at Charlotte, he has built playgrounds for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Charlotte, worked the annual 9/11 blood drive, helped with an epilepsy walk and raised money for Multiple Sclerosis awareness.

"I have been blessed with a lot of great people in my life who are out there trying to help me. It is a truly rewarding feeling to do that for someone else," he said. "To give a couple hours a month isn't too much to ask for when you know it can have a drastic impact in the life of someone else."

Back when Tilton was chosen as a finalist for the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award in February, he said he was humbled and it gave him the chance to reflect on everything he has accomplished during his college career.

"It is nice to be recognized not only for what I've done on the baseball field, but also for the hard work I have put in, in the classroom. I was just extremely humbled and proud of the accomplishments that I have accrued throughout college to put myself in the situation to even be nominated for such a prestigious award. I am thankful for the nomination and hope it shows that there is recognition to be had for college athletes for things other than what they do on the field, but also for how they conduct themselves in the community and in the classroom," said Tilton.

As Tilton's final season in a Charlotte uniform winds down, he and the rest of the 49ers squad (27-6; 8-1 in A10) hope to continue their success by adding another conference championship title to their resume and making a run in the NCAA Tournament. As Tilton enters UNC Charlotte's MBA program in the fall, he will take his determination with him and always remember how far he came.

Tilton said, "I'll never forget the feeling I had when I thought that my baseball career could have been over during that first year of college. That is still the feeling that keeps me motivated to this day to go out there every day and approach it as if it is my last."

At the end of April, the committee narrows the list down to 10 student-athletes before putting them on a national ballot so that fans can vote. The Lowe's Senior CLASS Award winner will be announced at the College World Series in Omaha on June 24th.