



PRESS RELEASE

- STARTS -

NBL veteran Grant Delzoppo claims first batting title while Francisco Gonzalez defends two-way award

Grant Delzoppo made his National Baseball League debut in 1995. Playing for the London Warriors, he had just five at-bats that year, picking up a solitary hit. After this taster, he returned to the league in 2003 and since then has been a perennial contender for the batting title.

After posting averages of between .333 and .375 from 2006 to 2009, in 2010 Delzoppo broke the .400 barrier to finish fourth in the batting title race (<https://is.gd/kxiM9H>). The following year he went two places better, losing out to Edwin Alcantara on the final day of the regular season (<https://is.gd/CiXDYW>). And in 2013 (<https://is.gd/YT5QTW>) he was second again, this time to Ryan Bird, the NBL's all-time leader in batting average.

For his first title, though, Delzoppo had to wait till 2016. At the age of 44, he hit for an average of .521 (after adjustment up to the qualifying number of plate appearances), which was just good enough to edge out 2015 triple-crown winner, Maikel Azcuy (.519).

Another stand-out player in 2016 was Francisco Gonzalez, the championship-winning Mustangs' ace. As well as leading the league in wins (7), he became the first player to defend the NBL's Most Valuable Two-way Player award since Simon Pole - a British Baseball Hall of Fame inductee - won three on the trot between 2001 and 2003.

Also excelling for the Mustangs in 2016 were sluggers Azcuy and Gary Davison. As mentioned above, Azcuy finished second in the batting race, but he led the league in RBI for a record fourth time (<https://is.gd/La71ZZ>) and is now joint all-time leader in this category with Hall of Famer Brad Thompson (237). In addition, Azcuy's national championship with Southampton adds to four in the previous 5 years, moving him to joint fifth all-time in titles (<https://is.gd/AFclJO>). Davison, meanwhile, clubbed eight home runs, the first time a player had achieved this in the NBL since Pole in 2005; he was awarded the Most Valuable Batter title.

The Most Valuable Pitcher award went to the London Mets' Tyson Walker, who led the league in ERA (2.25) and strike-outs (80). He also threw a shut-out in Game 1 of the national final, the first time this feat had been achieved during a championship game since in over 20 years.

Two other stand-out pitching performances during the year both came from Rei Martinez, who threw a no-hitter for the Mustangs on opening day and then notched up 16 strike-outs in a 7-inning start against the Brighton Jets in July. This matches his effort for the Bracknell Blazers on 11 August 2013 (<https://is.gd/leq2Cc>) and has only been bettered once in a seven-inning outing, by Hall of Famer Cody Cain in 2004 (18). Cain is all-time leader in strike-outs per 9 innings, with a rate of 12.7. Martinez needs a dozen more innings to qualify for career pitching rankings and is currently striking-out batters at a rate of 12.6.

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About Project COBB

The Project for the Chronicling of British Baseball (Project COBB) is an online collaboration aimed at restoring the record of British baseball's past and preserving its present. Its website is located at: <http://www.projectcobb.org.uk/>.