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## McNeil Named 2021 NBC Graduate of the Year

Former Santa Barbara Forester and NY Met joins prestigious group

**WICHITA, KANSAS** - The National Baseball Congress is proud to announce Jeff McNeil as the recipient of the 2021 NBC Graduate of the Year Award. This award has been presented to NBC alumni since 1975 and is based on prior season performance. McNeil was born in Santa Barbara and grew up attending Foresters youth camps, but eventually moved to Nipomo, CA for his high school years. He decided to attend Long Beach State and returned to Santa Barbara during the summers of 2010 and 2011 to play for the Foresters in the California Collegiate League.

McNeil was a crucial piece of the Foresters' 2011 championship squad. He batted .345 with 4 RBIs and 8 runs scored in the NBC World Series that year and was honored with a selection to the tournament's All-American Team as a utility man. This selection would serve as foreshadowing for the first two seasons of his career. Additionally, McNeil has become a permanent member of Foresters history with his induction into the team's Hall of Fame in 2019.

After three seasons at Long Beach State, McNeil was drafted by the New York Mets in the 12<sup>th</sup> round of the 2013 MLB Draft. He was called up to the big-league roster in 2018 and experienced immediate success, batting .329 with an OPS of .852 as a rookie. The best was yet to come, as he would be named an All-Star the next season as a left fielder. He would bat .318 with an OPS of .916 this season, adding 23 home runs. This success would continue in 2020, with a .311 average good for 11<sup>th</sup> in the NL and an 11.5 strikeout percentage being the 9<sup>th</sup>-lowest in the MLB.

Nicknamed "The Flying Squirrel" for his leaping grabs in the outfield as a college player, McNeil has transitioned from a utility role with the Mets over his first two seasons to a more everyday role as their second baseman. He has earned himself a reputation as an "old-school" hitter who excels at making good contact and putting the ball in gaps. The NBC is excited to officially honor McNeil with this deserved award.

Of his time with the Foresters, McNeil said: "Thank you to the National Baseball Congress for naming me the 2021 Graduate of the Year. I have very fond memories of my time with the Santa Barbara Foresters. It was an experience I will never forget."

Former NBC Graduate of the Year honorees include Tim Anderson, Aaron Judge, Albert Pujols, Paul Goldschmidt and several others.

The 87<sup>th</sup> NBC World Series, powered by Evergy, is scheduled for August 4-14, 2021. Games will be played at Hutchinson's Hobart-Detter Field and the brand-new Riverfront Stadium, home of the Wichita Wind Surge. Tickets and premium hospitality options are available for purchase online at [www.nbcbaseball.com](http://www.nbcbaseball.com) or calling (316) 265-6236.

**About Greater Wichita Area Sports Commission:** The organization is a facilitator, driving the collaborative efforts of the region in attracting and hosting a wide variety of sporting events. The Sports Commission provides the experience and expertise in sports marketing and event management that has established our region as a sports destination. Since 1997, the Greater Wichita Area Sports Commission has facilitated over 600 events in the Wichita area with a combined economic impact of over \$544 million.

**About NBC World Series:** The NBC World Series is the largest and the oldest continuous sporting event in Kansas. "The NBC" has been played in Wichita every year since 1935. This non-profit is a 501c(3) foundation. To learn more visit [www.nbcbaseball.com](http://www.nbcbaseball.com).