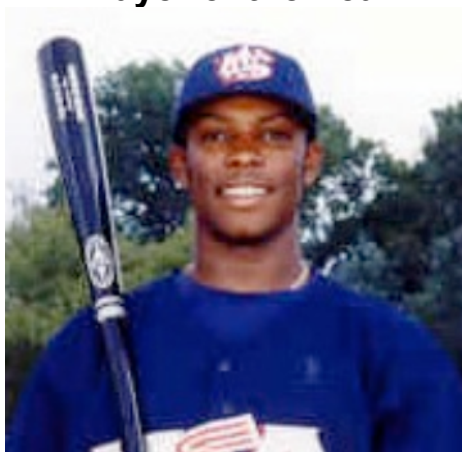


**National High School Baseball Coaches Association
2005
Player of the Year**



Justin Upton

In a year filled with excitement, drama, and action one player among all stands out as the most dominate, most talented and by far the best around. Justin Upton has been highly coveted for the last three years. Ever since his brother B.J. was **USA TODAY's** 2002 player of the year, Justin has been placed in the spotlight.

As a senior at Great Bridge High School in Chesapeake, Virginia, Justin had a tremendous season. He batted .508 with 12 home runs and 33 runs batted in. The 6-2, 195 shortstop has an impressive impact on any team that he has played for. According to *Baseball America*, Upton is the “best athlete, best five-tool player, best pure hitter, fastest base runner, best defensive player,” and is the most likely to be successful in the Majors in this year’s draft.

“We feel that he clearly was the best player in this year’s draft, and although we have several players at that position, we feel this was a guy too good and too talented to walk away from,” Arizona scouting director Mike Rizzo said in a quote from MLB.com and author Steve Gilbert.

Upton, a right-handed hitter, is able to drive the ball to all parts of the field. He has patience at the plate and quick hands, giving him good bat speed. At a Perfect Game Showcase Upton ran a 6.23 60-yard dash making him a threat on the base path. In his three seasons as a varsity starter, Justin batted .498 with 27 home runs and 95 runs batted in.

Clearly, Justin Upton is an outstanding baseball player. Having learned some tough lessons about being a professional from his brother B.J.; Justin appears to be taking the fact that he is only the fifth shortstop chosen number one all in stride.

“He’s helped me a great deal with some of the pressures during the season,” Justin said. “He’s just been there throughout the entire thing. He’s been to the big leagues. Once I get to the big leagues I’ll brag to him.” (MLB.com – Steve Gilbert)

Justin’s coach not only feels he is a force on the field, but that he is humble and knows how to treat people with respect. Justin comes from strong supportive family, and coach Wiley Lee believes this has a lot to do with who he is as a player.

“Justin goes about his business in a very humble fashion,” Lee says. “You won’t find any person at Great Bridge who says that he’s disrespected them, because he understands by the rearing that he’s gotten from his parents how important it is to treat people in a respectful manner.” (USA TODAY – Erik Brady)

Justin Upton more than deserves the Player of the Year. He has shown his ability on the field and off. Good luck Justin. Keep swinging for the fences.

By David A. Himmelstein