



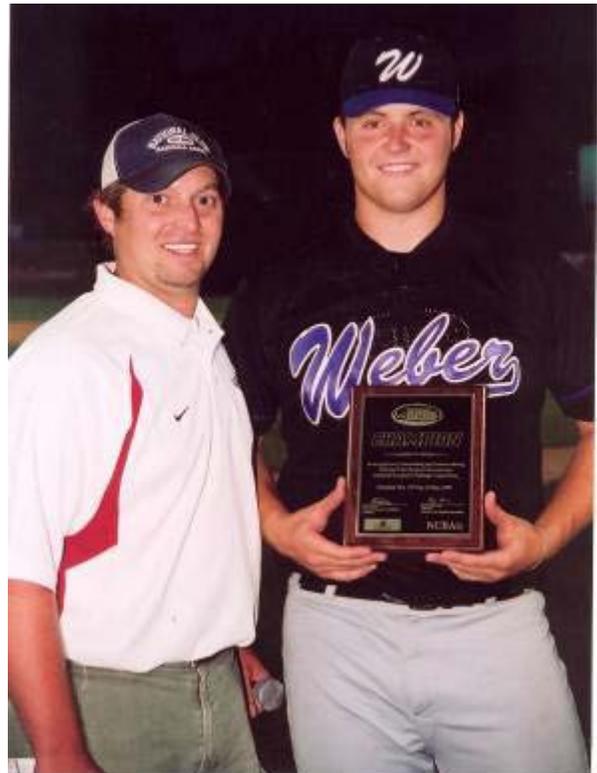
## **HISTORY of the DeMARINI LONGBALL CHALLENGE**

2013 marked the return of the “DeMarini Longball Challenge” after a one-year partnership with Reebok and the “Reebok Homerun Challenge.” From 2006 through 2011, the annual NCBA HR Derby event has been sponsored by DeMarini and appropriately titled the “DeMarini Longball Challenge.” It all began in the summer of 2006, when DeMarini and Wilson Sporting Goods signed a sponsorship deal with the NCBA to become the “Official Baseball Bat of the NCBA,” which remained through the 2011 NCBA season. As part of this landmark relationship, DeMarini agreed to co-host (with the NCBA) an annual Home Run Derby competition. And thus the DeMarini Longball Challenge was born and returns to showcase the top sluggers across the entire NCBA.

## 2006



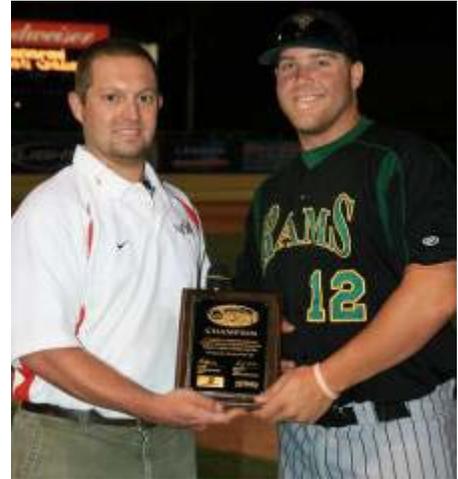
The 2006 DeMarini Longball Challenge marked the first NCBA-sanctioned event of its kind in the 6-year history of the league. The event was held during the 2006 NCBA World Series at Eastwood Field in Niles, OH. Knowing that this event should draw quite a bit of interest from all the participating World Series teams and fans, the NCBA decided to hold the LBC on the night of Memorial Day (Monday May 29<sup>th</sup>). The field of 16 participants was stacked with sluggers from all corners of the country and they did not fail to impress all in attendance with the mammoth home runs they hit. Bombers such as Richie Marrero (Wisconsin), Chris Crum (Virginia Tech), and Zac Snow (Weber State) continuously displayed the sheer power of the DeMarini bats by knocking pitch after pitch out of the STADIUM! Ultimately, Zac Snow showed that consistency dominates (3 HR in Final Round) by outlasting the rest of the field and thus earning the crown of 2006 DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion.



## 2007

As DeMarini and the NCBA eagerly prepared for the 2007 DeMarini Longball Challenge, a few changes were implemented to further enhance the event. Participants were given 10 outs (Up from 8 outs in 2006) per round to hit as many home runs as possible. Also, the event was moved to Friday night (May 25<sup>th</sup>) in order to kick off the weekend of 2007 NCBA World Series action. Despite the strong breeze blowing in from right field, the field of predominately right-handers lit

up the night sky with a spectacle of dazzling homeruns. Preston Prado (Sam Houston State) put on an awesome display by hitting an LBC record 17 Homeruns!!! However, Eric Zaruba (Colorado State) took a page out of the defending champion Zac Snow's (Weber State) book by staying consistent throughout the event and outlasting Preston in the final round to take the 2007 Demarini Longball Challenge with a total of 8 Homeruns.



## 2008



As the NCBA prepared for the 2008 DeMarini Longball Challenge, the day of the event was once again changed. This time the excitement took place on Saturday night (May 24<sup>th</sup>) in order to showcase the LBC as the marquee event of the 2008 NCBA DI World Series. While the derby got off to a slow start in Round 1, the bats got hot and stayed hot the rest of the way. The field set a new DeMarini LBC record by cranking out a total of 47 Homeruns

(2007 - 45HR), while Brian Dilley (Colorado State) overcame a first round goose egg to TWICE tie the event's single round record for Homeruns (Preston Prado – Sam Houston – 2007 – RD3 - 7HR) by blasting 7 in both the 3<sup>rd</sup> AND Final Rounds. LBC favorite Chris Crum (Virginia Tech) joined



Dilley as each of them entertained the crowd with a barrage of majestic homeruns to left and right field respectively.

However, despite tying Crum with a total of 16 Homeruns overall, Dilley claimed the 2008 DeMarini Longball Challenge title by besting Crum's Final

Round (4HR) with 7 of his own!!!



## 2009

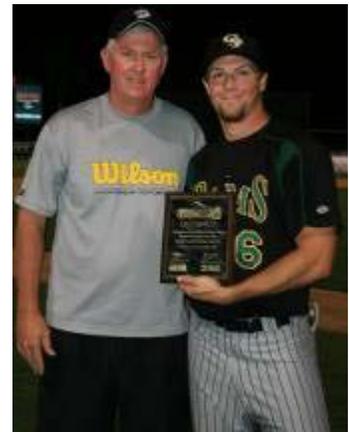
As the NCBA continued to improve the DeMarini Longball Challenge for 2009, the league decided to alter the rules slightly to make the event a bit more exciting for the fans in attendance. Having realized that the first round of the competition can get a bit long and drawn out, the league lowered the number of outs from 10 to 8 for the first round only. While the 2009 event lacked the tape measure homeruns previously provided by



Chris Crum (Virginia Tech) and Preston Prado (Sam Houston State), a crew of newcomers made the night exciting for everyone. Nick Powden (Penn State) and Shawn Linebaugh (Clemson) got the fire started in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round with 3 homeruns apiece. Watson Lavigno (Georgia) warmed up in Round 1 with 2 homeruns and then caught fire in Rounds 2 and 3 leading the way with 3 homeruns in each of those.



But a familiar face to the DeMarini Longball Challenge was looming close behind. Brian Dilley (Colorado State) was operating at his usual slow but steady pace through the first three rounds hitting just enough homeruns to qualify for the next round. Perhaps Lavigno was starting to run out of gas in the finals as he was only able to muster 2 homeruns while defending LBC champion Dilley was just getting warmed up. Dilley hit 3 homeruns in walk-off fashion to claim the 2009 DeMarini Longball Challenge title becoming the first participant to successfully defend his crown.



## 2010

2010 marked another great year of DeMarini Longball Challenge competition. Amongst the celebration around the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NCBA, the DeMarini Longball Challenge



was also marking its 5<sup>th</sup> year of homerun derby competition. With the reigning back-to-back champion (Brian Dilley –CSU) off playing pro baseball, all eyes were on the 2009



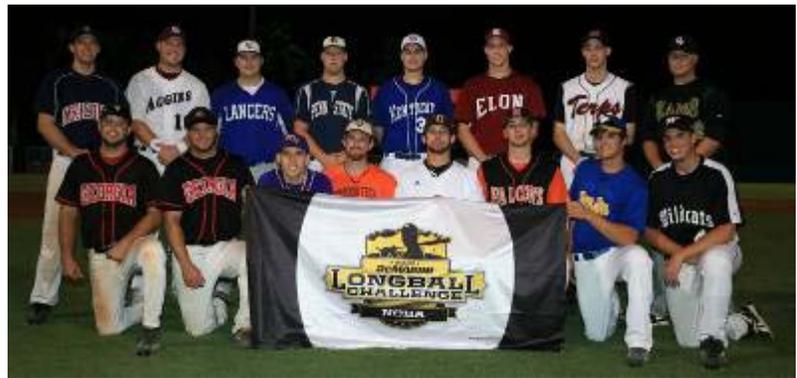
runner-up Watson Lavigno (Georgia) as this year he entered the event surrounded by the support of his entire team who was making their first ever

NCBA World Series appearance. Watson was quick to impress as he led the

1<sup>st</sup> Round by hitting 3 homeruns.

The first round also brought an end to Mike Abernathy's (Colorado State Head Coach) run of pitching to 4 straight DeMarini Longball

Champions when CSU's representative (Ryan Cooper) was eliminated. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Round was dominated by Aaron Smith (Texas



A&M) who slammed 3 more of his own. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Round went back to Watson who smashed 4 more majestic shots while a no-name out of Division II Longwood University (BJ Harlow) kept chugging along smacking a pair himself to put himself in head to head competition with Watson in the Finals. In the Finals it was Déjà vu from 2009 as Watson's bat seemed to tire as he could only muster a single HR while BJ kept at it hitting yet another pair of homeruns, and thus taking the 2010 DeMarini Longball Challenge title in true upset fashion. It appeared that BJ did his homework taking a page out of Brian Dilley and Zac Snow's playbook that to take home the title; you have to pace yourself and have some gas left in the tank for the Final Round.



## 2011

The 2011 LBC and NCBA DI World Series moved to Golden Park in Columbus, GA. Located on the Chattahoochee River in downtown Columbus, Golden Park is a 5,000 seat baseball only stadium that opened in 1926. Multiple minor league teams have called Golden Park home including the Columbus Astros (1970-1988) and most

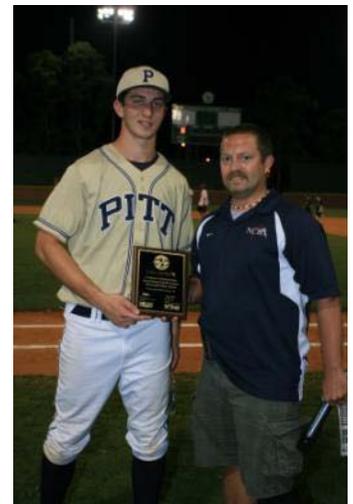


recently the Columbus Catfish (2004-2008). Having undergone major renovations for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Golden Park served as a phenomenal backdrop for the NCBA's sluggers to compete for the 2011 DeMarini Longball Challenge title.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Round of the 2011 Longball Challenge saw a pair of sluggers from the Lone Star State put on a show, with Texas Tech's Chris Manross and Sam Houston's Cole Lehmann each belting four dingers. Round 2 belonged to Brian Burgess of the soon-to-be National Champion ECU Pirates. Burgess hit five homers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round to bring his total up to nine.



Pitt's Max Hegedus quietly snuck into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round after knocking two out of the park in Round 1 and one more in Round 2. Max's bat really came alive in Round 3, however, when he went yard five times. Burgess continued to stay hot, going yasta pasta three more times to

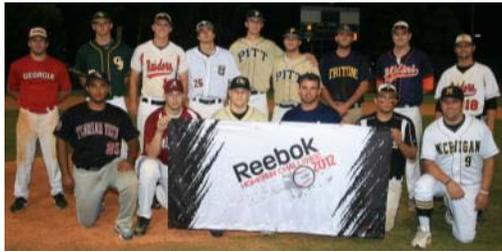


advance to the Finals to face off against Hegedus.

In the Finals, both players put on a great show, blasting home runs at an impressive pace. In the end, Hegedus edged out Burgess by one home run, 4-3, to take the crown as 2011 DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion.

## 2012

In 2012, the NCBA signed Reebok as the new “Official Bat Sponsor of the NCBA,” and the event name was changed to the “Reebok Home Run



Challenge”. Once again the event was held at Golden Park in Columbus, GA and oh what an event it was. For the first time Longball

Challenge history the event featured a player from north of the border as Michael Meany

(Lakehead University) not only participated but battled all the way to the bitter end, launching homer after homer into the



Georgia night sky. Meany and the defending champ

(Max Hegedus – Pittsburgh) both got off to

and early start bashing three homeruns apiece in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round.

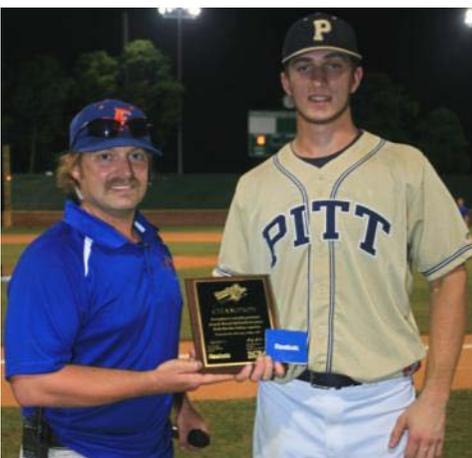
Round 2 put Meany ahead as he out slammed Max, six homers to Max’s five and the

battle was on. Falling behind Meany must have woken up Max as

he went into Round 3 hungrier than ever to defend his title and to try and join Brian Dilley (Colorado State - '08 & '09) as the only players to win back to back HR derby titles.

Meany was able to muster just three dingers in Round 3 before Max stepped to the plate and bashed a whopping 8 long balls to not only take the overall lead, but taking over

sole possession of the all time record for homeruns in a single round previously held by Brian Dilley (Colorado State - 2008 – RD3 & FINALS - 7HR) – and Preston Prado (Sam Houston – 2007 – RD3 - 7HR).



But there was still a big question left going into the Final Round... had either Meany or Max left anything in the tank? Meany had been launching majestic moon shots all night over the wall, but in the Final Round was only able to knock one out. With 16 total homeruns in his pocket, Max held the tiebreaker over Meany should he tie him in the Final Round with just one homerun. And that tiebreaker would become crucial as like Meany, Max was only able to squeak one ball over the fence. But that’s all he needed to take home his 2<sup>nd</sup> HR Derby Title along with tying Preston Prado (Sam Houston – 2007 – 17HR) for most total homeruns ever hit in the event. With another year of NCBA eligibility, the question around the ball park quickly switched to, “Can he do it again in 2013?”



## 2013

For 2013, the NCBA brought DeMarini back on board to once again host the “DeMarini Longball Challenge.” A new venue and a new city brought about a very

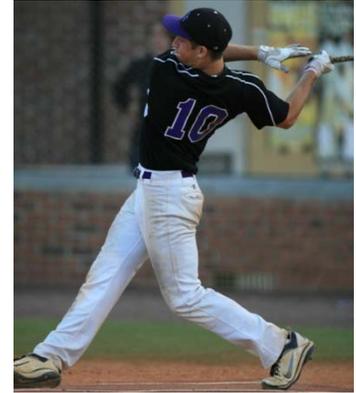


different atmosphere for the DeMarini Longball Challenge, but the end result wasn't all that new. While the University of Tampa Stadium created an amazingly picturesque backdrop for the event, Mother Nature decided she was going to have her say in the

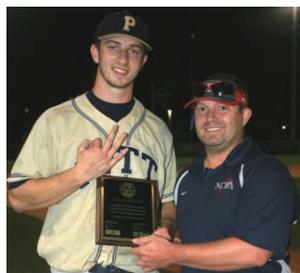


contest. Shortly before the start winds began to blow in from left field at nearly 20 miles an hour. It quickly became apparent that no righty stood a chance in this year's derby as batter after batter simply abused pitches towards left field that harmlessly fell onto the warning track. But it just so happened that Back to Back Champion (Max Hegedus – Pittsburgh) happened to be left handed and competing for the 3-peat.

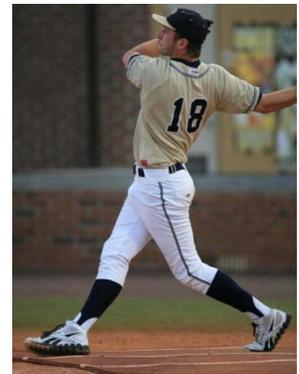
Longball Challenge newcomer Zach Cutter (James Madison – Yes he's a lefty) got things off to quick start by blasting 4 homeruns in the opening round. Max would get on the board in round 2 by hitting a solo homerun of his own. Neither contestant would homer in the final round which opened the door for Max who was trailing Zach 4 – 1 in total homeruns. In 2012 and earlier, Zach would have been declared the winner, but



in 2013 a new rule was implemented that forced rounds of Sudden Death. Mother Nature continued to wreak havoc as now the wind was making it difficult for these two left sluggers to keep their longballs fair down the rightfield line. After 3 sudden death rounds of no homeruns hit, when all hope had seemed lost, Back to Back defending champ Max Hegedus was able to drive one to deep right to win his 3<sup>rd</sup> straight HR Derby Title in dramatic walk off fashion. Max has now graduated with his shelf full of



HR Derby hardware, so who will step up in 2014 to claim the crown? Will it be the up and coming Zach Cutter (James Madison) or will a new slugger emerge? Will Mother Nature once again leave her thumb print on the event? We'll soon find out.



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## 2014



The last three DeMarini Longball Challenges saw the University of Pittsburgh's Max Hegedus take home championship but with his graduation in 2013, a new winner would be named. The 2014 event saw a total of 29 homeruns hit down in Tampa Florida at the University of Tampa Baseball Stadium. Tampa once again provided a picturesque scene for the batters and fans alike and the weather held up

to allow these longball hitters a chance to put on a show.

Round one saw 5 homeruns hit by Jacob Anderson from Utah State to lead the pack and another four participants recorded 3 longballs each (Chris Muellner, Texas; Stephen Beninato, UCF; Jose Dominguez, Florida Tech; David Schwehm, Cincinnati). The last spot to move onto Round 2 was given to the University of Delaware's Greg Rostick



who hit 1. He moved on due to tiebreakers after he had hit 8 regular season homeruns.



Round two saw three players get eliminated after recording 0 homeruns. One of which was the leader going into Round two, Jacob Anderson. At the end of round two, three players moved onto the finals. Chris Muellner moved onto the finals after hitting 3 homeruns. Stephen Beninato also moved on with 3 homeruns and the final spot was given to Greg Rostick from Delaware after he hit 1 homerun in round 2.



The final round saw two contestants hit zero homeruns and the

eventual winner of the 2014 DeMarini Longball Challenge

was Chris Muellner from the University of Texas after he belted 2 homeruns to claim the 2014 DeMarini Longball Challenge Title.



With Chris Muellner graduating, there will be no repeat winner at this year's DeMarini Longball Challenge. Wonder who will step up to claim the hardware as the 2015 DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion.

## 2015



The reigning 2014 DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion, Chris Mueller graduated which meant there would be no repeat champion in 2015. Who would take the title? Plenty of participants stepped up, but the University of Central Florida's Tyler Dennis took home the crown after hitting a total of 9 homeruns during the competition and 6 in the final round. The 2015 event was one for the ages and fans got to see a total of 37 homeruns hit out of Brooks Stadium.

Round one saw 11 of the 16 participants each hitting at least one homerun. Almost half of those participants were cut, with only 6 competitors able to move onto the next round.

Round two saw six competitors moving on. In addition to UCF's Tyler Dennis, Iowa State's Kellen Ausdemore, the University of Florida's Zack Zaversnik, East Carolina's Earl Oliver, University of Illinois' Keenan Connelley, and North Dakota State's Brenden Englund all joined Dennis in round two. Unfortunately for Oliver, Connelley and Englund, they were not able to hit any out of Brooks Stadium. Ironically enough, the eventual Champion, Tyler Dennis also wasn't able to hit any HR's out in round two, but moved onto the finals because of tiebreakers.

Heading in the final round, Dennis went up against the University of

Florida's Zack Zaversnik and Iowa State's Kellen Ausdemore. Zaversnik was strong in each round, hitting two in the first round, one in the second and two in the finals. Ausdemore, who was the most consistent homerun hitter in the competition, hit two in the first round, four in the second, and three in the final round. Unfortunately for Kellen, Dennis hit a whopping 6 homeruns in the final round to win the

competition.



Once again, a new champion will be crowned in 2016 with the graduation of UCF's Tyler Dennis. Who is going to take home the hardware this year? Be sure to check back on the NCBA website soon to see who the field is made up of for the 2016 DeMarini Longball Challenge.

## 2016



The 2016 DeMarini Longball Challenge was held once again at Brooks Stadium in Paducah, Kentucky on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 7:00pm. With the defending champion, Tyler Dennis now graduated a new king of the longball would be crowned, and guess what? The 2016 DeMarini Longball Champion was a pitcher! Logan Walden of East Carolina University took home the hardware after defeating the University of Oregon's Nick Waldsmith and the University of Illinois' Keenan Connelly in the final round.

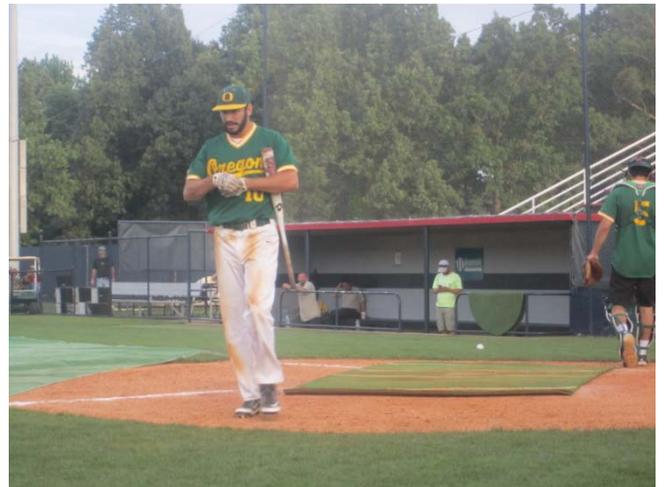


Logan, along with Ben Greer (Coastal Carolina) and Keenan Connelly (Illinois) led the pack in round one, hitting 4 bombs. Joining those three in round two, were Nick Waldsmith (Oregon), Drew Andary (Nevada) and Lee Gealow (Northern Iowa). Greer and Andary came out of round two with goose eggs and Gealow only managed to knock one out. Those three were eliminated from the competition and Walden, Waldsmith and Connelly moved onto the finals after they hit 3 homeruns, 4 homeruns and 2 homeruns respectively.

In the final round, the lefty

pitcher from ECU hit 4 homeruns, while Waldsmith managed to hit one and Connelly didn't have any leave the park. Walden finished the competition with 11 total homeruns and was crowned the 2016 DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion.

Logan put on a display in the 2016 competition but will he be back to defend his crown in 2017? We sure hope so. Make sure to check back in May to see which 16 homerun hitters will be participating in the 2017 event that will take place on May 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm in Holly Springs, North Carolina at North Main Athletic Complex.



## 2017

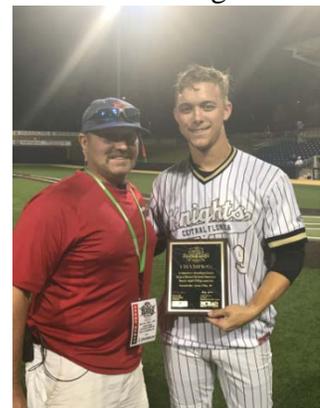
The 2017 DeMarini Longball Challenge was one that no one will soon forget as its competitors not only broke previous homerun records, they SHATTERED them! The 2017 event saw a new venue, North Main Athletic Complex in Holly Springs, NC. The brand new, state-of-the-art facility was the perfect backdrop for the 16 competitors to showcase their homerun prowess. Boy, did they not disappoint. In 2017, the field of competitors hit a total of 114 homeruns, which was more double the amount of homeruns that had previously held the all time record.



What a show these competitors put on for the crowd. The defending Champion, Logan Walden from East Carolina, put on an absolute show in the first round to lead all competitors with 15 longball's! The crowd was in disbelief as the lefty hit numerous homeruns all the way to the street outside the ballpark in right field. Jacob Anderson from Utah State also put on a show in round one with 8 homeruns while Tanner Witter from Penn State and Matt "The Sanchise" Sanchez from Central Florida both hitting 5! Joining Walden, Anderson, Sanchez and Witter in round 2 were Cameron Cole from Nevada and Matthew Davis from Colorado State.

In the second round, the display of power continued with Sanchez leading the way with 10 homeruns, followed by Matthew Davis hitting 9 and Jacob Anderson hitting 7. Those 3 competitors would move onto the finals as the defending champion Logan Walden unfortunately was stopped short of repeating after hitting 5 homeruns in the second round. It should be known that even without hitting in the finals, Walden finished with 20 total homeruns which put him in 3<sup>rd</sup> place in total homeruns hit in the competition.

Once again, the final round didn't disappoint. Sanchez was first up and belted an incredible 14 homeruns to bring his total to 29! Next up was Jacob Anderson. Anderson cooled off just a bit hitting 4 homeruns which brought his total to 19 during the event. The only thing that stood in the way of Sanchez winning the 2017 DeMarini Longball Challenge was Matthew Davis from Colorado State. With 9 outs, Davis had 12 homeruns in the final round, meaning if he hit one more, it would be a "Moneyball" which would count for 2 homeruns. That would tie him for the lead, but unfortunately, he came up just a bit short. Even though he came up short, Davis hit a total of 23 homeruns during the event. When all the dust settled, Matt "The Sanchise" Sanchez from Central Florida would be crowned the 2017 DeMarini Longball Champion.



The 2018 DeMarini Longball Challenge will once again take place in Holly Springs, NC at Ting Stadium (formerly North Main Athletic Complex) and will have VERY large shoes to fill. Will Matt Sanchez be back to defend his title in 2018 or will someone new be crowned King of the Longball? Make sure to join us on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 7:00pm to see who will be crowned the DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion!