



**For Immediate Release**

## **2019 Players Choice Awards Comeback Player Finalists**

***Lucas Giolito, Hunter Pence and Jorge Soler are selected as finalists by AL Players; Josh Donaldson, Sonny Gray and Hyun-Jin Ryu are NL finalists***

**NEW YORK, Oct. 14** – Players selected Lucas Giolito, Jorge Soler and Hunter Pence as finalists in the American League and Josh Donaldson, Sonny Gray and Hyun-Jin Ryu in the National League in voting for Comeback Player honors in the 2019 Players Choice Awards.

Winners of the AL and NL Comeback Player awards receive grants of \$20,000 each from the Major League Baseball Players Trust to direct to a charity of their choice.

All told, the 2019 Players Choice Award winners will designate charities to receive grants totaling \$260,000 from the Major League Baseball Players Trust. Since 1992, the Players Trust has recognized the outstanding on-and off-field performances of Players Choice Awards winners by contributing more than \$4.5 million to charities around the world.

Additionally, the 2019 Player of the Year and Marvin Miller Man of the Year will receive a \$50,000 grant and the eight league-wide Players Choice Award winners will receive grants of \$20,000 each.

Through their collective charity, players pool resources to support efforts that provide hope, sustainability and lasting change around the world. Players direct grants to the wide range of causes they support – from disaster relief to health and human services to growing baseball in the United States and abroad.

Players Choice Awards voting among all players was conducted in mid-September by the accounting firm KPMG. Winners will be announced beginning the week of October 21.

### **American League Finalists**

A first-round draft selection coming out of high school in Los Angeles in 2012, **Lucas Giolito** had the breakout season White Sox fans have been anticipating since the club acquired him in a trade

with the Nationals in 2016. After struggling in 2018, the 25-year-old right-hander became Chicago's ace and a first-time All-Star in 2019, going 14-9 over 176 2/3 innings and 29 starts. He had 228 strikeouts and a 3.41 ERA while pitching three complete games.

After a lost season due to injuries in 2018, Kansas City Royals outfielder **Jorge Soler** demonstrated that he's among baseball's most potent hitters when healthy. He batted .265 with an AL-leading 48 home runs and 117 RBIs. The 27-year-old Cuban established a new Royals record for home runs and the club's first player to top the 40-home run mark.

After struggling in his final season with the Giants, **Hunter Pence** played winter ball in the Dominican Republic, signed a minor-league contract with the Texas Rangers and proceeded to rejuvenate his career. The 13-year veteran hit 18 home runs with 59 RBIs and a .297 batting average over 83 games. The 36-year-old Forth Worth, Texas native was voted as the starting DH in his first All-Star game since 2014.

### **National League Finalists**

After appearing in only 52 games with the Blue Jays and Indians due to injuries in 2018, **Josh Donaldson** returned with a vengeance this season to help lead the Atlanta Braves to the NL East title, slashing .259/.379/.521 with 37 home runs and 94 RBIs. He also led NL third basemen with 15 Defensive Runs Saved.

**Sonny Gray**, who was traded to the Cincinnati Reds in January following a difficult season with the Yankees (4.90 ERA), settled back into form. The 29-year-old right-hander, who was the 18<sup>th</sup> overall draft pick coming out of Vanderbilt in 2011, went 11-8 with a 2.87 ERA over 31 starts and 175.1 innings for the Reds. He also had a career-high 205 strikeouts and was selected for the All-Star Game for the second time.

In his sixth year since coming from Korea, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher **Hyun-Jin Ryu** was named the Opening Day starter (following a series of injuries to his teammates) and never looked back. He tied for the 10<sup>th</sup>-longest streak of consecutive scoreless innings (31) in Dodgers history and was named the NL All-Star Game starter after going 5-0 with a 0.59 ERA in May. He finished with a 14-5 record and an MLB-best 2.32 ERA.

### **About the Major League Baseball Players Trust**

*Through the Players Trust, Major Leaguers contribute their time, money and celebrity to call attention to important causes. Each year the Players Trust distributes more than \$1.5 million in annual grants and programs. For additional information, please visit [www.PlayersTrust.org](http://www.PlayersTrust.org), @[MLBPlayersTrust](https://twitter.com/MLBPlayersTrust).*