

# Catch It!

## 2023 Grand National Champions

Julia Arciola, 3-Baton;  
Bower Sarra, Men's  
Solo and 2-Baton;  
Ally Duda, Women's  
Solo and Artistic Twirl;  
Katiana Welsheimer,  
Strut.



The *FantastiX Baton Team of Washougal, WA* performed in the Camas Days "Fairy Tale Parade" in July. The youngest twirled pickaxes, the next group twirled one baton, and the highest group twirled two batons. They were a crowd favorite!

CLICK ON TITLE TO JUMP TO PAGE

- [Summertime Twirling](#)
- [2023 U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships](#)
- [Winning Essays from Athlete of the Year Competition](#)
- [State and Regional Champions](#)

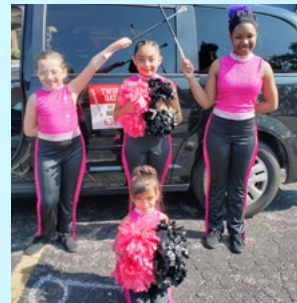
# SUMMERTIME TWIRLING

*Regional, national, and international competitions aren't the only things keeping twirlers busy this summer! Here's just a small sampling of other summertime twirling our athletes are involved in!*

12-year-old **Brooklynn VanMarter** has marched in the **Beloit, Wisconsin** Memorial Day Parade with Rising Stars Studio of Baton, Tumbling, and Dance since she was three years old. She joined the school band this year and was disappointed that she would be required to drum with the band instead of twirl with her studio. Fortunately, she solved her dilemma by convincing her band director to let her lead the band as she twirled. This was the first time any Beloit band was led by a twirler. *Way to go, Brooklyn!*



Members of the **Twirling Bears and Bearettes** performed in the 4th of July Parade in **Homewood, Illinois**.



**Valley Baton Club** had an amazing day at the Rose, White and Blue Parade on July 4th in **San Jose, California**.



**Melanie's Magic** twirlers performed at several community events this summer, including the **Lindsborg, Kansas** Old Fashioned 4th of July Celebration. Members performed their best routines to patriotic songs wearing anything red, white, and blue.



**Titanium Twirlers** from **Long Island, N.Y.** have been busy this summer! They participated in the 4th of July Parade in Port Jeff, N.Y., hosted a free "twirling in the park" event for new and returning twirlers, and are running their two, six-week summer sessions for recreational twirlers.



# SUMMERTIME TWIRLING

The ***FantastiX Baton Team*** of ***Washougal, Washington***, performed in the Camas Days “Fairy Tale Parade” in July. The youngest twirled pickaxes, the next group twirled one baton, and the highest group twirled two batons. They were a crowd favorite!



***Colorado Twirls'*** high school and college twirlers shared the sport of baton twirling with local children during a Try-It Camp on July 21 in ***Greenwood Village, Colorado***.



***Forte Twirlers*** from ***Atlanta, Georgia*** attended the Southeast Camp of Champions this summer, where they prepared for USTA Nationals, NBTA Nationals, and IBTF Worlds.



The ***Rantoul Shine Twirlers*** from ***Rantoul, Illinois*** followed the World Championships this summer, and have gained motivation and inspiration from past and present University of Illinois feature twirlers Julia Arciola and Ellie Garst.



The ***Saline Twirlettes*** from ***Saline, Michigan*** performed for the hometown crowd at Saline’s Summerfest on Aug. 11. It’s something they have done for many years! This year, their national team members - Alexis Figueras, Karissa Tandy, and Jenna Huetteman - led the way with dynamic routines. They were joined by some of the Twirlettes recreational twirlers, who did a great job!



# 2023 U.S. National Championships



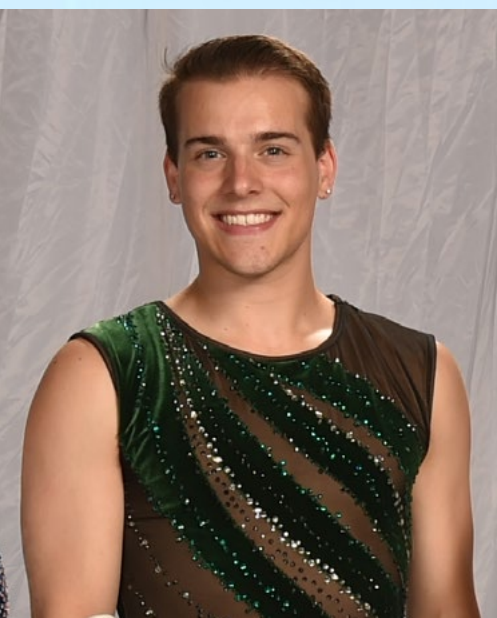
Congratulations to the elite athletes who earned the title of **Grand National Champion** during the **2023 U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships**, held July 11-15, at the Silver Spurs Arena and Events Center at the Osceola Heritage Park in Kissimmee, FL. The competition was sponsored by the United States Twirling Association and supported by the Greater Orlando Sports Commission.

**ALLY DUDA**, 21, earned the titles of **Grand National Women's Solo** and **Artistic Twirl Champion**. Duda was the 2022 Grand National Artistic Twirl Champion and is a three-time member of Team USA. She is a senior and feature twirler at the University of Georgia, where she is majoring in human development and family science on the pre-occupational therapy track.



## **BOWER**

**SARRA**, 24, won his fifth, consecutive Grand National Men's Solo title, and added the title of 2-Baton Grand National Champ. Sarra is a 2022 graduate of Arizona State University where he was a feature twirler and earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He now works full-time as an analyst at One Energy, and he



# 2022 U.S. National Championships

continues to twirl with The Show Twirlers.

**KATIANA WELSHEIMER**, 22, earned the title of **Grand National Strut Champion**. Welsheimer is a 2023 Summa Cum Laude graduate of the University of Memphis where she was a Tiger Twin feature twirler and earned a degree in exercise science. She and her twin sister Kirsandra earned the bronze medal in the Senior Pair discipline at the 2022 World Baton Twirling Championships in Turin, Italy.



**JULIA ARCIOLA**, 22, repeated as **Grand National 3-Baton Champion**. Arciola is the 2022 National Collegiate Champion and was a feature twirler at the University of Illinois. She is now working on her master's degree at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill.

In addition, **MARISSA PIERCE**, a senior at Michigan State University, won the title

of 2023 National Collegiate Champion. Pierce is majoring in political science pre-law with minors in leadership and organization and public law policy and justice.

These champions were among nearly 800 of the nation's best sport baton twirlers who competed in the 2023 National Championships, which included the prestigious U.S. PreTrials competition, the Athlete of the Year all-around competition, the National Collegiate Championship, and the Festival of the Future, a national competition for novice, beginner, and intermediate athletes.

This exciting week of competition wrapped up with the National and Festival group competition, National group finals, and fun-filled group retreat! Congratulations to all the groups that competed, and to all our National and Festival group champions!



# 2022 U.S. National Championships

Special recognition goes to **The Show Twirlers** for winning the **2023 esTEAMed Cup**, which is awarded to the highest scoring twirl team, and to **The Sundancers**, coach Lynette Starkey and choreographer Glenn Bittenbender for earning both the



**Esprit de Corps Cup**, for

the highest scoring corps, the Ann Bittenbender Legacy Cup, for highest scoring dance twirl team and the USTA Choreography Award.



Watch for profiles of the 2023 Coach of the Year, Patti Wojtowicz, Choreographer of the Year Glenn

Bittenbender, and Volunteer of the Year, Scott MacDonald, in the fall issue of Catch It!

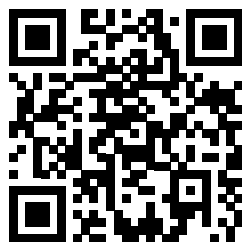
See complete National and Festival results here, and watch for the keepsake copy of the 2023 Catch It! Winners' Issue, featuring all National and Festival winners, later this fall.

The 2024 U.S. National Baton Twirling Championships will be held July 9-13, 2024, in the Nutter Center and McLin Gym at Wright State University in Fairborn, Ohio. Watch for schedule, hotel, and entry information on the USTA website in the coming months!

## Reminder

All results are posted online.

You can scan this QR code or click on this box to bring the results up on your phone.



# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR ESSAYS

## Athlete of the Year winning essays highlight all-around nature of AOTY competition

USTA's Athlete of the Year (AOTY) competition is an all-around competition that gives Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced athletes the opportunity to compete in Solo, Strut and 2-Baton, as well as an essay question for Beg. and Int. athletes and an interview for Adv. athletes.

*"The Athlete of the Year competition was established in 2021 to give athletes a new challenge and a new opportunity to shine," said USTA President Karen Cammer. "This event recognizes well-rounded athletes who have a broad base of skills and excel not just in twirling, but also in written and verbal communications. The Athlete of the Year event will set our twirlers up for success in athletics and in life."*

### Congratulations to the 2023 Athlete of the Year winners!

- ▶ Beginner Juvenile – **Lena Hatanaka**
- ▶ Beginner Junior – **Lila Gucinski**
- ▶ Beginner Senior – **Ana Lee Carlisi**
  
- ▶ Intermediate Juvenile – **Sydney Roberson and Mia Levielle** (not pictured)
- ▶ Intermediate Junior – **Hollis Holmes**
- ▶ Intermediate Senior – **Madison Frisby**
  
- ▶ Advanced Juvenile – **Kyla Brewer**
- ▶ Advanced Junior – **Micah Beaudoin**
- ▶ Advanced Senior – **Mikayla Schuller**

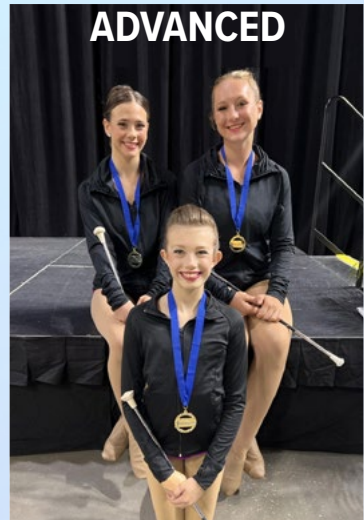
#### BEGINNER



#### INTERMEDIATE



#### ADVANCED



# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR ESSAYS

USTA is proud to share with you the winning essays from the 2023 Beg. and Int. Athlete of the Year competition!

## **Lena Hatanaka, Beginning Juvenile AOTY essay**

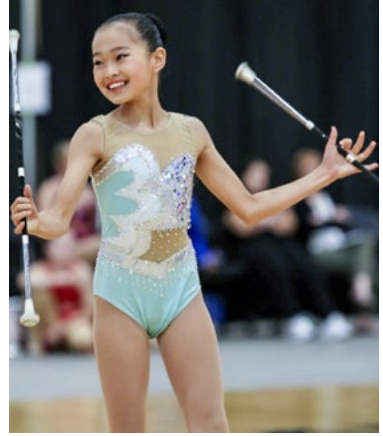
**QUESTION:** *How does being involved in twirling help you?*

Baton is my 3rd language which helped me break barriers and gave me confidence.

My parents are both Japanese, I was born in the US so my first language is English. While we visited our grandparent's house in Japan, I did not think I was going to make any friends there. I'm not confident at speaking Japanese. One day when we were taking a walk in the neighborhood, we found a baton club coincidentally, and my grandma talked to the coach about how I do the baton in the US. They invited me to practice baton, and I was able to make multiple friends around my age. I realized that baton helped me break the language barrier and make new friends.

Baton has helped me at school as well. I was too shy to run for any leadership roles, but my friends persuaded me to audition for the talent show. I was chosen by my classmates and performed my baton in front of the whole school. It was my first time performing baton out of competitions, so I was really nervous. Everyone liked it and applauded a lot which made me very happy and comfortable. With the whole school including my teachers and friends cheering me on, it gave me the courage to try out for more leadership roles such as Recess Leader, Kinder Crew, Safety Patrol and even getting the chance to be part of the Student Council. With being a part of all of these roles, I was selected to be one of the three students who received the 2023 Superintendent's Award from my school district.

This fall, I am going into middle school and I want to keep on trying new things and being confident from the experiences baton gave me.



# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR ESSAYS

## **Emelie Enriquez, Beginning Juvenile AOTY essay**

### *Practice Advice*

I have been taught valuable lessons from coaches, teammates, and my supportive mother to help improve my twirling. They are practice makes progress, the importance of muscle memory and compulsories are critical.

How you perform starts at practice. Therefore, the first piece of advice I will give you is “practice how you want to perform.” Facial expressions, especially for me, have either been my strong suit or a complete disaster at a competition. Something new my coach and I have done is listen to my freestyle music together, she would ask me at a particular part what I wanted the judges to feel from me and my expressions, and then awkwardly but effectively, I would practice how I wanted the look to illustrate the music.

Memorization is key. The body will remember how to move to the music; this is called muscle memory. I find it most beneficial to go over my routines in my head to visualize them. Also, with music and no baton, mainly just focusing on the bodywork, then going over the routine with no music and with a baton focusing more on tricks.

Practicing basics is never a waste of time. It is essential for progress. Having a solid base to work off of and add on is extremely wise while developing skills. This is why compulsories are necessary. Compulsories should be practiced as often as possible since they are the attributes of your routines.

At the end of the day, practicing in any shape or form is rewarding. These three methods will add value to your practice time and overall progression in the sport of baton twirling.



## **Teresa Hall, Beginning Senior AOTY essay**

*Who is your biggest twirling role model and why?*

Many people in sports have role models. It is usually the reason some kids get into that sport. They go and see their role model on a TV or a magazine and say “ I want to be like them one day”. That’s how I found my role model really, my role model is Emily Perkins and it’s for many different reasons.

I have been able to watch Emily at competitions and at other events like worlds for example. I am always excited to see her perform because she gives off so much emotion and makes twirling so interesting to watch. I also have been able to personally get to know her and it gave me motivation to know she wasn’t always as flexible. Which made me want to work harder towards my flexibility knowing that if i work hard enough I could possibly look like an amazing twirler just like her.

Every time I see her practicing she is always working hard to catch a trick or make something more enticing in a routine. I also have had the pleasure to learn from her, and she is an amazing teacher. She would give me a new, very different trick I have never tried before and wasn’t confident in. Emily believed in me and pushed me to catch it, and now some of her tricks are my favorite.

She is also my role model in how she shows her love for twirling. Even though she has retired from competitive twirling she still loves to go out and perform. Whether it’s doing a triple illusion or a five spin she always does it with determination a smile.

Another reason she is my role model is from seeing her on the field at Oklahoma University. I enjoy watching her twirl on the field, and seeing how the crowd lights up because everyone is so excited to see her. Also how little kids look up to her and think she is such an extraordinary twirler. I hope when I twirl on the field I can be as great as her.

Lastly she is my role model in the fact that she wants to start her own twirling group. She wants to show her love of twirling and teach younger future twirlers the sport that everyone loves. She



# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR ESSAYS

has inspired me in teaching and I hope in the future I can coach and spread this amazing sport to the world just like she has.

Emily Perkins is an amazing twirler and role model. She is someone I look up to in the twirling world and I hope I can be even a little bit like her in the future.

## **Sydney Roberson, Intermediate Juvenile AOTY essay**

*Describe one of your favorite moments in twirling so far!*

One of my favorite moments in twirling so far would have to be twirling in my school play, *The Greatest Showman*. This was my chance to mix my school life with one of my favorite sports and one of my favorite movies. The coolest part is that the directors of the play actually came to me and asked if I would twirl in the play. Of course I said yes.

This moment in my life was very special for many reasons. I was the opening and closing act of the show and had the spotlight on me during several feature parts. I enjoyed being in charge of my own routine. I not only worked with my mom at home, but I was responsible for fixing it by myself at school to make it work better for what the director needed during rehearsals. I loved meeting so many new friends from different grades that I would have probably never met if I would not have been given the opportunity to perform in the show. I've also become very interested in joining the theater club at my school from the great experience I had.

My schedule during the play was so hectic during rehearsal week. I missed team practice to be at school, which made me miss my twirling friends. I was so surprised and excited to see them on opening night when they came to cheer me on. It was great to see them support me at my school and stick by my side while trying something new. Because of these experiences, performing in *The Greatest Showman* at my school would absolutely have to be my favorite twirling moment so far.

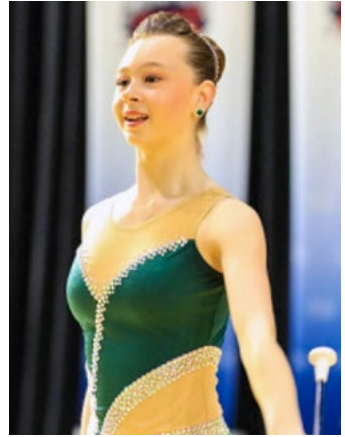


# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR ESSAYS

## **Juliana Buck, Intermediate Junior AOTY essay**

*How has twirling helped you succeed both academically and athletically?*

Baton twirling has taught me many lessons throughout my 5 years of competing. Two of these lessons have brought personal successes within my academic and athletic careers. These two lessons are resilience and determination.



For academics, the lesson of resilience taught me to never give up after failures. I wanted to be involved in our schools student council by being a classroom representative. For 3 years, I was not elected by my peers. However, it never stopped me from trying. Like in baton, you will never find a win if you don't keep putting yourself out there. Last year, my classroom representative was suspended from serving due to conduct issues. Since I was the only other candidate that ran, the position was handed over to me. I was so successful at the position that upon the return of the original representative, I was asked to stay on as a student council secretary in training. Due to this experience, I was elected this year to be the student council secretary.

For athletics, baton taught me to be determined when facing new challenges. Besides twirling, I have always been in love with volleyball, even though I never played the sport. This year, I decided to join the girls volleyball team. It was my determination that allowed me not only to try this new sport, but also to be successful at it. By mid-season, I was moved up to the starting line, and our team ended up making it to the third round of playoffs at the seasons end.

There are many more success stories that I would love to speak upon if I could because I know that none of them would have been possible if I never picked up a baton.

# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR ESSAYS

## **Elizabeth Kozdron, Intermediate Senior AOTY essay**

### *What advice would you give to younger athletes just starting the sport?*

As an 18-year-old baton twirler with over a decade of experience, I have developed a wealth of knowledge about the sport. If I was given the opportunity to share some of my insight with a younger athlete I would start off with explaining how important the basic techniques are to learn and perfect.

When beginning, it is extremely important to lock down the fundamentals and technique before advancing into those elite elements, although when watching high level twirling you want to be able to magically do tricks like doubles, triples, maybe even a toss aerial. When learning the basics it is crucial you focus on getting them technically correct so when you start to advance you are able to go about it in a smooth manner.

If I could go back and tell my younger self a piece of advice it would be to prioritize having fun with the sport as it is essential to keep the love alive when seeking a successful twirling career. Through your fails and successes always find something positive to take away from the experience. The journey is always worth it when you have a positive mindset and support system.

It is key to have an optimistic outlook on every aspect of your development. Having a supportive instructor and baton family has played a key role in my experience. When I was absorbed with negativity it quickly halted my progress, because of the support I received from my coach it immediately altered my mind set and motivated me to reach my goals.

On a final note, giving advice is easy but it is up to the athlete to accept. If I could offer anything it would be to focus on the fundamentals, create a supportive surrounding, cultivate mental toughness, and most significantly have fun!



# 2024 U.S. NATIONAL BATON TWIRLING CHAMPIONSHIPS



**July 9-13, 2024**

**Nutter Center and McLin Gym**

**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY, FAIRBORN, OHIO**



**UNITED STATES  
TWIRLING ASSOCIATION**

Watch for hotel, schedule and entry info this fall at [www.ustwirling.com](http://www.ustwirling.com).

# 2023 State Champions



## Alabama

FRONT: Madison Randall - Jr. Women's Solo, 2-Baton, and 3-Baton; Susan Otts - Jr. Strut and Artistic Twirl

BACK: Sally Otts - Sr. 2-Baton and 3-Baton; Erin Smith - Sr. Artistic Twirl and Strut; Maddox Mullen - Sr. Women's Solo



## Arizona

Megan Ekstrom - 2-Baton and 3-Baton; Taylor-Claire Warner - Women's Solo and Strut; Jayden Mendez - Men's Solo; Cheyenne Sorenson - Artistic Twirl



## California

Jaide Jobe - Women's Solo, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, Strut, Artistic Twirl



## Colorado

Hannah Vandeventer - Strut; Makaela Anderson - Women's Solo, 3-Baton, and Artistic Twirl; Byron Anderson - Men's Solo and 2-Baton



## Florida

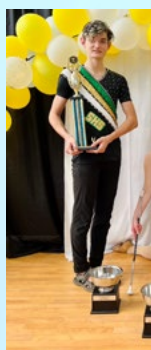
Amelia McAmis - Strut; Jax Scott - Men's Solo; Melyna Vaudrin - 2-Baton and 3-Baton; Gracyn Holley - Women's Solo; McKenzie Cooke - Artistic Twirl

# 2023 State Champions



## Indiana and Michigan

Audrey Circle - Indiana Strut; Ireland Jones - Indiana Women's Solo, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, Artistic Twirl; Marissa Pierce - Michigan Women's Solo, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, and Artistic Twirl; Morgan Kate Smith - Michigan Strut



## Kansas

Allen Johnson Men's Solo, Kaylyn Johnson - 3-Baton; Alexa Leitzel - 2-Baton, Artistic Twirl, Strut; Addy Gurney - Women's Solo



## Kentucky

Austin Arellanes - Men's Solo, 2-Baton, and Artistic Twirl; Harlie Peterson - Women's Solo, Strut, and 3-Baton



## Louisiana

Tara Zielinski - Women's Solo, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, Artistic Twirl, and Strut



## Maryland

Sami Cooper - 3-Baton; Allora Ferree - Women's Solo, Artistic Twirl, and Strut; Carly Pometto - 2-Baton; Marshall Sherer - Men's Solo

# 2023 State Champions



## Mississippi

Georgia Pylate - Women's Solo, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, Strut, and Artistic Twirl



## New Jersey

Tiahna Selby - Adult Women's Solo, 3-Baton, Strut and Artistic Twirl  
Madison Brown - Jr. Women's Solo, 2-Baton, Strut and Artistic Twirl



## New York

Kalista Kahler - Strut and Artistic Twirl; Micah Beaudoin - 2-Baton; Gina Zarcone - 3-Baton; Lila Sargent - Women's Solo



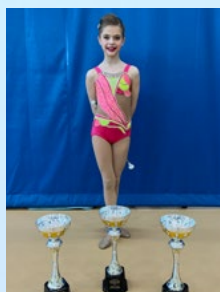
## Ohio

Marla Edgecomb - 3-Baton; Erienne Hay - Women's Solo, Strut and Artistic Twirl; Bower Sarra - Men's Solo and 2-Baton



## Oregon

Hudson Cunningham - Jr. Men's Solo, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, and Artistic Twirl; Bennett McKay - Jr. Women's Solo; Keely Vrieze - Jr. Strut



## Pennsylvania

Shay Busza - Women's Solo, 2-Baton, and Artistic Twirl

# 2023 State Champions



## Tennessee

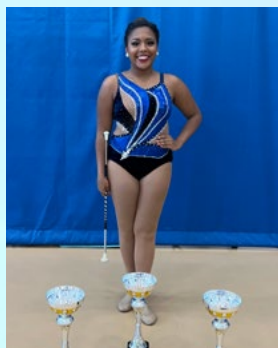
FRONT: Jenny Hannah - Adult Women's Solo, Strut, and Artistic Twirl; Lydia Hughes - Juv. Women's Solo, Strut, 2-Baton, 3-Baton, and Artistic Twirl

BACK: Bella Malone - Jr. Women's Solo, Strut, 2-Baton, and Artistic Twirl; Joanie Coville - Sr. 3-Baton; Abigail Hadener - Sr. Women's Solo, Strut, 2-Baton, and Artistic Twirl



## Texas

Maggie Chrudimsky - Women's Solo, 2-Baton, and 3-Baton; McKenzie Gomez - Strut and Artistic Twirl



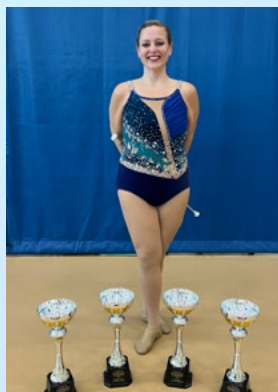
## Virginia

Madison Ramsingh - Women's Solo, 2-Baton, and 3-Baton



## Washington

JaZee Griffith - Women's Solo, 2-Baton, and 3-Baton; Rowan Dykstra - Strut and Artistic Twirl



## West Virginia

Angela Ridenour - Women's Solo, Strut, 2-Baton, and 3-Baton

# 2023 Regional Champions



## Central Region

Makaela Anderson - Women's Solo;  
Byron Anderson - Men's Solo and  
2-Baton; Tara Zielinski - Strut and  
Artistic Twirl; Maggie Chrudimsky -  
3-Baton



## Midwest Region

Kylie Cates - Women's Solo, Strut,  
and Artistic Twirl; Mikayla Schuller  
- 2-Baton and 3-Baton; Bower Sarra -  
Men's Solo



## Northeast Region

Micah Beaudoin - Women's Solo,  
2-Baton, and Strut; Ivorie Shelton

- 3-Baton; Kaycee Schultz - Artistic  
Twirl; Marshall Sherer - Men's Solo



## Southeast Region

Front: Gracyn Holley - Jr. Women's  
Solo; Jenny Hannah - Strut; Madison  
Randall - Jr. 2-Baton and 3-Baton  
Back: Jordon Steele - Sr. Men's  
Solo; Julia Arciola - Sr. 2-Baton and  
3-Baton; Ally Duda - Sr. Women's  
Solo and Artistic Twirl; Susan Otts -  
Jr. Strut and Artistic Twirl; Jax Scott  
- Jr. Men's Solo



## Western Region

JaZee Griffith - 2-Baton and  
3-Baton; Jaida Jobe - Women's Solo;  
Benjamin Zeitz - Men's Solo; Katiana  
Welsheimer - Strut; Kirsandra  
Welsheimer - Artistic Twirl



United States Twirling Association

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