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EMPIRE 8 ANNOUNCES FOOTBALL ALL-CONFERENCE TEAM
Nick Clark of Alfred Repeats as Defensive Player of the Year

ROCHESTER, NY – The Empire 8 announced its 2011 Football All-Conference team with senior linebacker Nick Clark of Alfred University repeating as Defensive Player of the Year and junior quarterback Dan Griffin of conference champion Salisbury University being named Offensive Player of the Year.

Clark, who was the unanimous choice as top defensive player and was named to the all-conference first team for the third time, averaged 10.3 tackles per game in the regular season. He registered nine tackles for loss for a total of 30 yards, three sacks, forced two fumbles, and intercepted two passes. The Saxons' defense allowed just 110.6 yards rushing per game.

Griffin led Salisbury to an undefeated conference record and an automatic bid to the NCAA Division III Football Championship. He has accounted for 27 touchdowns (13 passing, 14 rushing) and became the school's first 1,000-yard passer since 1998 with a 239.77 pass efficiency rating without throwing a single interception. Griffin has also rushed for 623 yards.

Senior Dan Ruffrage of Ithaca College was named the Special Teams Players of the Year and earned first-team all-conference honors as a return specialist and all-purpose player. He averaged 26.2 yards per punt return and 26.6 yards per kick return, returning two punts and one kickoff for touchdowns. Ruffrage added 568 receiving yards, averaging 142.1 yards all-purpose per game.

Running back J.D. Hook of Frostburg State University was selected as Rookie of the Year, averaging a conference-high 96.7 yards per game with four touchdowns.

Sherman Wood was selected as Empire 8 Coach of the Year for leading Salisbury to the conference title in its first season in the league.

Eight other Salisbury players joined Griffin on the all-conference first team. Senior running back Randall Smedley enters NCAA play averaging 79.2 yards per game, 6.2 yards per carry, and rushing for eight touchdowns. Senior right guard Christian Emeze and senior left guard Alex Smith anchor the Sea Gulls' offensive line that ranks second in the nation with 3,402 rushing yards and has yielded only 11 sacks.

Senior defensive end Matt Leon leads the conference in tackles for loss with 15.5 and has recorded 46 tackles, five sacks, and two fumble recoveries. Senior linebacker Jamey McClendon and junior linebacker Matt McMurdo clogged the middle of the Sea Gulls' defense that has limited opponents to 126 yards rushing per game. McClendon is averaging 7.2 tackles per game with 8.5 tackles for loss, while McMurdo is averaging 5.8 tackles per game with four tackles for loss. Junior defensive back Chris Everett and sophomore defensive back Andre Carter also garnered first-team honors. Everett ranks second on the team in tackles and has broken up six passes, while Carter has picked off five passes, returning one for a touchdown.

Three players from NCAA participant St. John Fisher College were named to the all-conference first team. Senior right tackle Corey Balcerzak was a repeat selection, anchoring the offensive line. Senior defensive lineman Chris Sawyer and senior defensive back David Vosburgh were named to the first team for the first time. Sawyer, who also played linebacker, ended the regular season averaging 4.6 tackles per game with 6.5 tackles for loss and three sacks. Vosburgh enters postseason play with 9.9 tackles per game, 11.5 tackles for loss, 11 passes defended, 2.5 sacks, and a pair of interceptions.

Four players from Alfred joined teammate Clark on the all-conference first team. Junior defensive lineman Mike Raplee, senior placekicker Eric Rockwood, and sophomore Austin Dwyer were repeat honorees. Raplee leads the Saxons with 4.5 sacks for a total loss of 38 yards and is averaging 6.8 tackles per game. Rockwood, the program's all-time leader in kicking points and extra points, leads the team in scoring and has hit 12 of 13 field goals. Dwyer is averaging 93.3 yards per game rushing with nine touchdowns and 145.2 all-purpose yards per game.

Senior defensive lineman Marcellus Jones garnered first-team accolades. Jones averages 4.5 tackles per game with 5.5 tackles for loss, including 3.5 sacks.

Three Utica College players were named to the all-conference first team unit. Sophomore wide receiver Anthony Acevedo is among the national leaders with 139.5 all-purpose yards per game and he added 6.2 receptions per game and seven touchdowns. Junior tight end Matt Dunn led the conference in receptions, yards, and yards per game, finishing with 48 catches and four touchdowns. Senior punter Seth Mitchell averaged 40.8 yards per punt, the second-highest punting average in the program's history.

Senior right tackle Sean Meagher of Springfield College, a second-team choice last season, was named to the first team this year. The Pride led the conference in rushing offense and total offense.

Senior defensive back Spencer White of Ithaca repeated as a first-team selection. He averaged six tackles per game, forced four fumbles, recovered three fumbles, broke up seven passes, and blocked a kick.

Sophomore offensive lineman Darius Arrington of Frostburg was named to the all-conference first team in his first year in the Empire 8.

Senior wide receiver Jordan Wilkins of Hartwick College earned first-team honors. He led the conference with 1,119 receiving yards and eight touchdowns.

One member of each team was named that institution's representative on the 2011 Football Sportsman of the Year Team. Empire 8 emphasizes that "Competing with Honor and Integrity" is an essential component of a student-athlete's experience in conjunction with an institution's educational mission. These honorees have distinguished themselves and consistently exhibit the critical traits as outstanding sportsmen.

Empire 8 2011 Football All-Conference Awards

Offensive Player of the Year: Dan Griffin, Salisbury University

Defensive Player of the Year: Nick Clark, Alfred University

Special Teams Player of the Year: Dan Ruffrage, Ithaca College

Rookie of the Year: J.D. Hook, Frostburg State University

Coach of the Year: Sherman Wood, Salisbury University

First Team Offense

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Dan Griffin	QB	Jr.	Salisbury University
Austin Dwyer	RB	So.	Alfred University
Randall Smedley	RB	Sr.	Salisbury University
Anthony Acevedo	WR	So.	Utica College
Jordan Wilkins	WR	Sr.	Hartwick College
Matt Dunn	TE	Jr.	Utica College
Dan Ruffrage	All-Purpose	Sr.	Ithaca College
Darius Arrington	OL	So.	Frostburg State University
Corey Balcerzak	OL	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Christian Emeze	OL	Sr.	Salisbury University
Sean Meagher	OL	Sr.	Springfield College
Alex Smith	OL	Sr.	Salisbury University

First Team Defense

Marcellus Jones	DL	Sr.	Alfred University
Matt Leon	DL	Sr.	Salisbury University
Mike Raplee	DL	Jr.	Alfred University
Chris Sawyer	DL	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Nick Clark	LB	Sr.	Alfred University
Jamey McClendon	LB	Sr.	Salisbury University
Matt McMurdo	LB	Jr.	Salisbury University
Andre Carter	DB	So.	Salisbury University
Chris Everett	DB	Jr.	Salisbury University
David Vosburgh	DB	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Spencer White	DB	Sr.	Ithaca College

First Team Special Teams

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Eric Rockwood	PK	Sr.	Alfred University
Seth Mitchell	P	Sr.	Utica College
Dan Ruffrage	KR/PR	Sr.	Ithaca College

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Second Team Offense

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Josh Carter	QB	Sr.	Springfield College
J.D. Hook	RB	Fr.	Frostburg State University
Jake Larson	RB	Jr.	Utica College
Ryan Schmidt	WR	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Anthony Young	WR	Jr.	Frostburg State University
Adam Schutz	TE	Jr.	Alfred University
Tim Demersman	OL	Sr.	Alfred University
Ryan DiFlavio	OL	So.	Alfred University
Andrew Hems	OL	Sr.	Utica College
Brian Mansfield	OL	Jr.	Salisbury University
Austin Restaino	OL	Sr.	Hartwick College

Second Team Defense

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Tommy Hawks	DL	Fr.	Salisbury University
Mike Herberger	DL	Jr.	Utica College
Mason Judd	DL	So.	St. John Fisher College
Ryan Simmons	DL	Sr.	Frostburg State University
Joe Gilfedder	LB	Sr.	Ithaca College
Brendan Moore	LB	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Wes Smith	LB	Sr.	Alfred University
Brendon Blanchette	DB	Jr.	Frostburg State University
Jon Jackson	DB	Jr.	Alfred University
James Kikel	DB	Sr.	Springfield College
Matt Ramos	DB	Jr.	Springfield College
Troy Sant	DB	Jr.	St. John Fisher College

Second Team Special Teams

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Andy Rogowski	PK/P	Sr.	Ithaca College
Austin Dwyer	KR/PR	So.	Alfred University

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Sportsman of the Year

Name	Yr.	School
T.J. Kilcarr	Sr.	Alfred University
Josh Volpe	Sr.	Frostburg State University
Brendan Cahill	Sr.	Hartwick College
Joe Gilfedder	Sr.	Ithaca College
Jamey McClendon	Sr.	Salisbury University
Josh Carter	Sr.	Springfield College
Artie Bigsby	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Greg Caloia	Sr.	Utica College

Honorable Mention Offense

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Andrew Benkwitt	QB	Jr.	Utica College
Ryan Francis	WR	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Joe Ingrao	WR	Jr.	Ithaca College
Artie Bigsby	TE	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Miguel Amezcuita	OL	Jr.	St. John Fisher College
Matt Dugon	OL	Sr.	Springfield College
Mike MacDonald	OL	So.	Springfield College
Dan Maloney	OL	Jr.	St. John Fisher College

Honorable Mention Defense

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Alex Akinseye	LB	Sr.	Salisbury University
Dana Christofferson	LB	So.	Utica College
Bryan Schweitzer	LB	So.	Hartwick College
Jordan Spirou	LB	Sr.	Hartwick College
Reggie Pressley	DB	Jr.	Alfred University

Honorable Mention Special Teams

Name	Position	Yr.	School
Chad Monheim	PK	Sr.	St. John Fisher College
Adam Burdick	PR	Jr.	St. John Fisher College