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2014 Little East Conference Hall of Fame Inductees

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NORTH DARTMOUTH, Mass. – The Little East Conference will honor 11 individuals as the Hall of Fame Class of 2014, the conference office announced today. The Class, the third in conference history, will be honored on Sunday, October 26 in the annual induction ceremony at the Providence Marriott Hotel.

This year's class, nominated by their alma maters and voted upon by the league's eight Athletic Directors, will include individuals representing every Little East institution. **William Baird**, former Rhode Island College athletic director, and **William Gathright**, former sports information director at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (inducted posthumously), will be the two administrators honored.

Representing the conference's coaches will be **Ron Butcher**, former head men's soccer coach at Keene State College, and **Alicia O'Brien**, former head softball coach at Western Connecticut State University.

Seven former student-athletes will also be honored as members of the Class of 2014: **Robin (Gaby) Leclerc** of Eastern Connecticut State University, **Erin Dallas** of Keene State College, **Claudia DeFaria** of Rhode Island College, **Mary-Bridget (Pawlik) Blandini** of Plymouth State University, **Andreen Gilpin** of the University of Massachusetts Boston, and **Jeff Bowers** and **Julie Plant** of the University of Southern Maine.

The induction ceremony will be open to the public, with a \$50 per person price of admission, and also streamed live at **www.littleeast.tv**. Tickets and congratulatory program advertisements can be purchased online at **http://mkt.com/LEC**. All eight Little East Conference athletic departments also have a limited number of tickets available for sale. The purchase deadline for program advertisements is October 1.

Formed in 1986, the Little East serves as New England's premier athletic conference for public institutions in NCAA Division III. Featuring 19 championship sports, the Little East sponsors quality competition in every season for our student athletes. Our eight state colleges and universities dedicate themselves to an ongoing fulfillment of the Division III mission of passion, responsibility, sportsmanship, and citizenship.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

William (Bill) Baird Rhode Island College



William Baird spent 28 years at Rhode Island College as a professor, head men's basketball coach and athletic director. Joining with the other athletic directors, Baird assisted in the formation of the Little East Conference.

Holding a career record of 168-97 (.634) as a coach, Baird was not only successful in winning games, but also increasing the talent of the Anchormen program. His most successful season was in 1968-69 when he led the Anchormen to a 24-2 record, reaching the finals of the NAIA

District 32 playoffs and being named New England Small College Coach of the Year by United Press International.

Winning five NESCAC Southern Division Championships, and four conference titles, Baird also led the Anchormen to the NAIA semifinals twice. 1976 saw Baird lead the program to the NCAA Div. III regional title as well as a spot in the quarterfinals of the national tournament.

Baird was responsible for many groundbreaking advancements at RIC, which included the transition from the NAIA to NCAA Div. III in 1975, hiring the school's first full-time athletic trainer as well as hiring the first Associate Athletic Director in charge of women's sports.

His 1968-69 men's basketball squad was the second team honored in the RIC athletic department's Team Hall of Fame in 2009. As a player Baird scored 1,534 points for the University of Rhode Island where he is honored in their Hall of Fame.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Mary-Bridget (Pawlik) Blandini Plymouth State University



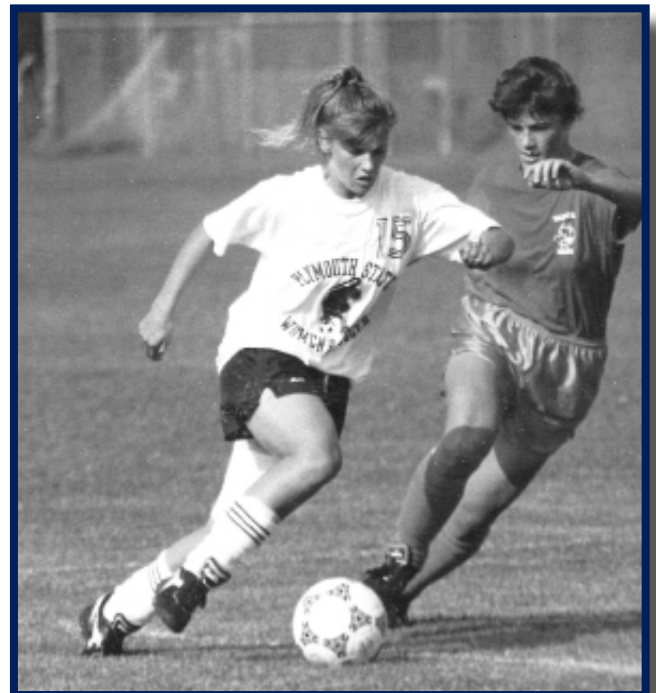
One of the finest student-athletes ever at Plymouth State, female or male, Mary-Bridget Blandini achieved a tremendous amount of success during her four years on the Panther women's soccer team from 1990-93. She led the team to four straight Little East Conference championships, earned First Team All-LEC recognition three times, and was named Little East Women's Soccer Player of the Year in 1992 and 1993.

A dominating offensive player, Blandini (known then as Mary-Bridget Pawlik) became Plymouth State's all-time women's soccer scoring leader with 56 goals and 140 points. She led the Panthers to the first four LEC titles and four NCAA Tournament berths from 1990-93 under head coach Nancy Feldman. Blandini led the team to NCAA Final Four appearances in 1991 and 1993, including the title game in 1993, and a combined four-year record of 60-9-4.

Blandini scored a then-record 19 goals as a junior, and came back to break her own mark with 20 goals as a senior in 1993. She received First Team All-America honors both years, and was named NCAA National Women's Soccer Player of the Year in 1993.

A native of North Andover, Mass., Blandini was well known and respected for her outstanding personality and character. She was a terrific teammate and opponent. M-B was so skillful, a former coach brags that M-B could beat her opponent with that Golden Left Foot, even if they knew it was coming.

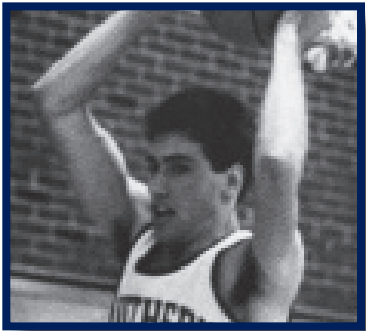
Plymouth State recognized Blandini with its two highest honors, inducting her into its Athletic Hall of Fame in her first year of eligibility in 1999, months after retiring her jersey No. 15, the only uniform number of a female student-athlete in school history to be retired.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Jeff Bowers *University of Southern Maine*



In 1988-89, the USM men's basketball program reached a level of success that has not been achieved since by going to the NCAA Division III National Championship Final Four. A major reason for that success was the outstanding play of 6-foot-6 forward Jeff Bowers. A two-time honorable mention All-American, Bowers averaged 20.3 points and 6.4 rebounds to help the Huskies win their only Little East Conference championship (1989) and advance to the NCAA Final Four. He was the Little East Co-Player of the Year, the ECAC Division III New England Player of the Year and earned first team all-star accolades from the LEC, ECAC, UPI New England and the Maine College Basketball Coaches and Writers Association.

As a junior, Bowers averaged 19.2 points and 10.1 rebounds as the Huskies finished 21-8 and took third place in the NCAA regional tournament. The NCAA tournament bid was the first of four straight trips to the "Big Dance" for the Huskies. Bowers was named to numerous all-star teams, and led the nation in free-throw percentage sinking 93 percent of his charity tosses. Still ranked among the program's career leaders in points (1,257), scoring average (17.2), field goal percentage (.524), three-point field goals (158), three-point field goal percentage (.476) and free throw percentage (.855), Bowers holds the school records for three-point field goals made in one season (89) and career free throw percentage.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Ron Butcher Keene State College



Ron Butcher, the dean of New England soccer coaches, guided the Keene State College men's soccer team for 43 years through three different classifications, all with the same aim.

Throughout his tenure, whether his team was in the NAIA or the NCAA, Division II or Division III, his goal for the Keene State's soccer program was unwavering: win.

Appointed head coach in 1970, Butcher nursed Keene State's program through its early NAIA days, reaching the NAIA national championship game in 1978, and the semifinals in 1981.

After his early success at Keene State, Butcher was forced to change gears abruptly when the program was elevated to Division II and entered the New England Collegiate Conference in 1982.

Scouting, recruiting and athletic scholarships became just as important as the game on the field, and Butcher, already wearing many hats in Keene State's Athletic Department, set about the task of making sure his Owls would not be grounded. Although other programs had more resources, Keene State's soccer guru still found a way to win, directing the Owls to the 1987 and 1990 ECAC crown.

The winning didn't stop with KSC's move to Division III in the fall of 1997. Since joining Division III, the Owls have earned 10 NCAA tournament berths and captured six Little East Conference championships. Named the Little East Conference Coach of the Year in 1999, 2001, 2010, and 2011, Butcher compiled an astonishing 89-21-9 (.786) record in LEC play, with a 15-8-2 (.640) record in the LEC tournament. Both marks stand atop the record book in LEC annals.

Butcher, who retired from coaching at the end of the 2013 season, finished with 596 wins, third most amongst Division III coaches. The coach of 22 All-Americans, Butcher was inducted into the Keene State Hall of Fame in 2005, becoming the rare inductee who was still an active coach.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Erin Dallas Keene State College



Erin Dallas' career at Keene State College was nothing short of miraculous. A local product who had played at Keene High School, Dallas transferred to Keene State after playing her freshman year at the University of Michigan.

A big-time talent, Dallas had scored the game winner against Indiana in the Big Ten championship game. That talent would return home to KSC, finishing her career as a three-time All-American with her name in the KSC record books and leading the Owls to a pair of NCAA tourna-

ment appearances.

But the real miracle happened off the field.

Heading in for what was supposed to be routine surgery on her knee, Dallas was re-admitted four days afterwards for an infection. It turned out to be necrotizing fasciitis, a bacterial infection that can destroy skin and soft tissue. It nearly took her leg – then her life.

Enduring 10 consecutive days of surgery, countless hours of physical therapy, and time in a hyperbaric chamber, Dallas spent nearly three straight weeks at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H.

Dallas said she couldn't have survived the ordeal without the support of her family and friends. KSC held a special night for her at a basketball game with proceeds going to the hospital to offset her medical bills. Entering the Spaulding Gym with the aid of a walker, fans greeted an emotional Dallas with a standing ovation.

Then it was back on the field; Just nine months after enduring multiple surgeries and countless hours of physical therapy, Dallas was cleared to play. One of the outcomes of the illness was that Dallas, who had been an All-American in 2007 and 2008 and LEC Offensive Player of the Year in 2007, was forced to switch to defense, where she went out and ended up earning LEC Defensive Player of the Year honors in 2009, capping her career with her third All-America award.

Dallas, who is KSC's all-time leader in assists, ranks in the top 10 in several other categories. But her most impressive achievement truly was a miracle.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Claudia DeFaria Rhode Island College



Claudia DeFaria '96 is one of the most distinguished players to ever wear the Rhode Island College women's basketball uniform.

In just two seasons with the team, DeFaria climbed her way into the school record books by scoring 1,048 points (11th) and recording 592 rebounds (seventh). She remains the only player in program history to reach the 1,000-point milestone in just two seasons. In her senior season DeFaria averaged 19.2 points per game and 11.2 rebounds per game en route to being named the Little East Player of the Year, First Team All-LEC,

to the LEC All-Tournament team and a New England Women's Basketball Association (NEWBA) Second Team All-Star. She was also named a Distinguished Student-Athlete by the Rhode Island Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (RIAIW).

After playing, DeFaria returned to the Community College of Rhode Island as part of the coaching staff. During her tenure, CCRI reached the NJCAA Final Four twice, and the Elite Eight four times while capturing five consecutive New England and Northeast District Championships. After her stint at CCRI, DeFaria joined the RIC coaching staff as the associate head coach. She helped lead the Anchorwomen to the 2012 LEC Regular Season and Tournament Championships.

Since her playing days ended, DeFaria has been recognized by numerous organizations for her contributions. An inductee of the CCRI Hall of Fame in 1999, she was also recognized as Alumni of the Year in 2008. Rhode Island College also inducted her into its Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002 and to the college's 75th Anniversary Women's Basketball Team in 2005. DeFaria was selected to the Little East Conference Women's Basketball 25th Anniversary Team in 2011.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

William E. (Bill) Gathright, Jr. University of Massachusetts Dartmouth



Long-time UMass Dartmouth Sports Information Director Bill Gathright is being inducted posthumously into the Little East Conference Hall of Fame following his passing in 2004 at the age of 54. A renowned figure on the UMass Dartmouth campus and throughout the Little East Conference and the New England collegiate athletic community, Gathright worked in the Athletic Department at then Southeastern Massachusetts University and later UMass Dartmouth for 31 years. One of his most enduring contributions to the Athletic Department was serving as founder of the Corsair Hall of Fame.

Bill Gathright was part of a small group of athletics administrators who were instrumental in the creation and early growth of the Little East Conference in the mid-1980s. His professionalism and friendship were his hallmarks as was his willingness to promote both the Corsairs and the Little East Conference.

A 1973 graduate of Boston University, Gathright was an All-New England First Team All-Star in football as a senior after earning three varsity letters. Selected as team co-captain and Harry Agganis Most Valuable Player award winner during his senior season, Gathright was also an All-East Second Team selection as an offensive tackle.

Following his graduation from Boston University with a Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education and Health Education, Gathright was hired at then-SMU as Intramural Director in the Fall of 1973. During his career at SMU, and later UMass Dartmouth, Gathright made several contributions to the development of Athletics on the Dartmouth campus. He was the department's first Sports Information Director. He was a member of the Council of Sports Information Directors and a beloved and colorful personality within New England intercollegiate athletics.

In addition to his work at UMass Dartmouth, Gathright was also very active as a basketball and softball official. He was a long-time member of the Southeastern Massachusetts Board of Officials, serving as rules interpreter for women's basketball. He worked as a woman's basketball official in the Big East for several seasons.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Andreen Gilpin University of Massachusetts Boston



The art of rebounding the basketball and Andreen Gilpin '04 go hand-in-hand. Gilpin stands as UMass Boston's all-time leading rebounder with 1,342 boards for her career (13.2 rpg), which ranks her amongst some the top rebounders in the history of Division III women's basketball. The post player ripped down 15.7 boards per outing during her senior campaign to lead the nation and establish a school record with 408 total rebounds. She also averaged 16.2 points per game to give her 422 points on the season to become the only player in school history with over 400 points and rebounds in a season. A 2004 graduate of UMass Boston, Gilpin is also the only player in UMB history to post 300 or more points and 300 or more rebounds in three different campaigns.

She showcased her rebounding prowess early in her career when she pulled down an NCAA Division II/III record 38 rebounds during her freshman year vs. Rivier College on February 11, 1999. She would later post four of the top nine season rebound totals in school annals. The Boston native averaged 13.7 rebounds during her rookie season and ranked 18th in the nation with 11.9 as a sophomore and 15th with 11.8 the following year. Gilpin was named a Little East Conference All-Star three times to become just the fourth Beacon to earn the honor at least three times, including twice as a First Team selection.

Gilpin was a force on the offensive end of the court as well for UMass Boston, averaging 12.6 points in 102 games for a total of 1,380 to rank third on the UMass Boston career scoring list and posted 61 double-doubles (points-rebounds) during her career. She improved her accuracy at the line throughout her tenure at UMB, sinking 346 free throws for the most in school history and capped her career with the sixth-most efficient season percentage in school history as a senior. Gilpin altered opponents' offense in the paint as well with 125 career blocked shots to stand fourth on the Beacons' career list.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Robin R. (Gaby) Leclerc Eastern Connecticut State University



The athletic contributions of Eastern Connecticut State University's Robin R. Gaby Leclerc to two distinctly different sports helped maintain the success of one intercollegiate program while providing the ground-work for the rapid rise of a second.

Leclerc becomes the second Eastern student-athlete to gain LEC Hall of Fame induction, following charter inductee Allison Coleman in 2012. Leclerc is also a member of the Eastern E-Club Hall of Fame and the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

In her 81-game basketball career, the six-foot-one inch Hebron, Conn. native scored 1,114 points (currently sixth all-time), grabbed 933 rebounds and blocked 101 shots as the centerpiece of three post-season tournament qualifiers (including the 1989 ECAC tournament champion) from 1987 through 1990.

As a senior, Leclerc was voted the program's first WBCA Division III All-America. In addition to All-America laurels, she was named ECAC New England Division III and Little East Conference Rookie of the Year in 1988 and was twice named First Team All-New England by both the ECAC and New England Women's Basketball Association.

As both a junior and senior, Leclerc was voted First Team All-LEC in basketball. The third player in program history to score as many as 1,000 points, she remains the only individual to reach that plateau in less four seasons. Leclerc joined the Eastern women's basketball program as a sophomore, competing in the second season of Little East competition. She helped the Warriors to a three-year LEC regular-season record of 22-8 and to the conference tournament title game each year. She was named to the LEC Tournament All-Tournament team as a junior in 1989 and the tournament's MVP as a senior.

A letterwinner on the first Eastern women's soccer team in 1986, Leclerc went on to amass program-record 30 assists in a 55-match career as a four-year letterwinner and three-time team captain, playing her final season one year before the LEC began sponsoring the sport in 1990.

Leclerc's contributions played no small role in the women's soccer program, qualifying for a post-season tournament (ECAC) in only its third intercollegiate season in 1988, and for its first NCAA tournament on year later.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Alicia O'Brien Western Connecticut State University



O'Brien served as Western's head softball coach for 17 years. She also held the position of associate director of athletics/senior women's administrator. During her coaching tenure at WCSU, the softball program went 423-213-3 and made 13 post-season appearances. From 1999 to 2002, WCSU had four consecutive 30-win seasons, captured three straight conference titles and appeared in four consecutive NCAA Tournaments.

In 2002, the softball program ended the season ranked ninth in the country and competed in its first NCAA Division III College World Series where it captured the NCAA New England Regional Championship and completed the year with a 34-9-1 record. In 2004, O'Brien led the Colonials to a 26-16 overall record and 9-5 finish in the Little East Conference. Crowned LEC Tournament champions, the team earned a seventh bid to the NCAA Tournament. In 2005, Western advanced to the championship game of the Eastern College Athletic Conference New England Championships, finishing the year with a 24-16-1 record — the 12th straight season in which the team accrued 20 or more wins.

O'Brien celebrated her 400th career win in March 2006. She was inducted into the Connecticut Softball Hall of Fame as collegiate coach in 2002. In 2008, she was inducted into the Danbury High School Hall of Fame. She is a member of the National Fastpitch Coaches Association and the New England Intercollegiate Coaches Association. O'Brien also is a member of the NCAA Regional All-American Committee, directed the Western Connecticut Softball Camp and served for five years as for the Danbury school system as a Title IX consultant. She earned a B.A. in Anthropology in 1983, and master's degrees in Community Counseling (1986) and Guidance and Counseling (1995) — all from Western.





Hall of Fame Class of 2014

Julie Plant University of Southern Maine



Presently the head women's basketball coach at Division II St. Anselm College, Plant was a two-sport standout for the Huskies from 1996-2000, competing in women's basketball and softball. During her time on the court with USM, Plant was named the 1997 Rookie of the Year and earned first team all-conference honors in 1998, 1999 and 2000. In her final season, Plant was named the conference's and the Maine Women's Basketball Coaches' Association Player of the Year as well as earning first team All-ECAC honors and being selected as a 2000 WBCA Honorable Mention All-American. The Huskies' point guard during her four-year

career, Plant led USM to appearances in the NCAA Division III National Championship game in 1998 and 2000. With Plant at the helm, USM compiled an impressive 105-17 overall record and an outstanding 49-3 mark in the Little East Conference. During that time, the Huskies captured the conference regular season title four times and won the conference tournament three times. Inducted in the N.E. Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006, Plant averaged 11.9 points and 3.9 assists per game in her career and is in the top five in career statistical categories for points (fifth - 1,451 points), three-pointers (fifth - 123), steals (fifth - 263) and assists (fourth - 472).

One of the most highly decorated student-athletes to wear a USM softball uniform, Plant's excellence on the field is easily recognizable in the career record books. The only USM softball alumnae to earn NFCA All-American honors, Plant's achievements made her the school's career leader in runs scored (151), hits (206), doubles (36), runs batted in (110), total bases (304) and stolen bases (59). During her career, USM compiled a 108-69-2 overall mark and earned its only two berths to the NCAA Division III National Championship tournament in 1997 and 1998. Along with earning NFCA All-American honors in 1998, Plant was named the LEC Player of the Year in 1998 after earning Rookie of the Year honors in 1997. Plant also earned All-LEC honors three times (1997, 1998, and 2000) while being named to the NFCA Regional All-American team (1998, 1999, and 2000).

