



GULF SOUTH CONFERENCE

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GSC ANNOUNCES 2014 TOP TEN HONOREES

Birmingham, AL—The Gulf South Conference is proud to announce its 18th annual GSC “Top Ten” Award winners.

These awards, based on athletic, academic and extracurricular achievement during the 2013-14 academic year, recognize the top five male and top five female student-athletes as the cream of the GSC crop. This year, six female members were selected due to an impressive pool of candidates. The top male and female receive the Commissioner’s Trophy, the Conference’s most prestigious honor.

The presentations will be made at the GSC’s Annual Awards Banquet, Thursday, June 26, at the Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front starting at 6:15 pm. The entire ceremony will be streamed LIVE and can be accessed [HERE](#). Fans can also check out the 2014 GSC “Top Ten” picture album on our official Facebook page [HERE](#) and can follow the Top Ten conversation by using [#GSCTop10](#).

On Thursday night, the Conference will reveal the winners of the Commissioner’s Trophies, recognize its All-Sports Trophy Champions (*Overall: **West Florida**, Men: **Delta State**, Women: **West Florida***) and bid farewell to departing administrators: **University of North Alabama President Dr. William G. Cale, Jr.**, **University of West Alabama President Dr. Richard Holland** and **Gulf South Conference Commissioner Nate Salant**.

The “Top Ten” are selected with the assistance of an advisory committee representing the ADs, SWAs, SIDs, FARs and Presidents from randomly selected GSC schools, which makes a recommendation to the Commissioner, who has the final decision. Ties are not broken, so more than ten student-athletes can be honored.

Five seniors highlight the six women’s winners: **Mary Kelley** (Alabama Huntsville, Softball, Mobile, AL), **Annalee Pierce** (Delta State, Cross Country, Yazoo City, MS), **Renea Porsch** (West Florida, Cross Country, Land O’Lakes, FL), **Anna Shartzter** (West Alabama, Softball, Gulf Shores, AL) and **Alison Welch** (Christian Brothers, Volleyball, Olive Branch, MS). Completing the list is junior **Courtney Albritton** (Valdosta State, Softball, Macon, GA).

Kelley is just the third *three-time “Top Ten” winner in league history*, following former North Alabama standout Nikki Brown (2011-13) and Henderson State’s Valerie Brummal (1997-99). Shartzter is another familiar face, becoming the *17th all-time back-to-back winner*. Porsch is UWF’s eighth consecutive Top Ten women’s winner and Welch is the second CBU volleyball winner in two years. Albritton’s selection marks the third consecutive VSU softball winner, as she follows former teammate Morgan Johnson who won back-to-back Commissioner’s Trophies from 2012-13.

Only two of the five male “Top Ten” winners are seniors: **Jordan Chovanec** (Graduate, Delta State, Baseball, Inez, TX) and **Drew Eiland** (Alabama Huntsville, Baseball, Auburn, AL). The trio of underclassmen include juniors **Gary Buffington III** (West Florida, Golf, Tampa, FL) and **Trey Casey** (Christian Brothers, Basketball, Cincinnati, OH) and sophomore **Mitch Holgate** (West Alabama, Baseball, Windsor, Ontario).

Chovanec is DSU’s second straight baseball winner and third consecutive men’s honoree. Holgate is UWA’s first-ever “Top Ten” winner since the Conference changed the award from the “Top Eight” after 2004 when Tigers quarterback Brett Gilliland was selected. Eiland marks UAH’s fifth straight men’s award winner, while Buffington represents UWF’s fourth consecutive men’s Top Ten honoree. Casey is the first-ever Buccaneers’ men’s basketball student-athlete to be recognized in the GSC “Top Ten/Top Eight” and he is also CBU’s second straight winner.

PROFILES OF “TOP TEN” WINNERS ON NEXT SIX PAGES



Courtney Albritton, Valdosta State University
Softball | Outfielder
Junior | Sycamore, Georgia
Middle Grades Education | 4.00 Overall G.P.A.

Courtney Albritton has been so good for so long, many people look at her accomplishments and think she has reached the end of an outstanding collegiate career. But Albritton's work on the diamond, in the classroom, and throughout the community still has another year remaining as the junior earns a spot on the GSC Top Ten list for the first time.

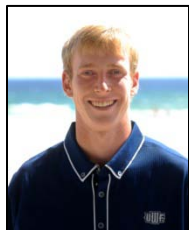
This season, Albritton put up staggering numbers en route to leading the Blazers to the NCAA Division II championship game and No. 2 overall national ranking. She hit .437 with 27 home runs and 83 runs scored - both GSC single-season records - and 67 RBI. She also set the GSC career record in home runs with 63 and runs scored with 234 and the single-season record for total bases with 200.

She has a load of individual accomplishments that she racked up just this season. She won GSC Player of the Year for the third consecutive season, becoming just the second student-athlete to accomplish the feat in league history. She was named Daktronics South Region Player of the Year for the second straight campaign and a First Team All-American two years running. She also grabbed a NFCA National Player of the Week honor.

Albritton has also handled the classroom with equal aplomb. The Middle Grades Education major has a spotless 4.00 grade point average was named to the GSC All-Academic Team for the second straight year. She is also a two-time NFCA Scholar-Athlete award winner and won the prestigious NCAA Elite 89 award, which is given to the student-athlete with the highest cumulative grade-point average participating at the finals site for each of the NCAA's 89 championships. Albritton was selected VSU's Student-Athlete of the Year in 2014 and is a member of the Alpha Delta National Honor Society..

In the community, Albritton has also been a winner. She was named the Dr. Lamar Pearson Community Service Award winner at VSU for logging the most community service hours by a student-athlete. Among her many endeavors was helping organize the second-largest blood drive in south Georgia, volunteering at a dog shelter, gathering toys for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program, volunteered feeding shut-ins and the homeless at Thanksgiving, and participating in a church mission trip in Kentucky.

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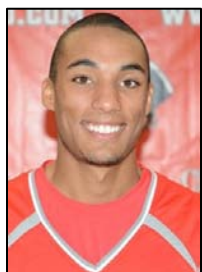
Gary Buffington III, University of West Florida
Men's Golf
Junior | Tampa, Florida
Accounting | 3.98 Overall G.P.A.

Since arriving at the University of West Florida three years ago, Gary Buffington III has risen to be one of the highest academic achievers, while also demonstrating special leadership qualities on the golf course and on campus.

The junior was named team captain for the UWF Men's Golf squad this year, guiding the Argonauts to their second consecutive Gulf South Conference Tournament Title and a final Top 10 national ranking by GolfStat. Individually, Buffington played in all but one tournament in 2013-14, posting a scoring average of 76.71 for an average of 5.07 over par. He fired a 68 in two of the three rounds of the AFLAC/Cougar Invitational, matching the third best round for an Argo during the year.

The Tampa, Fla. native's academic efforts were equally strong, entering his senior year with a 3.98 grade point average as an Accounting major. Buffington claimed many academic awards capped by a selection to the CoSIDA/Capital One Academic All-America Second Team and Academic All-District First Team for the second straight year. He also returned to the GSC All-Academic squad for the second year in a row and was among the Academic Honor Roll for the third consecutive season. The President's Honor Roll student's efforts were also recognized on campus as he was the recipient of the UWF Student-Athlete Leadership Award and was tabbed the Richard and Sandra Berg Scholar Athlete of the Year.

His leadership filtered to other campus endeavors, serving on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and the Student Affairs Advisory Council Board as its Vice President. Buffington made an impact in the local Pensacola community as well, serving as a camp instructor and golf league instructor for the Idlewild Baptist Church and volunteering in the First Tee of Northwest Florida event.



Trey Casey, Christian Brothers University
Men's Basketball | Guard
Junior | Cincinnati, Ohio
Business Administration (Finance) | 4.00 Overall G.P.A.

Dedication and hard work have been a winning combination for Christian Brothers University men's basketball standout Trey Casey.

Casey has made significant contributions to the Bucs' program since his arrival three years ago, leading CBU to three consecutive GSC Championship Game appearances and the Conference Title in 2013 when he also garnered Tournament Most Outstanding Player laurels. The Cincinnati, Ohio native earned First Team All-GSC accolades this past season, ranking first in the league in steals (2.2), third in three-point percentage (48.2), fourth in scoring (17.9) and ninth in field goal percentage (51.7) and assists (2.8). He also advanced to two All-Region squads, earning a First Team designation by the National Association of Basketball Coaches and Second Team by Daktronics.

Academically, Casey had few equals becoming the only GSC student-athlete to attain First Team Capital One Academic All-America honors in 2013-14. He enters his senior year with a perfect 4.00 grade-point average as a Business Administration major with a concentration in Finance. Casey was also the lone unanimous selection on the 2014 GSC Men's Basketball All-Academic squad.

Casey served as his team's representative on CBU's Student-Athletic Advisory Committee and helped lead the school's Make-A-Wish Committee efforts. His community service work included working close with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis' Restore.

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Jordan Chovanec, Delta State University
Baseball | Centerfielder
Graduate | Inez, Texas
Exercise Science | 3.75 Overall G.P.A.

Delta State's Jordan Chovanec was exemplary in his senior season, both on and off the field.

Chovanec, a native of Inez, Texas, hit .330 with nine doubles, four triples, a homerun and 35 RBI in 2014. He earned a plethora of conference and regional accolades. He was named GSC Player of the Week and NCBWA Region Player of the Week (04/7). He earned a place on the All-GSC First Team, the ABCA/Rawlings All-Region Second Team, Daktronics All-South Region Second Team and NCBWA All-South Region Second Team.

His stellar 1.000 fielding percentage also earned him an ABCA/Rawlings South Region Gold Glove Award. He also was made the watch lists for two College Baseball Lineup awards, the Tino Martinez, for National DII Player of the Year, and the Josh Willingham, which is given to the Most Valuable DII Player. His biggest honor of 2014 was being named the DSU's Charles S. Kerg Senior Athlete of the Year Award.

With a 3.75 GPA, Chovanec was named to the GSC Academic Honor Roll and secured a spot as a GSC All-Academic Team honoree. He assisted in off-campus community service in 2014 with the Women's Resource Center in assisting with landscape and lawn care, engaged in the Pearman Reading Program and took part in the Cleveland Downtown Cleanup.



Drew Eiland, University of Alabama in Huntsville
Baseball | Starting Pitcher
Senior | Auburn, Alabama
Civil Engineering | 3.91 Overall G.P.A.

Starting Pitcher Drew Eiland, of the University of Alabama in Huntsville, helped lead his team to a 2014 GSC Tournament Championship this season.

The senior, from Auburn, Ala., posted a 9-1 record with a 1.92 ERA and 54 strikeouts this season. He earned All-GSC First Team honors, as well as spots on the ABCA/Rawlings and Daktronics Regional Second Team(s). He registered his first-career save against Delta State in the GSC Tournament and finished his UAH career No. 1 all-time in lowest ERA.

Eiland landed on the GSC Honor Roll and GSC All-Academic Team with a 3.91 GPA this year. The civil engineering graduate saw him earn the Gold Level Scholar Athlete Award and Scholar Athlete Award honors. He earned the Distinguished Student Leader Award, Intern of the Year Award and graduated Summa Cum Laude.

His extra-curricular activities included, being president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, served as a student mentor, was the UAH baseball team SAAC representative and was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Off the field and outside of the classroom, he served as a guest speaker at the Northeast Alabama FCA Baseball/Softball Media Day, spoke to Westlawn Middle School, read to Heritage Elementary School children and served dinner at the FCA Donors Banquet.

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Mitch Holgate, University of West Alabama
Baseball | Designated Hitter
Sophomore | Windsor, Ontario
Pre-Engineering | 3.89 Overall G.P.A.

After earning 2013 GSC Freshman of the Year accolades, West Alabama's Mitch Holgate posted a stellar sophomore campaign in 2014, as he was named the 2014 GSC Player of the Year.

This season he was once again a standout on the field. He hit .324 with 12 doubles, eight homeruns, four triples and 37 RBI, en route to All-GSC First Team honors and a spot on the ABCA/Rawlings All-Region Second Team. He became the first-ever UWA player to hit for the cycle as he was 4-for-4 with four RBI and a stolen base against Spring Hill on April 16, earning him GSC Player of the Week honors (4/21).

The Windsor, Ontario, Canada, native and pre-engineering major also stood out in the classroom. He earned his place on the 2014 GSC Academic Honor Roll list and on the GSC All-Academic Team with a 3.89 GPA. His strong work in the classroom this year earned him inductions to the Chi Alpha Sigma Collegiate Athletic Honor Society and in Phi Kappa Phi. He will begin his second major in pre-medicine this summer.



Mary Kelley, University of Alabama in Huntsville
Softball | Catcher
Senior | Mobile, Alabama
Business Administration & Management | 3.54 Overall G.P.A.

Repetition is what has made Mary Kelley a success on and off the playing field. That is why it is no surprise that the UAH senior is selected to the GSC Top Ten for the third straight year. For four years, she put together an effort that garnered high praise on the diamond, which went along with her sparkling achievements in the classroom and the community.

In 2014, Kelley became an All-American for the fourth straight season, this time as a Third Team selection. The senior hit .397 with nine home runs and 71 RBI. She led the GSC with 20 doubles and became the conference's career leader in doubles with 79 and finished No. 4 all-time in RBI with 229. She was also selected to the All-GSC First Team for the third straight campaign.

The Business Administration major with a 3.54 grade point average was a three-time member of the GSC All-Academic Team and was named to the Capital One/CoSIDA All-District Team for the third consecutive season. Kelley also earned the prestigious UAH Academic Silver Award and the Athletic President's Award, which is the highest academic honor bestowed upon a Charger athlete. She was also voted the UAH Campus Leadership Award.

Kelley took her softball abilities and showcased them for our country, playing overseas in Italy over the summer. She also spent time baking cookies for a prison outreach program at her church for incarcerated individuals to enjoy when they attended Bible study. Kelley was also a group leader during the "Girls in Science" day at Alabama Huntsville, when student-athletes interact with young ladies in the community.

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Annalee Pierce, Delta State University
Women's Cross Country
Senior | Yazoo City, Mississippi
Business Management | 3.86 Overall G.P.A.

Delta State University's Annalee Pierce has embraced the NCAA Division II model of "Life in the Balance," not only excelling on cross country courses, but also demonstrating a strong commitment to her campus and local communities.

The team captain earned GSC Runner of the Week honors in 2013, while also running her way to her third consecutive All-GSC post-season team, finishing in 19th place at the Conference Championship meet.

Academically, the senior carries a 3.86 grade-point average in her Business Management major. She earned back-to-back spots on the GSC Fall All-Academic Team and became a four-time member of the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association All-America and All-South Region Teams. The Yazoo City, Miss. native also made Delta State's President's List for fall 2013 and spring 2014, was the recipient of the Management Student Excellence Award and earned memberships to the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor Society and the Delta Mu Delta National Business Honor Society.

Pierce has demonstrated strong leadership qualities on campus, serving as the chair of the school's Student Government Association for four years, heading the university's FCA Leadership Team since 2010 and working on the DSU Hall of Fame Selection Committee in 2013 and 2014.

Pierce shared her community service efforts throughout the Southeast and to the continent of Africa. She led the DSU Pearman Elementary School Reading Project for two years and coordinated the Crosstie 5K, the DSU Triathlon and the DSU Trunk or Treat for three years. Pierce worked with tornado relief efforts in Birmingham, Ala. and Yazoo City, Miss. and traveled to Accra, Ghana to work with the Rafiki Orphanage.



Renea Porsch, University of West Florida
Women's Cross Country
Senior | Land O'Lakes, Florida
Athletic Training | 3.43 Overall G.P.A.

Renea Porsch's individual accomplishments helped bring the University of West Florida's women's cross country program to the next level of national success.

The senior completed her final season in Pensacola as a three-time All-GSC member and a three-time U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association All-South Region runner. Porsch competed in all six events in 2013, placing in first or second on her team in each meet. The one-time 2013 GSC Runner of the Week placed fifth at the GSC Championships and No. 15 at the NCAA South Regional.

The Land O'Lakes, Fla. native is a three-time GSC Fall All-Academic Team winner and a four-time GSC Honor Roll qualifier. She advanced to the USTFCCA Division II All-Academic Team and was the recipient of the UWF Student-Athlete Leadership Award. Porsch completed her undergraduate work with a 3.43 grade-point average in Athletic Training and she was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship for the inaugural University of South Florida/University of West Florida Doctor of Physical Therapy Partnership Program.

On-campus, she logged over 900 clinical hours over two years in the UWF athletic training program, working with three local high schools and the UWF softball team. Porsch was also a member of the UWF athletic training club where she volunteered as first aid staff at local marathon events.

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Anna Shartzter, University of West Alabama
Softball | First Base
Senior | Gulf Shores, Alabama
Elementary Education | 3.56 Overall G.P.A.

Finding a way to the top has not been as easy a time for Anna Shartzter as her coach, Will Atkinson, has had in writing her name at the top of the lineup. But through perseverance, the softball star has found away to make history at West Alabama as she earns her second GSC Top Ten award designation.

In 2014, Shartzter was named a NFCA First Team All-American, the first player to ever earn that honor at UWA. She ranked in the Top 10 of eight offensive categories in the league as well as three defensive categories. She led the team with 45 runs and 69 hits and was second with 13 doubles and nine home runs. At first base she totaled a .997 fielding percentage as well as 289 putouts; fourth in the conference. She set five career records for the program. Since 2010, having missed the 2012 season, she has compiled 713 at bats, 172 runs, 60 doubles and 404 total bases in 213 games played.

In the classroom, the Elementary Education major has a 3.56 grade point average was a two-time member of the GSC All-Academic Team and has earned her degree. She was also selected as a Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities in 2014.

Shartzter has spent a lot of time volunteering her time and energy to others. She has shared her softball talents while working various youth clinics. She has also served as a Ronald McDonald House Ambassador and worked tirelessly to support the Friends of Jaclyn Foundation, mission is to improve the quality of life for children and their families who are battling pediatric brain tumors and to raise awareness about the disease.



Alison Welch, Christian Brothers
Volleyball | Outside Hitter
Senior | Olive Branch, Mississippi
Psychology | 3.85 Overall G.P.A.

Alison Welch has left a legacy of leadership, not just on the campus of Christian Brothers University, but also within the Gulf South Conference and NCAA Division II.

The senior played an important role on the volleyball court for CBU during the program's most successful run since joining the GSC in 1996. As a starter and team captain, Welch was a key component in the Lady Bucs' first-ever GSC Title Match appearance, first two berths to the NCAA Regional's and first-ever entrance into the second round of the NCAA post-season.

The Olive Branch, MS native has excelled in the classroom, graduating with a 3.85 grade-point average as a Psychology major. She earned CBU Dean's List honors all eight semesters and was one of only two student-athletes who were unanimous selections on the 2013 GSC Fall All-Academic Team. Welch graduated magna cum laude as a member of the Psi Chi Honor Society, Alpha Chi Honor Society and the Chi Alpha Sigma National College Athlete Honor Society.

Three years ago Welch began serving as CBU's representative to the Gulf South Conference Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and she has spent the past two years as the GSC's representative on the NCAA DII SAAC. Her numerous community service projects included volunteering at LeBonheur Children's Hospital and at Hope House, a daycare center for children affected by HIV.

OTHER "TOP TEN" NOMINEES

North Alabama

Lauren Faris, Women's Basketball
Junior | Louisville, KY
Nursing
3.74 Overall G.P.A.

West Georgia

Melissa Holt, Volleyball
Senior | Newport News, VA
Finance/Economics/Sport Management
3.09 Overall G.P.A.