



NORTHEAST CONFERENCE • 399 CAMPUS DR. • SOMERSET, NJ 08873 • PH: (732) 469-0440 • FAX: (732) 469-0744 • WWW.NORTHEASTCONFERENCE.ORG

For Immediate Release
May 2, 2012



www.twitter.com/NECsports
www.facebook.com/NECsports
www.youtube.com/NECsports

Strong Fairleigh Dickinson Presence Highlights NEC Women's Tennis Postseason Awards *FDU Junior Anna Rapoport Claims NEC Player of Year Honor*

Somerset, NJ -- Fairleigh Dickinson won its first Northeast Conference (NEC) women's tennis title in 24 years, and less than two weeks later, league coaches rewarded the Knights with five first team All-NEC singles selections, one second team honor and two of the three major awards. FDU junior **Anna Rapoport (Moscow, Russia/#1239)** was tabbed NEC Player of the Year, while longtime head coach of the Knights, **Ira Miller**, was voted NEC Coach of the Year. LIU Brooklyn freshman **Sanne Louwers (Nuenen, Netherlands/Mgr. Cuytenlaan)** was named the NEC Rookie of the Year.

A highly touted recruit from Moscow, Russia, Rapoport did not disappoint in her first season with the league champion Knights. Immediately penciled into the #1 flight, Rapoport proved nearly unbeatable with an 18-3 record in 2011-12. She ranked first among NEC players in win percentage and posted a 12-2 mark in #1 singles dual match play. Rapoport is currently riding a seven-match win streak heading into the NCAA Tournament and was a perfect 5-0 against NEC rivals. She was named NEC Player of the Month for October after capturing the Flight A title at the USTA Invitational and was also tabbed NEC Player of the Week on April 17. Rapoport, who was also voted to the All-NEC doubles second team, is FDU's second NEC Player of the Year, joining Julija Korsunova, who was honored in 2007.

The addition of Louwers at midyear gave LIU Brooklyn a welcome boost, eventually leading to a run to the NEC semifinals and a hard-fought loss to league champion FDU. Louwers was locked in from the start, and won the first seven matches of her career at the #1 flight. She finished the season 9-2 overall and 3-1 in NEC play. In the NEC semis, her battle with Rapoport was cut short in the second set with the FDU star ahead 7-6, 3-5. Louwers, who hails from Nuenen, Netherlands, was a two-time NEC Player/Rookie of the Week who also earned recognition as a first team All-NEC doubles performer. She joins former LIU stars Merve Koksal (2004) and Ashley Harvey (2006) as NEC Rookie of the Year award winners.

To say that Miller will savor the recent NEC title win is an understatement. The FDU Hall of Famer won the inaugural NEC women's tennis title in 1987 while in the first of his three stints as head coach of the Knights. FDU repeated the following year without Miller, but hadn't tasted victory in the postseason since that time. Following a pair of runner-up finishes in 2010 and 2011, the addition of Rapoport to the lineup was just the spark the Knights needed as it all culminated with a 4-2 win over Quinnipiac in a classic NEC final on April 22. With all-stars in each spot of his singles lineup, FDU takes a 16-7 record into its first round NCAA Tournament match at #14 Virginia. For Miller, this marks his third NEC Coach of the Year accolade.

Rapoport was in familiar company on the All-NEC singles first team, flanked by four teammates. Senior **Elmine Botes (Heidelberg Gauteng, Republic of South Africa/Hoer Volksskool & British International Distance College)** manned the #2 spot, senior **Irina Demytyeva (Moscow, Russia/W 91)** was voted in at #4, junior **Egzona Morina (Prishtina, Kosovo/American School of Kosovo)** was honored at #5 and sophomore **Manuela Leme (Varginha, Brazil/E.E. Antania Alves Cruz)** was the pick at #6 singles. Joining the quintet was Quinnipiac junior **Sarah Viebrock (Carmel, NY/John F. Kennedy Catholic)** at the #3 position.

Botes is no stranger to end-of-year honors, having been named to the All-NEC second team in each of her first two seasons with the Knights before jumping to the first team in 2011-12. She was dominant at #2 singles, winning 10-of-11 matches at the flight en-route to a 16-10 record on the year. Botes went 4-2 within the conference, including a 2-0 mark at the NEC Championship. Like many of her teammates, she is red-hot heading into NCAA play, having posted a 10-2 record in her last 12 matches. Botes is now 57-27 in three seasons playing at #1 and #2 singles.

Viebrock was the only All-NEC first teamer to repeat, but this time at the #3 spot after earning #4 flight honors a year ago. The chance to sharpen her game against a slew of challenging non-conference opponents served her well in league play, where she posted a 5-1 record for head coach Mike Quitko. In perhaps her best performance of the season, she posted a 6-1, 6-1 win in the terrific NEC title match against FDU. Viebrock finished 15-13 on the year.

Dementyeva took her game to another level in 2011-12, and capped the year off with an April to remember. She closed out the NEC Tournament on a nine-match win streak with three of those victories coming in the postseason. All eyes were on the Russian native in the championship final against Quinnipiac, and she did not disappoint, clinching the Knights' third NEC title with a come-from-behind 0-6, 6-2, 6-3 victory over QU's Michelle Dassa. Dementyeva finished the year 8-0 in the conference, and has compiled an 11-1 record in #4 flight play and 19-14 overall ledger.

Morina is now a three-time All-Conference honoree after having been tabbed to the first team as a freshman in 2010 and second team as a sophomore in 2011. She too played a key role in FDU's win over Quinnipiac in the NEC title match. Morina rallied from a set down to win 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 and end her year 3-1 versus league rivals. She has amassed a stellar 7-1 record in #5 singles and is 14-11 on the year.

Leme came on strong the last month of season, winning eight of her last nine matches to lift her record to 17-13 as a sophomore. As versatile as they come, she contributed at the #6 (5-3 record), #5 (6-5 record) and even #4 flight (1-0 record) this year. Leme amassed a 6-1 record against NEC competition.

Three different schools were awarded spots on the All-NEC doubles first team. LIU Brooklyn freshman **Sanne Louwers (Nuenen, Netherlands/Mgr. Cuytenlaan)** and junior **Taysha Blessington (Sydney, Australia/Roseville College)** took honors at #1 doubles. Bryant sophomore **Marcela Brandeo (Santo Andre, Brazil)** paired with junior **Claudia Hidalgo (Guayaquil, Ecuador/Unidad Educativa Delta)** to pick up #2 flight plaudits, and at the #3 position it was Fairleigh Dickinson junior **Elmine Botes (Heidelberg Gauteng, Republic of South Africa/Hoer Volkskool & British International Distance College)** and sophomore **Manuela Leme (Varginha, Brazil/E.E. Antania Alves Cruz)** who were recognized.

Louwers and Blessington suffered just two setbacks (to UMass and Army) after first teaming up in March. The #1 tandem closed the 2011-12 season with an 8-2 mark, highlighted by a perfect 4-0 record against NEC duos. They picked up a key victory (8-3) against FDU in the NEC Tournament semifinals. Blessington was previously honored for her doubles play in 2010, picking up second team accolades along with partner H'Ann Johnson.

Brandao and Hidalgo proved to be a winning #2 doubles combination this spring for the Bulldogs, who are in their final year of NCAA reclassification before becoming NEC Tournament eligible in 2013. They went 7-3 on the year and did not lose in three matches against NEC opponents. Hidalgo, the 2010-11 NEC Rookie of the Year, is now a two-time doubles honoree. She was one-half of a second team all-star duo with Lucy Bird a year ago.

Botes and Leme stormed through the NEC this season with a 5-0 record in #3 doubles, dropping just three games in the process. They won all three of their matches in the NEC Tournament and are riding a six-match win streak. The tandem is 9-4 overall this season. This marked the second straight year Botes was voted first team All-NEC doubles at the #1 position. A year ago, she and teammate Irina Dementyeva were recognized.

There were four schools with players tabbed to the All-NEC second team singles roster, including two apiece for LIU Brooklyn and Bryant.

LIU was represented by **Sanne Louwers (Nuenen, Netherlands/Mgr. Cuytenlaan)**, the NEC Rookie of the Year, at the #1 flight. She was joined by doubles partner **Taysha Blessington (Sydney, Australia/Roseville College)**, a #2 flight honoree. Blessington, who also earned second team All-NEC status at #4 singles as a freshman in 2010, came on strong down the stretch for Asi Phillips' youthful Blackbirds squad. She won nine straight at one point in April and finished 9-2 in her flight, 4-1 against NEC competitors and 14-8 overall.

The future is bright for Bryant head coach Barbara Cilli with sophomore **Stephanie Smyers (Pittsburgh, PA/North Allegheny)** and freshman **Rosie Bird (Hamilton, New Zealand/Hillcrest)** manning the #5 and #6 singles flights, respectively. Smyers won nine of her 14 matches at the #5 spot and posted a 3-1 mark in league. Bird, a two-time NEC Rookie of the Week, won all three of her league matches in straight sets and was 9-2 on the year.

FDU senior **Julia Prantl's (Benediktbeuern, Germany/GUS-Gymnasium Bad Tolz)** selection to the second team means all six Knights achieved All-NEC singles status in 2011-12. A three-time all-star, Prantl sandwiched a first team honor (#2 singles) in 2011 in between second team accolades at the #3 spot in 2010 and 2012. She has racked up 68 singles wins over her four years as a member of the Knights, including an NEC-best 22 this season. Prantl compiled a 5-2 NEC mark, and in splitting time between the #2 and #3 flight, posted a 6-5 dual record in both spots. She was the NEC's September Player of the Month.

Quinnipiac's **Michelle Dassa (Marlboro, NJ/Marlboro)** is one of just three freshman to be voted as an All-NEC singles performer. Dassa excelled in league play, winning four-of-six matches competing at the #4 flight. After a 6-0, 6-0 win against Sacred Heart in the NEC semifinals, the Marlboro, NJ native fell just short in a three-set thriller against FDU in the championship tilt. She ended the year with 10 victories.

FDU's **Anna Rapoport (Moscow, Russia/#1239)** and **Irina Dementyeva (Moscow, Russia/W 91)** added to their list of honors by being tabbed to the All-NEC second team doubles team at the #1 spot. They were joined by the LIU Brooklyn #2 team of **Lisa Maas (Norden, Germany/Middle Tennessee State)** and **Nancy Zonneveld (Frankfurt, Germany/European School Frankfurt)**, and Bryant's all freshman #3 duo of **Devlin-Ann Ammendola (Massapequa, NY/Farmingdale)** and **Rosie Bird (Hamilton, New Zealand/Hillcrest)**.

Rapoport and Dementyeva posted an 8-5 record at #1 doubles and were 3-2 in NEC contests, including an 8-2 win in the NEC Championship match against Quinnipiac. Dementyeva was also part of the All-NEC second team last season, teaming with Elmine Botes at #1 doubles. Maas, a sophomore, and Zonneveld, a freshman, are two integral parts of LIU's youth movement. They tallied a 4-1 mark in NEC play - an 8-2 win helped the Blackbirds secure the doubles point against FDU in the NEC semis - and were 6-4 overall in #2 doubles. Ammendola and Bird burst onto the scene this spring at #3 doubles, winning nine of their 12 matches, while finishing 3-0 versus conference foes. Interestingly, the duo won at least six games in all three of their setbacks.

About The Northeast Conference

Now in its 31st year, the Northeast Conference is an NCAA Division I collegiate athletic association consisting of 12 institutions of higher learning located throughout six states. Media coverage of the NEC extends to four of the largest markets in the United States - New York (#1), Pittsburgh (#23), Baltimore (#27), and Hartford/New Haven (#30). Founded in 1981 as the basketball-only ECAC Metro Conference, the NEC has grown to sponsor 23 championship sports for men and women and now enjoys automatic or play-in access to 14 different NCAA Championships. NEC member institutions include Central Connecticut State, Fairleigh Dickinson, LIU Brooklyn, Monmouth, Mount St. Mary's, Quinnipiac, Robert Morris, Sacred Heart, St. Francis (NY), Saint Francis (PA) and Wagner. Bryant will become the NEC's 12th member upon completion of the NCAA Division I reclassification process in 2012. For more information on the NEC, visit www.northeastconference.org.

2012 NEC Women's Tennis Award Winners

NEC Player of the Year

Anna Rapoport Fairleigh Dickinson Jr Moscow, Russia/#1239

NEC Rookie of the Year

Sanne Louwers LIU Brooklyn Fr Nuenen, Netherlands/Mgr. Cuytenlaan

NEC Coach of the Year

Ira Miller Fairleigh Dickinson

2012 NEC Women's Tennis First Team All-Conference

Singles

Flight	Name	School	Yr	Hometown/High School
#1	Anna Rapoport	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr	Moscow, Russia/#1239
#2	Elmine Botes	Fairleigh Dickinson	Sr	Heidelberg Gauteng, Republic of South Africa/ Hoer Volksskool & British International Distance College
#3	Sarah Viebrock	Quinnipiac	Jr	Carmel, NY/John F. Kennedy Catholic
#4	Irina Dementyeva	Fairleigh Dickinson	Sr	Moscow, Russia/W 91
#5	Egzona Morina	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr	Prishtina, Kosovo/American School of Kosovo
#6	Manuela Leme	Fairleigh Dickinson	So	Varginha, Brazil/E.E. Antania Alves Cruz

Doubles

#1	Sanne Louwers	LIU Brooklyn	Fr	Nuenen, Netherlands/Mgr. Cuytenlaan
	Taysha Blessington	LIU Brooklyn	Jr	Sydney, Australia/Roseville College
#2	Marcela Brandao	Bryant	So	Santo Andre, Brazil
	Claudia Hidalgo	Bryant	Jr	Guayaquil, Ecuador/Unidad Educativa Delta
#3	Elmine Botes	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr	Heidelberg Gauteng, Republic of South Africa/ Hoer Volksskool & British International Distance College
	Manuela Leme	Fairleigh Dickinson	So	Varginha, Brazil/E.E. Antania Alves Cruz

2012 NEC Women's Tennis Second Team All-Conference

Singles

Flight	Name	School	Yr	Hometown/High School
#1	Sanne Louwers	LIU Brooklyn	Fr	Nuenen, Netherlands/Mgr. Cuytenlaan
#2	Taysha Blessington	LIU Brooklyn	Jr	Sydney, Australia/Roseville College
#3	Julia Prantl	Fairleigh Dickinson	Sr	Benediktbeuern, Germany/GUS-Gymnasium Bad Tolz
#4	Michelle Dassa	Quinnipiac	Fr	Marlboro, NJ/Marlboro
#5	Stephanie Smyers	Bryant	So	Pittsburgh, PA/North Allegheny
#6	Rosie Bird	Bryant	Fr	Hamilton, New Zealand/Hillcrest

Doubles

#1	Anna Rapoport	Fairleigh Dickinson	Fr	Moscow, Russia/#1239
	Irina Dementyeva	Fairleigh Dickinson	Sr	Moscow, Russia/W 91
#2	Lisa Maas	LIU Brooklyn	So	Norden, Germany/Middle Tennessee State
	Nancy Zonneveld	LIU Brooklyn	Fr	Frankfurt, Germany/European School Frankfurt
#3	Devlin-Ann Ammendola	Bryant	Fr	Massapequa, NY/Farmingdale
	Rosie Bird	Bryant	Fr	Hamilton, New Zealand/Hillcrest