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Northeast Conference Announces 2013-14 Hall Of Fame Class

Somerset, NJ -- The Northeast Conference (NEC) Hall of Fame spotlights the “best of the best” from the league’s 33-year history. The members of the fourth NEC induction class are certainly worthy of that moniker. The three-member group includes Robert Morris men’s basketball player Myron Walker, Sacred Heart women’s basketball player Amanda Pape and legendary Robert Morris football coach Joe Walton.

“We couldn’t be any prouder of this year’s Hall of Fame induction class, and now we have the chance to celebrate the tremendous contributions Myron, Amanda and Joe have made to their institutions and the Northeast Conference,” said Noreen Morris, NEC Commissioner. “All three of this year’s inductees not only amassed incredible individual accolades during their esteemed careers as student-athletes, but also led their teams to NEC championships. On behalf of the Conference, I congratulate the honorees on this wonderful achievement.”

Myron Walker, Robert Morris University Aliquippa, PA/Aliquippa Men’s Basketball • 1990-94

Robert Morris has established a rich tradition in NEC men’s basketball having won a league-best seven conference championships. And of all the great players who have passed through Moon Township, Myron Walker can certainly stake a claim as being the best to don a Colonials uniform.

Walker, out of nearby Aliquippa, PA, has held the RMU career scoring record for 20 years, and his 1,965 points ranks seventh on the NEC all-time list. The 6’4” guard also pulled down 603 rebounds, seventh in school annals. He paced the Colonials in scoring in each of his four years and his 19.8 ppg in 1991-92 was best in the NEC. His 614 points as a sophomore remains the RMU single-season record. Walker averaged 18.7 ppg over his career and shot just under 50 percent from the field.

After being named to the NEC All-Rookie team as a freshman, Walker became the first sophomore recognized as NEC Player of the Year during the 1991-92 season. He capped off the 1992 season with NEC Tournament MVP honors after leading the Colonials to their fifth NEC crown. Walker was tabbed to the All-NEC first team in his sophomore, junior and senior seasons.

Walker was inducted into the Robert Morris Athletic Hall of Fame in 1999 and the Beaver County Sports Hall of Fame in 2010.

Walker, who went on to play professionally in Europe, currently works as an engineer for Norfolk Southern Railroad and remains based in the Pittsburgh area.

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“Myron Walker was easily the best all around player that I ever coached at RMU, but what stands out the most is that he was at his best in the biggest of moments,” said Jarrett Durham, who led the Colonials to the NEC title in 1992. “Myron Walker is well deserving of this honor!”

“Myron Walker is maybe the most complete player ever in the NEC,” said former Wagner head coach Tim Capstraw, who coached against Robert Morris during Walker’s time as a Colonial. “His uncanny knack for scoring everywhere combined with his ability to play lockdown defense helped make Robert Morris an outstanding team.”

“Myron Walker still causes me nightmares,” said former Monmouth standout Dave Calloway, who competed against Walker and also coached against him in the early 90s. “Whether it was that shot he hit against us in my senior year or the game he lit us up in his senior year, it always seemed whenever Robert Morris needed a basket, Myron was the one who was taking the shot. Those great Jarrett Durham teams at Robert Morris always had a toughness factor that seemed to be the edge that always had them on the winning side. But in the end, you still have to score more points than the other guy and Myron was the player who scored those points. He was as good a scorer as anyone who has played in the NEC!”

Amanda Pape, Sacred Heart University
Stamford, CT/Trinity Catholic
Women’s Basketball • 2003-07

Amanda Pape was a Pioneer in the truest sense of the word.

It was her arrival at Sacred Heart that propelled the women’s basketball program to new heights and a lofty status in the NEC that the Pioneers still enjoy to this day. Fast forward ten years and she now holds the distinction of being the youngest member of the NEC Hall of Fame.

A local product out of Stamford, CT, Pape led Sacred Heart to its first NEC Tournament championship in 2006 and a pair of NEC regular season titles in 2005-06 and 2006-07. The Pioneers compiled an 87-34 overall mark and incredible 59-13 record in conference play over her four years.

Pape was named the NEC Rookie of the Year in 2003-04 and the NEC Player of the Year as a junior in 2005-06. She wrapped her career as a four-time All-NEC honoree, including first team accolades in her final three seasons. Pape was also tabbed the 2006 NEC Tournament MVP after a 25-point, 14-rebound performance in the title game win over Quinnipiac.

She closed out her career as Sacred Heart’s all-time leading scorer and ranks third in NEC history with 2,045 points. Pape also established new Sacred Heart school career records for steals (362), field goals (709), free throws (587) and scoring average (16.9 ppg), as well as single-season marks in points (620 in 2006-07), free throws (173 in 2005-06) and steals (107 in 2006-07).

Following her senior campaign, Pape received the Connecticut Sports Writers Alliance Gold Key as the Hank O’Donnell Female Athlete of the Year. She was inducted into the Connecticut Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in 2010.

Pape, who played professionally in Greece following her graduation, currently works at Icon International, Inc., a marketing firm in Stamford, CT.

“I am so excited that Amanda has been elected to the NEC Hall of Fame,” said Ed Swanson, who was the head coach at Sacred Heart during Pape’s tenure. “Amanda lifted Sacred Heart University’s women’s basketball program to unprecedented heights, culminating with the 2006 NEC Championship! Amanda was the greatest competitor that I have ever coached. Her ability to rise to challenges and make others better still sets her apart. She was a complete team player. Sacred Heart University and all her former teammates and coaches are very proud of Amanda Pape! She was a once in a lifetime student-athlete for this coach. Congratulations Amanda!”

"I couldn't be more pleased to learn of Amanda Pape's election to the NEC Hall of Fame," said former Sacred Heart Director of Athletics and fellow NEC Hall of Famer Don Cook. "Her accomplishments on the court are well documented. I'm certain the numbers were important in her election. Who could debate the numbers (SHU all-time leader in points, assists, steals, field goals, free throws, career scoring average, etc.)? However, in my view there's so much more to her Hall of Fame worthiness. Amanda, the person, takes Hall of Fame validation to another level. As important as the numbers were, she meant far more to Sacred Heart by the way she lived, not just by how many points she scored. She was exemplary in all phases of her life, a credit to her team, the University, her family, and most of all to herself. Amanda embraced a special quality, whether on the basketball court, the classroom, or at home with her family. She's among a special breed whose passion for her sport, as important as it was, was always in perspective. She saw life to be bigger than the game. Yet, few athletes in any sport could match her ability, competitiveness, accomplishments, and resolve to achieve at the highest level. I couldn't be more pleased as Sacred Heart's former Athletics Director to see someone of Amanda's character and skill be elected to the NEC Hall of Fame."

Joe Walton, Robert Morris University Head Football Coach • 1994-2013

An institution at Robert Morris and a legend in the Northeast Conference, Walton recently retired following a 47-year football coaching career in the college and professional ranks.

The only head coach in Robert Morris history, Walton was hired in 1993 to build the program from scratch. After posting 13 wins as an independent his first two years at the helm, Walton led the Colonials into NEC football in 1996 by winning the first of five consecutive conference championships. During the five-year run, Robert Morris posted a 39-13 overall record and 26-2 mark in league play, and recorded the only undefeated season in school history with a 10-0 mark in the 2000 campaign. The Colonials won back-to-back ECAC Bowls in 1996 and 1997, and were crowned NCAA I-AA non-scholarship national champions in both 1999 and 2000.

Under Walton, the Colonials would go on to win a sixth NEC title in 2010 and earn the first-ever FCS playoff bid for the conference.

The winningest coach in NEC history, Walton retired with 114 career victories and a 74-47 record against conference opponents during his 20-year run. He was recognized four times as NEC Coach of the Year (1996, 1997, 1999 and 2010), and was an Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year candidate in 2010.

Three of his players at Robert Morris reached the NFL. Running back Tim Hall played two years for the Oakland Raiders in 1996-97 and defensive back Robb Butler played with the San Diego Chargers in 2004. Offensive lineman Hank Fraley, a member of the NEC's first Hall of Fame induction class in 2010, spent 10 years in the NFL from 2000-10 with the Philadelphia Eagles, Cleveland Browns and St. Louis Rams.

In 2005, Robert Morris named its new football stadium in his honor and he was inducted into the RMU Athletic Hall of Fame this past November.

Prior to his arrival at Robert Morris, Walton served as head coach of the New York Jets from 1983-89, and was the offensive coordinator for the Washington Redskins (1978-80), Jets (1981-82) and Pittsburgh Steelers (1990-91). He began his NFL coaching career as a scout for the New York Giants (1967-68), then transitioned to wide receivers coach (1969-73) before moving on to the Redskins as running backs coach (1974-77).

Walton is one of a select few coaches to win 50 games as both an NFL and collegiate head coach.

The Beaver Falls, PA native enjoyed a seven-year NFL career with the Redskins and Giants and was a two-time All-American at Pittsburgh.

"Coach Walton has meant a great deal to Robert Morris University, both to the athletic program and the University as a whole," said Craig Coleman, Robert Morris Director of Athletics. "As the only head coach in our 20-year football history, he has over

seen the development of our program from its inception to the current day. With a number of NEC Championships, numerous athletes with individual awards for both athletics and academics, and several players making it to the NFL, Coach Walton will leave behind a legacy that is hard to match. Most importantly, he has been a great leader, mentor, and terrific role model for hundreds of young men who have come through our program. This honor is certainly well-deserved!”

“It is certainly a well-deserved honor for him,” said Jon Banaszak, a former assistant under Walton and now the head coach at RMU. “He’s a coach who won six Northeast Conference football championships, more than any other coach. For me to be the second head football coach at Robert Morris University and to follow in the big shoes that Coach Walton left behind is very important to me.”

“I congratulate Joe on this well-deserved honor and salute him for the enormous impact that he had on Northeast Conference football,” said Wagner head coach Walt Hameline, who competed against Walton during his entire run at RMU. “Wagner and Robert Morris had many great battles through the years. Facing a Joe Walton-coached team always meant you had to be on top of your game and I will miss competing against his teams.”

The NEC Hall of Fame was established as a means to recognize, honor and perpetuate the memory of those individuals who have made outstanding contributions to NEC athletics and have helped to bring recognition, honor, distinction and excellence to both the Conference and its Division I athletic programs. The 2010 inaugural class was headlined by the NEC’s first Commissioner, Chris Monasch, and legendary Mount St. Mary’s basketball head coach Jim Phelan. Student-athletes honored included Wagner basketball player Terrance Bailey, Robert Morris football lineman Hank Fraley, Mount St. Mary’s distance runner Peter Rono, Fairleigh Dickinson sprinter/hurdler Sharlene Milwood-Lee, Monmouth soccer standout Christie Pearce-Rampone and Saint Francis U women’s basketball player Jess Zinobile. The 2011 class included Marist men’s basketball player Rik Smits, Saint Francis U women’s basketball player Beth Swink and former Fairleigh Dickinson men’s basketball coach Tom Green. The 2012 class featured Fairleigh Dickinson men’s basketball player Desi Wilson, Mount St. Mary’s women’s basketball player Vanessa Blair and former Sacred Heart Director of Athletics Don Cook.

Nominations for the Hall of Fame are made by current and former member institutions, along with the Conference office. Enshrinees are then selected in a vote by administrators from each member institution and the Conference.

Student-athletes who have competed in an NEC-sponsored sport for at least two full seasons and completed their playing career at a member institution become eligible for induction beginning five years after exhausting their collegiate eligibility. Coaches, administrators and any other persons who have made outstanding contributions or offered extraordinary service to NEC athletics are eligible after three full years of service.

A maximum of five inductees may be selected annually, including at least one male student-athlete, one female student-athlete, and one coach or administrator.

About The Northeast Conference

Now in its 33rd year, the Northeast Conference is an NCAA Division I collegiate athletic association consisting of 10 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 22 championship sports for men and women and now enjoys automatic access to 14 different NCAA Championships. NEC member institutions include Bryant, Central Connecticut, Fairleigh Dickinson, LIU Brooklyn, Mount St. Mary’s, Robert Morris, Sacred Heart, St. Francis Brooklyn, Saint Francis U and Wagner. For more information on the NEC, visit the league’s official website (www.northeastconference.org) and digital network (www.necfrontrow.com), or follow the league on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Google+, all @NECsports.