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FDU's Arvis Berzins Captures Third Straight NEC Men's Tennis Player of the Year Honor

Somerset, NJ -- He's one of the best in Northeast Conference history, and with his third consecutive NEC Men's Tennis Player of the Year honor, Fairleigh Dickinson junior **Arvis Berzins (Adazi, Latvia/Riga Centre Language School)** has etched his name in the conference recordbook. The first-ever three-time winner of the award, Berzins was not the only Knight who earned a major honor as teammate **Jacob Whalley (Wirral, England)** was voted NEC Rookie of the Year by league head coaches. Bryant's **Ron Gendron**, who led the Bulldogs to their first conference title earlier this month, repeated as NEC Coach of the Year.

With one more year to go, Berzins is already the most decorated player in NEC history. He surpassed former FDU greats Daniel Wynne (2005, 2006) and Philip Stevens (2007, 2008) - both two-time NEC Player of the Year honorees - and made it eight winners of the award in 11 years for the Knights. The Adazi, Latvia native was also tabbed the NEC Rookie of the Year as a freshman in 2011-12. This past season, he was named NEC Player of the Month for September and was a two-time NEC Player of the Week in the spring. Berzins closed out his junior year with a 17-5 record, including a 10-2 mark in #1 flight play. His .773 win percentage ranked first among NEC players with ten or more singles matches. In three years, he is 49-23 in singles and a remarkable 17-1 against NEC competition. Berzins' two biggest wins in 2013-14 came against Yale's Tyler Liu, who is ranked just outside the top-100 in the country, and in the NEC Tournament when he avenged an earlier loss to Bryant's Dana Parziale as the Knights fell just short of three-peating as conference champion. He also earned first team All-NEC doubles recognition with teammate Gonzalo Quintana.

Whalley stepped right into the void at the #2 flight left by the graduation of FDU's two-time All-NEC first teamer Ibrahim Shams and didn't miss a beat. He made an immediate splash by being named NEC Rookie of the Month last September after he advanced to the "B" flight singles final at the USTA BJK NTC Men's College Invitational. Whalley, who hails from Wirral, England, went on to post a 4-1 record in NEC play and 11-11 overall mark against a challenging slate of opponents. Whalley, who was one of three freshman to earn first team All-NEC recognition, became FDU's fifth NEC Rookie of the Year award winner, joining Albert Nersesyan (2006), Philip Stevens (2007), Matt Gordon (2008) and current teammate Arvis Berzins (2012).

After bringing Bryant to the brink of the conference title in 2013, Gendron and the Bulldogs took the next step in the program's ascension earlier this month, defeating FDU by a 4-3 score to capture their first NEC championship. Gendron and his charges head into NCAA play in May with an 18-10 overall mark and posted a perfect 6-0 record against NEC opposition. The Bulldogs landed five singles players and a pair of doubles tandems on All-NEC teams.

Bryant and FDU combined for all six spots on the All-NEC first team. Along with Berzins (#1) and Whalley (#2), the Knights are represented by freshman **Diogo Garnel (Portugal)** (#6). Bryant was recognized in three flights by freshman **Oliver Welsh (San Diego, CA/Laurel Springs)** (#3), junior **Ernesto Arguello (Managua, Nicaragua/American Nicaraguan School)** (#4) and sophomore **Max Vogt (Fair Oaks, CA/Granite Bay)** (#5).

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Welsh led all NEC freshman with 21 victories and ranks second overall in the conference in wins behind teammate Dana Parziale. He heads into the postseason with a 12-4 mark at #3 singles and went unbeaten in six matches against league rivals, including three NEC Tournament wins. Welsh was tabbed the NEC Player of the Month for October and twice earned NEC Player of the Week recognition in the spring.

This marks this second straight first team All-NEC honor for Arguello and third overall in his career at Bryant. The junior has won 17 matches on the year and posted an 8-5 record in #4 flight play. Arguello won his match in straight sets in the NEC final against FDU and is unbeaten in NEC Tournament play the last two years. He is also 12-2 lifetime versus conference competitors.

Vogt, the 2012-13 NEC Rookie of the Year and All-NEC second teamer as a freshman, jumped up to first team status after compiling an 18-12 record as a sophomore. He heads into NCAA competition on a six-match win streak, including a perfect 3-0 record in the NEC Tournament. Vogt finished the year 4-0 against NEC players.

Garnel came on strong down the stretch for the Knights, winning four of his last five matches. He picked up a pair of wins in the NEC Tournament - dropping just two games in the process - highlighted by a 6-2, 6-0 victory in the championship match against Bryant. Garnel finished with a 3-1 NEC slate.

The first team All-NEC doubles lineup was highlighted by the FDU combination of junior **Arvis Berzins (Adazi, Latvia/Riga Centre Language School)** and freshman **Gonzalo Quintana (Ecuador)**, who were recognized at the #1 spot. Bryant senior **Dana Parziale (Pinehurst, NC/Pinecrest)** and junior **Ernesto Arguello (Managua, Nicaragua/American Nicaraguan School)** were the #2 pairing, while the Mount St. Mary's tandem of sophomore **Austin Blake (Garnet Valley, PA/Salesianum (DE))** and senior **Mike Zabetakis (Finksburg, MD/Calvert Hall)** manned the #3 spot.

Following a two-year All-NEC run with Ibrahim Shams, Berzins transitioned to Quintana as his partner in 2013-14 and enjoyed similar success. The duo posted a 9-3 record at the #1 flight, 4-1 record versus the NEC and ended the year on a five-match win streak.

Pairing up for the first time this season, Parziale and Arguello were nearly unbeatable with a 15-4 doubles record. The 15 wins ranked second in the NEC and the tandem went 3-1 in #2 flight play. Back in September, the duo won four straight matches en-route to the USTA crown, defeating teams from Marist, Boston College, FDU and Fairfield. Arguello previously earned first team All-NEC doubles honors with Juan Gonzalez-Paz (#1) in 2012 and Vidith Huot (#2) in 2013. Parziale was an All-NEC second teamer at #1 doubles along with Zachary Morris last season.

Blake and Zabetakis became the first Mount doubles team to earn All-NEC status since the 2006-07 campaign. And what a season it was for the duo, who finished the year with an NEC-best 16 wins against just three setbacks. Blake and Zabetakis tallied a 10-1 mark at #3 doubles and won all five of their league matches. The tandem has posted an impressive 32-7 record in two years as a team.

Three schools were represented on the All-NEC singles second team. Bryant senior **Dana Parziale (Pinehurst, NC/Pinecrest)** and junior **Zachary Morris (Garden City, NY/Garden City)** were picked at the #1 and #2 flights, respectively. FDU freshman **Gonzalo Quintana (Ecuador)** was the choice at #3 singles, while teammate **Julien Philippe (Paris, France/Lycees Notre Dame de Boulogne)**, a junior, was voted in at the #5 spot. Saint Francis junior **Chris Jimenez (Bayside, NY/St. Francis Prep)** was chosen at #4 singles and freshman teammate **Plamen Avuski (Plovdiv, Bulgaria/Math High School)** was the pick at the #6 position.

Parziale is no stranger to all-star honors, having earned All-NEC status in each of his four years. He was picked to the second team as a freshman and sophomore, before landing first team accolades at the #3 flight in 2012-13. Making the jump to #1 singles as a senior, Parziale took a huge step forward, claiming two NEC Player of the Month awards and three NEC Player of the Week honors. Heading into postseason play, the Pinecrest, NC native has raked up an NEC-best 25 wins on the season, including 14 at the #1 flight. Parziale handed FDU's Arvis Berzins his first-ever conference setback in early April and also picked up wins against Harvard, Brown and Villanova. He has compiled an 84-41 career singles record and 17-4 mark versus league rivals.

Morris will forever be remembered in Bryant lore for clinching the program's first-ever NEC championship on April 19. With the match tied at 3-3 against FDU, he won a three-setter with a dominating 6-1 victory in the third set to send the Bulldogs to the NCAA Tournament. On the season, he posted five wins at the #2 flight and was the NEC Player of the Week on March 13.

Quintana appears to be a building block for FDU head coach Jonathan Buchman. The Ecuador native finished 3-2 versus league players and won six matches at #3 singles for the Knights. Quintana was tabbed as the final NEC Rookie of the Week of the 2013-14 season on April 15.

Jimenez comes off a prolific year in #4 flight play where he registered an NEC-best 10 victories, including two in Saint Francis U's first run to the semifinals since the 2001 season. He also won all six of his NEC matches and ended his junior season on a five-match win streak.

Philippe won five of his last seven matches to wrap his first season as a regular in the FDU lineup. He concluded the year with a 5-2 mark at #5 singles and captured four-of-five conference matches.

Avuski was one of three impact freshman for the Red Flash this season. The September NEC Rookie of the Month, Avuski finished 12-4 overall and 2-0 against conference opposition. He was 7-1 at the #6 spot, the most wins by any NEC player in the flight.

Adding to their singles honors, Bryant's **Max Vogt (Fair Oaks, CA/Granite Bay)** and **Zachary Morris (Garden City, NY/Garden City)** also claimed the #1 spot on the All-NEC doubles second team. They were joined by the Sacred Heart #2 duo of junior **Justin Pagan (Flushing, NY/St. Mary's)** and sophomore **Brian Power (Pelham, NY/Pelham)**, and the FDU #3 tandem of **Diogo Garnel (Portugal)** and **Julien Philippe (Paris, France/Lycees Notre Dame de Boulogne)**, themselves All-NEC singles award winners.

Vogt and Morris finished 6-2 as a #1 flight team and won a pair of NEC Tournament matches for the Bulldogs. The duo also posted a 4-1 mark against the NEC. Both players had picked up All-NEC doubles recognition with different partners last season. Vogt was an All-NEC first teamer at #3 doubles with Munir Serin and Morris was a second team selection at the #1 flight with Dana Parziale.

Pagan and Power have proven to be a successful pairing the last two years. The New York state natives rang up five wins against four defeats at the #2 doubles spot and went 3-1 when facing NEC competition.

Garnel and Philippe concluded their year with a flourish, winning four straight matches, three of which came in the NEC Tournament. The team went 3-2 versus conference rivals and 6-5 overall in #3 flight play.

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.

2014 NEC Men's Tennis Award Winners

NEC Player of the Year

Arvis Berzins	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr	Adazi, Latvia/Riga Centre Language School
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NEC Rookie of the Year

Jacob Whalley	Fairleigh Dickinson	Fr	Wirral, England
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NEC Coach of the Year

Ron Gendron	Bryant
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2014 NEC Men's Tennis First Team All-Conference

Singles

Flight	Name	School	Yr	Hometown/High School
#1	Arvis Berzins	Fairleigh Dickinson	So	Adazi, Latvia/Riga Centre Language School
#2	Jacob Whalley	Fairleigh Dickinson	Fr	Wirral, England
#3	Oliver Welsh	Bryant	Fr	San Diego, CA/Laurel Springs
#4	Ernesto Arguello	Bryant	Jr	Managua, Nicaragua/American Nicaraguan School
#5	Max Vogt	Bryant	So	Fair Oaks, CA/Granite Bay
#6	Diogo Garnel	Fairleigh Dickinson	Fr	Portugal

Doubles

#1	Arvis Berzins	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr	Adazi, Latvia/Riga Centre Language School
	Gonzalo Quintana	Fairleigh Dickinson	Fr	Ecuador
#2	Dana Parziale	Bryant	Sr	Pinehurst, NC/Pinecrest
	Ernesto Arguello	Bryant	Jr	Managua, Nicaragua/American Nicaraguan School
#3	Austin Blake	Mount St. Mary's	So	Garnet Valley, PA/Salesianum (DE)
	Mike Zabetakis	Mount St. Mary's	Sr	Finksburg, MD/Calvert Hall

2014 NEC Men's Tennis Second Team All-Conference

Singles

Flight	Name	School	Yr	Hometown/High School
#1	Dana Parziale	Bryant	Sr	Pinehurst, NC/Pinecrest
#2	Zachary Morris	Bryant	Jr	Garden City, NY/Garden City
#3	Gonzalo Quintana	Fairleigh Dickinson	Fr	Ecuador
#4	Chris Jimenez	Saint Francis U	Jr	Bayside, NY/St. Francis Prep
#5	Julien Philippe	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr	Paris, France/Lyce Notre Dame de Boulogne
#6	Plamen Avuski	Saint Francis U	Fr	Plovdiv, Bulgaria/Math High School

Doubles

#1	Max Vogt	Bryant	So	Fair Oaks, CA/Granite Bay
	Zachary Morris	Bryant	Jr	Garden City, NY/Garden City
#2	Justin Pagan	Sacred Heart	Jr	Flushing, NY/St. Mary's
	Brian Power	Sacred Heart	So	Pelham, NY/Pelham
#3	Diogo Garnel	Fairleigh Dickinson	Fr	Portugal
	Julien Philippe	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr	Paris, France/Lyce Notre Dame de Boulogne