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Northeast Conference Announces 2014-15 Hall Of Fame Class

Somerset, NJ -- The Northeast Conference (NEC) Hall of Fame spotlights the “best of the best” from the league’s 34-year history. The fifth NEC induction class brings membership in the prestigious circle to 20 former student-athletes, coaches and administrators. The three-member group includes a pair of former Central Connecticut student-athletes: **Corsley Edwards**, a men’s basketball player, and **Kelly Shimmin**, a women’s soccer player. Former Wagner Sports Information Director and NEC Communications Director **Bob Balut** will be posthumously inducted into the Hall of Fame.

“I’m thrilled to announce this year’s NEC Hall of Fame class which epitomizes the grit, determination and commitment to excellence that has existed in the NEC for decades and still exists today,” said Noreen Morris, NEC Commissioner. “Corsley and Kelly were tremendous leaders on the court and field, earning multiple NEC Championships and All-Conference awards for their outstanding performances. Bob was a champion of promoting and celebrating the accomplishments of the NEC student-athletes and set the standard for innovation and creativity in the media relations field. Congratulations to Corsley, Kelly and Bob and the Balut family.”

Corsley Edwards, Central Connecticut Baltimore, MD/Lake Clifton Men’s Basketball • 1998-02

Since joining the Northeast Conference in 1997, the Central Connecticut men’s basketball program has had more than its share of success. And of all the outstanding players who have passed through Detrick Gymnasium, a case can be made that **Corsley Edwards** is the best to don a Blue Devil uniform.

Edwards, a Baltimore native, was a three-time All-NEC selection and the 2001-02 NEC Player of the Year. He was chosen to the NEC All-Rookie team as a freshman in 1998-99 and All-NEC second team as a sophomore. Edwards would go on to earn to earn first-team All-NEC accolades in his junior and senior seasons. He was named to the NEC All-Tournament team in both the 1999 and 2000 postseasons.

Edwards is the third-leading scorer in CCSU history and ranks 21st on the NEC career list with 1,731 points. The 6’9” center also pulled down 966 rebounds, seventh in school annals and eighth in the NEC recordbook. Edwards is one of just three players in NEC history who have scored 1,700+ points and grabbed 900+ rebounds in their career. He never shot less than 50 percent from the field in any of his four seasons and ranks second all-time at CCSU with 198 career blocks.

Edwards won a pair of NEC titles at CCSU, the first coming in 1999-00, his sophomore season. That year, Edwards helped spark the Blue Devils to a 15-game win streak and close loss to Iowa State in the NCAA first round after beating Robert Morris

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in the NEC title game. He was also part of a dominant 2001-02 team that set a conference record with 27 victories, including a league record 19 straight at one point. CCSU would go on to beat Quinnipiac in the NEC title game to earn a second NCAA Tournament appearance. The Blue Devils fell to Pitt in the first round with Edwards scoring a game-high 16 points. CCSU won 85 games in his four seasons.

Edwards became the first NEC player selected in the NBA Draft in 11 years when chosen by the Sacramento Kings in the second round in 2002. He played for the New Orleans Hornets in 2003-04. Edwards was also named to the CBA All-Rookie team and competed in the CBA All-Star game in 2003. He won a CBA title and was named playoff MVP with the Sioux City Skyforce in 2005. Edwards continued to play professionally in 10 different countries through 2014 until taking a position as a player development assistant with the Denver Nuggets.

“Corsley was the main reason that the Blue Devils competed in two NCAA Tournaments during his sophomore and senior years,” said longtime CCSU head coach Howie Dickenman. “I want to congratulate the selection committee on their choice. Corsley Edwards is well deserving of this prestigious honor as he is a class act both on and off the basketball court.”

“To watch a player develop and mature, with an infectious smile on one end of the court and a thunderous dunk on the other end was a thing of beauty,” said C.J. Jones, the former Director of Athletics at CCSU. “Then to end up as an NBA draft choice was the icing on the cake. I am both thankful and proud of the memories that Corsley and his teammates brought to CCSU and its fans. What a great honor for a job well done.”

“Corsley’s agility, foot work, hands and explosiveness along with being a lefty made him one of if not the most dominant big man in the history of NEC,” said former Wagner head coach and longtime NEC analyst Tim Capstraw. “The Big Dog did not enter CCSU with all these skills, but through diligent work with outstanding coaches led by Howie Dickenman, developed each season. Corsley’s impressive professional career was no doubt shaped by CCSU as will his be his future endeavors.”

“Corsley Edwards was a dominant force who was the backbone of that incredibly successful run CCSU had at the start of 2000,” said former Monmouth head coach Dave Calloway. “He had the size and an inside game that was really unstoppable, making him one of the best interior players in NEC history.”

“I had many sleepless nights trying to prepare for him,” said former Quinnipiac head coach Joe DeSantis. “He was big, strong and skilled...and had the ability to dominate.”

Kelly Shimmin, Central Connecticut Liverpool, England/Neston Women’s Soccer • 2001-04

When there is discussion on the greatest women’s soccer players in NEC history, **Kelly Shimmin** is one name everyone can agree on.

Central Connecticut was already a dominant program when she arrived in New Britain back in 2001. But it was Shimmin who helped propel CCSU to even greater heights and a lofty status in the NEC that the Blue Devils still enjoy to this day.

Perhaps the finest in a long line of English imports at CCSU, Shimmin arrived from her native Liverpool in 2001 and immediately made an impact. She led the Blue Devils to three straight NEC titles from 2002-04 as CCSU became the first, and to this day, only school to “three-peat” in women’s soccer. In 2003, Shimmin helped lead the Blue Devils to their winningest season with 16 victories and scored the game-winning goal in a landmark victory over Boston College in the first round of the NCAA Tournament. It marked the first NCAA tournament win in both CCSU and NEC history. During her time in New Britain, CCSU posted a 48-27-7 record.

Shimmin is one of only three players in conference history to earn back-to-back NEC Player of the Year honors, doing so in the 2002 and 2003 seasons when she led the league in scoring. A three-time first team All-NEC honoree from 2002-04, Shimmin was also tabbed the 2002 NEC Tournament MVP. She was twice named All-New England, earned NSCAA first team All-Region honors in 2003 and was the MVP of the NEWISA Senior Bowl following the conclusion of her CCSU playing career.

Shimmin ranks second all-time at CCSU in points (108), goals (40) and assists (28). She still holds the school record for single-season assists (16 in 2003), and ranks second in single-season points (38 in 2003) and goals (15 in 2002).

Shimmin, who went on to earn her Master's Degree at CCSU in 2007, remained in the area and has enjoyed a successful coaching career at Hartford. She is in her seventh season with the Hawks where she serves as Associate Head Coach.

"Kelly Shimmin was a complete player," said longtime CCSU head coach Mick D'Arcy. "She created some unbelievable magic with the ball at her feet, had an incredible first touch and was tenacious in defense too. I have never seen another college player who could control a game the way Kelly could. At times it seemed that she could score at will and she was just as happy setting up someone else to score. She played the game with a smile on her face and made the players around her better. In spite of all the personal accolades she remained humble and was totally dedicated to the success of the team."

"When I first met Kelly I thought, 'O.K., now this is a soccer player,'" said C.J. Jones, former CCSU Director of Athletics. "Then when I saw her play there was no question that not only was she a player, but a great soccer player and difference maker for the Blue Devils. Clearly she became and still is one of the best to ever play at Central Connecticut and in the Northeast Conference. This is a great honor that is both earned and well deserved."

Bob Balut

Wagner College, Sports Information Director • 1999-03

Northeast Conference, Assistant Director of Communications • 2003-07

Bob Balut enjoyed a long and productive history with the Northeast Conference before his untimely passing in 2007 after a long battle with colon cancer at the age of 32.

Born in Edison, NJ, Balut was known for both his energy and passion for his work. He began his tenure with the NEC in November, 2003, and was the league's media contact for football, women's basketball and softball, organized numerous championships and played a key role in the relaunch of the conference website. Always looking to be on the cutting edge, Balut pushed for NEC telecasts to air in HD at a time when standard definition was still the norm, and was a proponent of video streaming live events before it became commonplace.

Balut's history with the NEC included a six-year stint at Wagner College, including four as the school's Sports Information Director from 1999-03. He created the Seahawk Broadcasting Network, which streamed Wagner's first-ever Internet broadcasts for football, basketball and baseball. In addition, Balut served on the Wagner Athletic Hall of Fame and the Seahawk Golf Classic Committees and had a two-year stint as the Chair of the NEC Sports Information Directors Committee.

He also worked as a media relations assistant at the University of Massachusetts in 1997 and began his career as an undergraduate assistant at the University of South Carolina, where he served as baseball contact for two seasons (1996-97). He won a CoSIDA/Baseball Writers Association "Best In The Nation" award for his 1997 baseball media guide.

Balut graduated from South Carolina in 1997, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in Sport Administration.

Balut's dedication, loyalty, creativity, sense of humor and character were well known among those within his profession. He left an indelible mark on his family, friends, colleagues and all who had a chance to meet him.

"It's not often that we are recognized or celebrated for the work that we do," said Erica Magee, a former Wagner basketball player who was married to Balut in 2003. "For Bob to be recognized with this Hall of Fame honor almost eight years after his passing speaks volumes to the impact that he had on everyone and everything he touched. I can't thank Wagner and the NEC office enough for making this induction possible. I know Bob is thrilled! For anyone that knew him, I'm sure you can picture him smiling (ear to ear), clapping and high-fiving EVERYONE in sight! This Hall of Fame induction is an amazing tribute to an even more amazing man."

"It makes me sad that my daddy isn't here for this but I think it's great to see how special he was and it's really cool that I can tell people my daddy is in the Hall of Fame!" said a very proud Aidan Balut, his now 9-year old son.

"I was very happy to hear the news that Bob Balut will be a member of the Northeast Conference Hall of Fame," said Walt Hameline, Wagner Director of Athletics. "This is a very deserving honor and I'm elated for his family and friends that he is being recognized in this way. We all remember Bob's dedication, friendship, loyalty and professionalism. He always had the best interest of the student-athletes at heart and is sorely missed."

"Bob Balut was a force of nature," remembered Ron Ratner, NEC Senior Associate Commissioner. "He had what coaches call a 'non-stop motor.' Bob had endless amounts of energy, was an out-of-the-box thinker and an incredible multitasker. He only wanted what was best for the student-athletes he was promoting, and was on the forefront of using technology to spread the word on Wagner College and the NEC. I'm so happy to see Bob recognized for all that he accomplished. It truly is a fitting honor."

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. The 2013 class was comprised of Robert Morris men's basketball player Myron Walker, Sacred Heart women's basketball player Amanda Pape and Robert Morris football coach Joe Walton.

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 34th 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.