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For Immediate Release
May 5, 2015

Northeast Conference Announces 2014-15 Winter Scholar-Athletes, Academic Honor Roll & Commissioner's Honor Roll

Somerset, NJ -- Student-athletes from six different schools comprise the 2014-15 Northeast Conference (NEC) Winter Scholar-Athlete award winners. This exceptional group of student-athletes features an All-American, three honorees with a 3.9 or better grade point average and a pair of repeat award recipients.

All scholar-athlete award winners must have earned a minimum of 60 semester hours at their institution, maintained a minimum cumulative grade-point-average of 3.20 and participated with distinction as a member of a varsity team.

Along with the scholar-athletes, the NEC announced its Winter Academic Honor Roll, consisting of 420 student-athletes with a 3.20 or better grade-point average. There were also 132 student-athletes named to the Commissioner's Honor Roll, recognizing those superior student-athletes with a 3.75 or better grade point average.

Sacred Heart graduate student **Phil Gaetano's (Wallingford, CT/Sheehan (Choate Rosemary))** work in the classroom and on the court enabled him to become the league's first-ever three-time winner of the men's basketball scholar-athlete award. One of the most prolific passers in NEC history, Gaetano finished his career with 721 career assists to rank third all-time in the Conference and second at Sacred Heart. He finished the 2014-15 season with an NEC-best 5.8 assists per game, a figure that ranked him 21st nationally. Gaetano, who started all 32 games at the point for a Sacred Heart team that improved from five to 15 wins, also paced the circuit with a 2.20 assist-to-turnover ratio. The Wallingford, CT native averaged 5.8 points and 3.1 rebounds while shooting 37.3 percent from outside the arc. Gaetano graduated with a degree in Business in just three years and is currently pursuing his MBA. A three-time member of the NEC Commissioner's Honor Roll, he finished his undergraduate years with a 3.78 grade point average and has posted a perfect 4.0 as a graduate student.

St. Francis Brooklyn's **Sarah Benedetti (Canton, CT/Canton)** earned women's basketball scholar-athlete honors after a magical senior season in Brooklyn Heights. Benedetti was named the NEC Tournament Most Valuable Player after she sparked the fifth-seeded Terriers to three straight road wins and the program's first league championship. She averaged 21.7 points in the NEC Tournament, including a career-high 29 in SFBK's 77-62 win over Robert Morris in the title tilt. On the year, Benedetti ranked 11th in the NEC in scoring with 14.2 ppg and finished third in the conference with 2.3 three-pointers per game. The small forward closed out her career with 1,379 points and a school record 280 three-pointers. Benedetti was inducted into the prestigious SFC Duns Scotus Honor Society in 2014 and was a Dean's List student each semester at SFBK. The Canton, CT product maintains a 3.96 grade point average majoring in Political Science.

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Fairleigh Dickinson senior **Liat Vizenfeld (Holon, Israel/Campus Kiryat Sharet)** will go down as one of the most decorated student-athletes in NEC history, and she added to her stellar resume with a second consecutive women's bowling scholar-athlete award. Vizenfeld earned her second straight NEC Bowler of the Year honor in February and followed with her third NTCA All-American nod, including back-to-back first team nods. The three-time NEC Bowler of the Week helped lead the Knights to both the NEC regular season and tournament championships, as well as the program's 11th NCAA Tournament appearance in 12 years. FDU was seeded second in the NCAA field and finished in the top-six at the event. Vizenfeld paced the NEC in frame average (20.57), strike percentage (.525) and filled frame percentage (.890), and ranked third in traditional game average (199.8) and spare percentage (.770). Vizenfeld, who hails from Holon, Israel, majors in Psychology. She has compiled a 3.87 grade point average.

Central Connecticut senior **Patrick Hubbell (North Haven, CT/North Haven)** was the recipient of the men's indoor track and field scholar-athlete award. Hubbell delivered a dominant performance at the 2015 NEC Indoor Track and Field Championship, earning gold in three events en-route to MVP honors. In winning the mile (4:22.10), 3,000 meters (8:43.06) and 5,000 meters (15:09.85), he posted the highest individual point total of the meet and helped lead the Blue Devils to a runner-up finish at the event. Hubbell was tabbed the ECAC Indoor Track and Field Co-Athlete of the Week following his exceptional performance. A local product out of North Haven, CT, Hubbell was also the NEC cross country scholar-athlete this past fall. He carries a 3.25 grade point average as a Mechanical Engineering major.

Saint Francis U senior **Kylie Jackson (Apollo, PA/Kiski Area)** took home scholar-athlete accolades in women's indoor track and field. Jackson, who won the cross country scholar-athlete award this past fall, medaled in two events at the NEC Indoor Track & Field Championship in February. She finished second in the 3,000 meters, just over a second behind the winner, and took third in the 5,000 meters to earn 14 points for the Red Flash. Prior to the Championship, Jackson won the 5,000 meters at Bucknell's Gulden Invitational for the second straight year. The Apollo, PA native maintains a 3.90 grade point average majoring in Political Science.

Following a spectacular junior campaign, Wagner's **Amanda Lucia (Easthampton, MA/Easthampton)** collected the NEC swimming and diving scholar-athlete award. Lucia was unbeatable at the NEC Swimming & Diving Championships this past February, sweeping all three of her individual events. She finished first in the 400 IM for the third straight year, setting a new NEC record in the process (4:21.62). Soon thereafter she captured gold in the 100 butterfly (55.04). On the final day of competition she won the 200 butterfly (1:59.34), breaking the conference record that had stood since 2009 while also posting an NCAA "B" cut time. Lucia qualified and competed at the AT&T Winter National Championships in the aforementioned events and was a two-time NEC Swimmer of the Week honoree. She also established school records in the 400 IM and 200 butterfly this season. Lucia, who hails from Easthampton, MA, is majoring in Nursing. She carries a 3.49 grade point average.

2014-15 Northeast Conference Winter Scholar-Athletes

Sport	Name	School	Cl	GPA	Major
Men's Basketball	Phil Gaetano	Sacred Heart	Gr	3.78 (u) 4.0 (g)	Business Administration MBA
Women's Basketball	Sarah Benedetti	St. Francis Brooklyn	Sr	3.96	Political Science
Women's Bowling	Liat Vizenfeld	Fairleigh Dickinson	Sr	3.87	Psychology
Men's Indoor Track & Field	Patrick Hubbell	CCSU	Sr	3.25	Mechanical Engineering
Women's Indoor Track & Field	Kylie Jackson	Saint Francis U	Sr	3.90	Political Science
Women's Swimming & Diving	Amanda Lucia	Wagner	Jr	3.49	Nursing

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.