Northeast Conference

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University of Rhode Island To Join Northeast Conference As Associate Member In Football

Rams To Increase NEC Football Membership To Ten In 2013

Somerset, NJ -- The University of Rhode Island (URI) has accepted an invitation to join the Northeast Conference as an associate member in the sport of football, it was announced today by Northeast Conference (NEC) Commissioner Noreen Morris.

"We are thrilled to welcome the University of Rhode Island to the Northeast Conference football family," said Noreen Morris, NEC Commissioner. "The Conference is united in its commitment to the long term growth of NEC football. As such, the NEC has made great strides in recent years, leading to our first appearance in the NCAA FCS playoffs. The addition of URI further strengthens the league and begins an exciting new chapter in the NEC's development."

Rhode Island will begin competing in the NEC in the 2013 season. The Rams will remain an associate football member of the Colonial Athletic Association in 2011 and 2012.

"We are looking forward to the new opportunity afforded the University of Rhode Island Football program," said Thorr Bjorn, University of Rhode Island Director of Athletics. "We would like to thank NEC Commissioner Noreen Morris, as well as all of the NEC presidents and athletic directors, for their invitation. We are grateful to the CAA member institutions, Commissioner Tom Yeager, and the CAA staff for their support and understanding of this move for URI."

"Our success this year, with signature wins over New Hampshire, Villanova, and Massachusetts, reinforces my belief that Coach Joe Trainer and his staff are building a competitive and exciting FCS program here at URI. Considering the uncertainties surrounding the fiscal climate and the alignment of NCAA FCS football programs, Thorr Bjorn and I think that joining the NEC provides the best opportunity to advance our program further," stated David Dooley, the President of the University of Rhode Island.

With the addition of Rhode Island, NEC football sponsorship will reach ten in 2013. Bryant, Central Connecticut State, Monmouth, Robert Morris, Sacred Heart, Saint Francis (PA) and Wagner are full-time NEC members who sponsor football, and are currently joined by associate members Albany and Duquesne. The 10-team alignment will feature three institutions from Pennsylvania, two from Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island, and one from New Jersey.

"We are always looking at the changing landscape of FCS football. The CAA Football League has proven to be the top FCS conference in the country over the past decade," Bjorn continued. "But recent changes in geography and membership - including the loss of two northern football-playing members last year - would make it more difficult for URI to continue as a member of the CAA."

"The NEC offers us a strong regional league who has earned the right to receive an automatic bid to the FCS playoffs. Our goal and mission is to ensure a longstanding commitment to FCS football and feel this change in conference affiliation solidifies that desire," added Bjorn.

The 2010 season marks the first that the NEC will gain automatic access to the Division I Football Championship as the playoff bracket expands for the first time in 21 years. Robert Morris has secured the league's automatic bid.

"The NEC is proud to add the Rams in the sport of football," said Thomas Powell, Mount St. Mary's University President and Chair of the NEC Council of Presidents. "URI is a great regional university that will add to the richness of our conference."

About The University of Rhode Island

Rhode Island is known locally and worldwide for its innovative, big ideas, adaptive intelligence and breakthrough solutions to today's puzzling problems. URI's pioneering research extends the University's influence well beyond its coastal borders, while its unique interdisciplinary courses provide its 16,000 undergraduate and graduate students with global opportunities in an intimate environment. Rhode Island's flagship public university is a global leader in oceanography and marine sciences, biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences, forensics, international engineering and business, behavior change science and nursing.

About The Northeast Conference

Now celebrating its 30th Anniversary season, 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. The NEC began sponsoring football at the FCS level in 1996, and has since increased its membership from five to ten institutions. Beginning in 2010, the NEC gains automatic access to the Division I Football Championship. Bryant, Central Connecticut State, Monmouth, Robert Morris, Sacred Heart, Saint Francis (PA) and Wagner are full-time NEC members who sponsor football, and they are joined by associate members Albany and Duquesne. Rhode Island will become the tenth member of the football league in 2013. For more information on the NEC, visit www.northeastconference.org.