

Northeast Conference

200 Cottontail Lane • Vantage Court North • Somerset, NJ 08873
(732) 469-0440 • Fax (732) 469-0744 • www.northeastconference.org



For Immediate Release

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Central Connecticut State's Ron Robinson Named NEC Men's Basketball Player of the Year

Long Island's James Williams Chosen NEC Rookie of the Year

Wagner's Nigel Wyatte Crowned NEC Defensive Player of the Year

St. Francis (NY)'s Ron Ganulin Earns Jim Phelan Coach of the Year Honors

Somerset, NJ -- Central Connecticut State senior forward **Ron Robinson (Bronx, NY/Winchendon Academy (MA))** was chosen as the 2003-04 Northeast Conference Player of the Year in a vote conducted by league head coaches. Long Island freshman guard **James Williams (DeSoto, TX/DeSoto)** was named NEC Rookie of the Year, while Wagner senior forward/center **Nigel Wyatte (Staten Island, NY/Curtis)** nabbed NEC Defensive Player of the Year honors. The Jim Phelan Coach of the Year was awarded to St. Francis (NY)'s **Ron Ganulin**. The award winners were announced two days before the start of the 2004 NEC Basketball Tournament, the first two rounds of which will be held this weekend at Wagner College in Staten Island, New York.

In addition to being a two-time first team all-conference pick, Robinson can also add an NEC Player of the Year plaque to his growing list of accomplishments in his four years at Central Connecticut State. Entering the postseason, the senior power forward ranks third in the NEC with 18.2 points per game and is second in rebounding with 9.5 boards per contest. Robinson also leads the conference with 12 double-doubles on the season and has 36 over the course of his career, tops among active performers on the circuit. With career totals of 1,268 points and 988 rebounds, the Bronx, NY native is looking to become just the second player in NEC history (and fifth in school annals) to reach 1,000 in both categories. Needing just 12 more caroms, Robinson would join LIU's Carey Scurry, who compiled 1,413 points and set the league record with 1,014 rebounds from 1982-85. A fiery competitor who scored 29 points in a five-point setback to 12th-ranked Providence earlier this season, Robinson becomes the third CCSU player in five years to garner NEC Player of the Year honors, joining former teammate Corsley Edwards (2001-02) and Rick Mickens (1999-00).

One of the key building blocks in Jim Ferry's long range plans at Long Island, Williams took over as the Blackbirds' floor general right from the outset of his career, and ended the season as one of the league's true ironmen, averaging over 36 minutes per contest. A point guard who isn't afraid to pull up from long distance, he leads all NEC freshmen in a number of categories, including scoring (11.5 ppg), assists (3.9 apg), free throw percentage (.781) and assist-to-turnover ratio (1.02:1), and also ranks second in three-pointers (46). A DeSoto, TX product, Williams was one of three Blackbirds tabbed NEC Rookie of the Week this season, suggesting a bright future is in store for the Long Island program.

Wyatte made his presence felt defensively this season, not only as a shot blocker, but as a deterrent to would-be penetrators. Likewise, his ability to shut down some of the league's premier power forwards and centers was hard to overlook. Wyatte, a Staten Island native, currently ranks fifth in the NEC with 1.1 blocks per contest.

Ganulin corrals Jim Phelan Coach of the Year honors for the second time in his career after piloting St. Francis (NY) to a share of the NEC regular season title. Despite losing his top three scorers to graduation, Ganulin led the Terriers to a 12-6 league mark and the #2 seed in the NEC Tournament relying on the three-point shot on offense - the Terriers rank fifth nationally with 9.3 per game - and swarming, full-court pressure defense. He earned his 200th career win last Tuesday, and recently moved into second place in career NEC victories with 120. After a rough start at St. Francis, Ganulin's teams are 78-36 (.684) in league play over the last six years. The Terriers' five straight trips to the NEC semifinals is the longest active streak in the conference and is tied for the second longest streak in league history.

(2003-04 NEC Men's Basketball All-Conference Release; 1-of-4)

Central Connecticut State University • Fairleigh Dickinson University • Long Island University
Monmouth University • Mount St. Mary's College • Quinnipiac University
Robert Morris University • Sacred Heart University • St. Francis (NY) College
St. Francis (PA) University • Wagner College

There is no room for the backcourt on the all-NEC first team this season, as all five honorees play up front. Aside from Robinson, the first team consists of four first-time all stars: Monmouth junior forward **Blake Hamilton (Harrisburg, PA/Central Dauphin)**, Fairleigh Dickinson sophomore forward **Gordon Klaiber (Greenbelt, MD/National Christian Academy)**, Robert Morris senior forward **Chaz McCrommon (Pittsburgh, PA/Schenley)** and Wagner senior forward **Nigel Wyatte (Staten Island, NY/Curtis)**.

Hamilton, whose game has dramatically improved since his freshman season, emerged as a prime time player for NEC regular season co-champion Monmouth in 2003-04. Blessed with a terrific inside-outside game, he paces the Hawks and ranks eighth in the conference in both scoring (16.9 ppg) and rebounding (6.6 rpg). His league-leading 193 free throws made are a school record, as well as fourth on the NEC's single-season list. Hamilton, who hails from Harrisburg, PA, needs 11 points and nine boards to become just the third Hawk to amass 500 points and 200 rebounds in a season.

At a springy 6' 8", Klaiber is another NEC forward who excels whether playing out on the perimeter, slashing to the hoop or mixing it up in the paint. In 2003-04, the Greenbelt, MD product fulfilled on the tremendous promise he displayed in his freshman season by leading Fairleigh Dickinson and ranking in the NEC top-10 in scoring (16.9 ppg, 7th), rebounding (6.7 rpg, 6th) and blocks (1.4 bpg, 3rd). Klaiber, who brother Antric played at UConn in the late 1990s, has registered all five of FDU's double-doubles this season and scored 20 or more points 11 times.

A sinewy slasher whose terrific mid-range game stands out in this day and age, McCrommon developed into one of the NEC's elite scorers for Robert Morris in 2003-04. He concluded the regular season averaging 17.6 points per game, tops on the Colonials and fifth in the conference. McCrommon also hauls down 5.3 rebounds per contest and ranks tenth in the NEC in both field goal percentage (.524) and free throw percentage (.778). A local recruit out of Pittsburgh, McCrommon is one of three Robert Morris players to hit the 1,000 point mark this season and enters postseason play with 1,119 career points.

Wyatte stepped out of the shadow of former teammate Jermaine Hall this season and proved he has an offensive game to match his stealth defense and instinctive rebounding skills. He was the only NEC player to average a double-double for the regular season with 13.4 ppg and a league-leading 10.2 rpg, a figure that ranks him ninth nationally. Wyatte has also recorded 11 double-doubles, including eight in his last 12 games, to rank second in the conference. The lone Staten Island native on the Wagner roster, Wyatte reached the 1,000-point milestone on February 23 and has since upped that total to 1,039 points. He also ranks 11th on the NEC career rebounding chart with 818 boards. In addition, Wyatte has compiled two 20-point, 20-rebound games this season - he became the first NEC player to go for 20-20 in nearly six years - and is one of just three players nationally with multiple 20-rebound performances in 2003-04.

While the first team was composed entirely of frontcourt players, the all-NEC second team is dominated by members of the backcourt. St. Francis (PA) sophomore guard **Darshan Luckey (Baltimore, MD/Southern)** and Sacred Heart senior guard **Maurice Bailey (Hempstead, NY/Southside)** earns the second all-conference nods of their careers, and are joined by three first time honorees: Quinnipiac senior forward **Rashaun Banjo (Far Rockaway, NY/Lawrence Woodmere Academy)**, Mount St. Mary's sophomore guard **Landy Thompson (Germantown, MD/Archbishop Spalding)** and St. Francis (NY) senior guard **Mike Wilson (Naugatuck, CT/Naugatuck)**.

Coming off one of the most impressive freshman campaigns in league history for St. Francis (PA), Luckey dispelled any notion of a sophomore jinx by picking right up where he left off. Currently the NEC's fourth-ranked scorer with 17.9 ppg, he recently established a new league mark for points entering his junior season. With 1,088 points to his credit, the Baltimore product surpassed Red Flash alum Joe Anderson, who scored 1,041 points from 1987-89, and former record holder Chris McGuthrie of Mount St. Mary's, who tallied 1,058 points from 1992-94. A year ago, Luckey, who also holds the league's freshman scoring record with 605 points, became the first NEC frosh to earn first team all-NEC honors in a decade.

A second team all-NEC pick in 2001-02, Bailey's return engagement as a conference all-star is well merited, as the high-scoring guard from Sacred Heart finished the regular season as the league's leading point producer with 20.1 points per outing. A fearless penetrator who possesses uncanny strength in the air for someone his size (6'0"), the Hempstead, NY native reached the 20-point mark 14 times this season and ended his career by tying a personal best with 32 points against Wagner on March 1. Bailey amassed 1,422 points in just three years on the Pioneers and ranks 48th on the NEC's all-time scoring list.

One of the most underrated NEC players of recent vintage, league coaches took notice this season as Banjo stepped up in all facets of his game. He led Quinnipiac and stands in the NEC top-ten in scoring (17.5 ppg, 6th) and rebounding (7.6 rpg, 4th). Known early in his career as an outstanding leaper, Banjo worked hard to improve his perimeter shot, and it showed in 2003-04 as he cracked the league leaders in three-point percentage (.409, 7th). A native of Far Rockaway, NY, Banjo eclipsed the 1,000-point barrier in early February - joining teammates Kason Mims and Rob Monroe who reached the milestone earlier in the season - and put a wrap on his career with 1,166 points.

An explosive scorer, Thompson made the logical jump from all-NEC rookie team member last season to budding star in his sophomore campaign. One of the league's premier long range bombers and a slick penetrator, the Germantown, MD product leads Mount St. Mary's with 18.2 points per game and 71 three-pointers. He also ranks third in the conference in both categories. Just last week, Thompson became the first Mount player to score over 500 points in a season since Gregory Harris tallied 511 in 1998-99, and has already amassed 931 points in less than two years. On Saturday, the Thompson-led Mountaineers will compete in their first NEC playoff game since the 1999-00 season.

Wilson drew quite a bit of attention from defenders this season due to his limitless range from the outside and ability to put points on the board in a hurry for St. Francis (NY). In helping lead the Terriers to a share of the NEC regular season crown, he netted 13.4 points per game and is the league's top-ranked three-point shooter with 81 trifectas. Wilson, who has drained 43.1 percent of his shots from downtown (fourth in the NEC), is 23rd nationally in three-point percentage and 24th in made three-pointers.

The future of the NEC resides in the considerable talents of the 2003-04 NEC all-Rookie team. Joining Williams, the NEC Rookie of the Year, is fellow point guard **Derek Coleman (Dorchester, MA/Charlestown)** of Robert Morris. Coleman saw limited action early on until cracking the Colonials' rotation and earning a starting spot in early February. Over the last ten games of the season, he averaged 7.6 points, 3.3 assists, shot 19-39 (.487) from three-point range and hit a number of clutch shots late in games. That stretch helped boost his season figures to 4.4 points, 2.0 assists and a 44.0 percent success rate from downtown. Based on his tremendous performance in the second half of 2003-04, Sacred Heart freshman forward **Joey Henley (Kent, WA/Kentridge)** should be a force in the paint for years to come. Henley, who averaged 8.7 points, 5.4 rebounds, hit at a 58.3 percent clip from the floor and recorded three double-doubles on the year, put up some eye-popping numbers over the final 13 games of the campaign. In that span, the two-time NEC Rookie of the Week contributed 14.4 points and 8.0 rebounds per outing, and hit 61.3 percent of his shot opportunities. Mount St. Mary's freshman guard **Mychal Kearsse (Charlotte, NC/Providence Day)** led all NEC rookies with three NEC Player of the Week accolades and concluded the regular season averaging 6.5 points per contest. Despite standing at just 6'4", he snares a team-leading 5.5 rebounds per contest, and is also the NEC's top rated freshman with 1.4 steals per game. Rounding out the 2003-04 all-Rookie team is Central Connecticut State freshman forward **Obie Nwadike (Jersey City, NJ/St. Anthony's)**. Nwadike has started all but one game for the Blue Devils, and despite his 6'4" frame, has proven to be an absolute terror on the offensive glass, where he leads all NEC players with 3.7 rebounds per outing. He is also the league's sixth ranked rebounder (6.6 rpg) and is third in the conference with a .594 field goal percentage. Nwadike also averages 7.7 points for the playoff-bound Blue Devils.

2003-04 NEC Men's Basketball Award Winners

Player of the Year

Ron Robinson	Central Connecticut State	F	6-7	215	Sr	Bronx, NY/Winchendon Academy (MA)
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Rookie of the Year

James Williams	Long Island	G	5-10	165	Fr	DeSoto, TX/DeSoto
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Defensive Player of the Year

Nigel Wyatte	Wagner	F/C	6-9	215	Sr	Staten Island, NY/Curtis
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Jim Phelan Coach of the Year

Ron Ganulin	St. Francis (NY)
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2003-04 NEC Men's Basketball First Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
Blake Hamilton	Monmouth	F	6-7	225	Jr	Harrisburg, PA/Central Dauphin
Gordon Klaiber	Fairleigh Dickinson	F	6-8	193	So	Greenbelt, MD/National Christian Academy
Chaz McCrommon	Robert Morris	F	6-6	200	Sr	Pittsburgh, PA/Schenley
Ron Robinson	Central Connecticut State	F	6-7	215	Sr	Bronx, NY/Winchendon Academy (MA)
Nigel Wyatte	Wagner	F/C	6-9	215	Sr	Staten Island, NY/Curtis

2003-04 NEC Men's Basketball Second Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
Maurice Bailey	Sacred Heart	G	6-0	177	Sr	Hempstead, NY/Southside
Rashaun Banjo	Quinnipiac	F	6-6	200	Sr	Far Rockaway, NY/Lawrence Woodmere Academy
Darshan Luckey	St. Francis (PA)	G	6-5	200	So	Baltimore, MD/Southern
Landy Thompson	Mount St. Mary's	G	6-1	178	So	Germantown, MD/Archbishop Spalding
Mike Wilson	St. Francis (NY)	G	6-2	185	Sr	Naugatuck, CT/Naugatuck

2003-04 NEC Men's Basketball All-Rookie Team

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
Derek Coleman	Robert Morris	G	5-11	180	Fr	Dorchester, MA/Charlestown
Joey Henley	Sacred Heart	F	6-6	210	Fr	Kent, WA/Kentridge
Mychal Kearse	Mount St. Mary's	G	6-4	185	Fr	Charlotte, NC/Providence Day
Obie Nwadike	Central Connecticut State	F	6-4	200	Fr	Jersey City, NJ/St. Anthony's
James Williams	Long Island	G	5-10	165	Fr	DeSoto, TX/DeSoto