

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release

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Monmouth's Kyle Higgins Earns NEC Baseball Player of the Year Honors

Wagner's Joe Testa Garners NEC Pitcher of the Year Accolades

Monmouth's Ryan Terry Named NEC Rookie of the Year

Monmouth Head Coach Dean Ehebalt Nabs NEC Coach of the Year

Somerset, NJ -- The regular season league champion Monmouth Hawks claimed three of the Northeast Conference's four major postseason baseball awards. The conference office publicized the 2008 all-NEC baseball teams at its annual awards banquet on the eve of the NEC Baseball Championship. Recognized in front of his peers on Wednesday evening at Bernie Robbins Stadium in Atlantic City, NJ, Monmouth senior shortstop **Kyle Higgins (Green Brook, NJ/Watchung Hills)** received the NEC Player of the Year award. Freshman teammate **Ryan Terry (Levittown, PA/Truman)**, a third baseman, and Monmouth head coach Dean Ehebalt joined Higgins on the awards platform. The freshman third baseman claimed NEC Rookie of the Year honors, while his coach took home a third NEC Coach of the Year plaque. Wagner senior southpaw **Joe Testa (Brick, NJ/Brick Twp.)** prevented a Monmouth sweep of the major awards by nabbing NEC Pitcher of the Year accolades.

Higgins won the conference's regular season batting title (.386 average) and turned in a remarkable all-around offensive effort during his final collegiate campaign. One of three Hawks to play in all 49 of the team's games, the shortstop ranks amongst the NEC's top three in hits (81), on-base percentage (.443), runs scored (47), triples (4), and stolen bases (23). Arguably the toughest out in the league, Higgins drove in 35 runs from the lead-off spot in the lineup and laced 12 doubles. The explosive shortstop became the ninth player in Monmouth history to join the 200-hit club and was the fastest ever to do so as he needed only 154 games. With eight more hits, Higgins can take over the program's single-season record for base-knocks. He also stands amongst Monmouth's top six all-time in doubles and triples.

It is unlikely that the Seahawks could have defied the preseason coaches' ranking, which tabbed them to finish sixth, in the manner in which they did without the contributions of Testa. The senior southpaw's credentials are unlike any other pitcher in the NEC this season. The only pitcher to post a sub-2.00 overall earned-run average struck out 79 batters over 83.0 innings to surpass current Oakland A's farmhand Andrew Bailey and become the first Wagner pitcher to eclipse the 300-strikeout milestone. Posting a 1.63 ERA and holding opposing batters to a league-low .205 average, Testa anchored one of only two NEC pitching staffs to post a team ERA under 4.00. The senior lefty was even less forgiving in NEC play, dropping his ERA down to 0.94 in league games while striking out 47 over 47.2 innings. Testa owned a 5-1 record against conference foes this season, with his lone blemish being of the hard-luck, 1-0 variety to Monmouth. Wagner's all-time Strikeout King can also claim sole possession of the program's career wins mark by earning a victory in this week's NEC Tournament.

One of two freshmen to excel for Monmouth this season, Terry has much to do with the Hawks' remarkable run. Leading all rookie hitters with a .329 average, Terry, a third baseman, has rapped seven home runs and 14 two-baggers to rank amongst the league's top seven in both categories. His 87 total bases rank third on the team and tenth in the conference. Not slow of foot by any means, Terry was caught stealing only twice in 15 attempts. Sporting a .404 on-base percentage, Terry has come around to score 38 of the Hawks' league-high 346 runs to rank eighth amongst his NEC peers.

(NEC Baseball All-Conference Release; 1-of-4)

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

The tournament still lies ahead, but Eehalt may have his best team yet in 15 seasons at Monmouth. The Hawks are on the cusp of setting a program record for single-seasons victories. They have led the NEC standings from wire-to-wire this season thanks to an all-around amazing effort. Monmouth is the league leader in batting average, hits, runs, team ERA, and fielding percentage amongst numerous other statistical categories.

Monmouth's junior second baseman **Chris Collazo (Wall, NJ/Wall Twp.)** is one of two Hawks to join Higgins on the all-NEC first team. The other half of the team's potent double-play combo, Collazo led all second basemen in batting average (.292) while driving in 24 runs. Playing in all of the Hawks' 49 games, the slick-fielding second baseman made only three errors for a .987 fielding percentage.

After earning second team all-NEC honors at the designated hitter spot last season, Mount St. Mary's senior **Josh Vittek (Eldersburg, MD/Liberty)** elevated his status with a first team selection at first base. An intimidating presence in the batter's box at 6-4, 240 lbs., Vittek continued to carve out his legacy en route to posting the NEC's second-highest batting average (.354). The first baseman etched his name into Mount history by connecting on a league-high 15 home runs this season to become the program's all-time Home Run King with 39. The only Mountaineer to hit at least 30 career round trippers, Vittek is the league leader in RBI (50), slugging percentage (.674), and total bases (122).

Across the diamond, Quinnipiac senior **John Delaney (Hanson, MA/Xaverian Brothers)** mans the hot corner on the all-NEC first team. Delaney's team-leading batting average (.337) and team-high 40 RBI are good enough for fifth and fourth, respectively, amongst NEC student-athletes. The senior third baseman rapped out the league's second-highest hit total (66) and came around to score 66 runs, more than anyone in the league and two more than Higgins.

Two Long Island Blackbirds and one Fairleigh Dickinson Knight comprise the first team outfield. Junior outfielder **Jeff Vincent (Murrysville, PA/Franklin Regional)** is one of two Knights to achieve all-NEC status. A disciplined hitter with a sharp eye at the plate, Vincent drew a league-best 36 bases on balls on his way to posting the conference's fifth-highest on-base percentage (.438). The junior outfielder, who carries a .316 batting average, connected on 59 hits to rank ninth in the NEC. A key hitter for opposing pitchers to keep off the base paths, Vincent stole 15 bases in 20 tries.

LIU sophomore **James Jones (Brooklyn, NY/Telecommunications)** finds his way into the first team all-conference outfield, but can play almost anywhere on the field and do so efficiently. The extremely athletic and versatile Jones was the ace of the Blackbirds' staff, and inflicted even more damage on the opposition with his stick. Playing in all 47 of LIU's games, mostly in the outfield, Jones hit .309 with five home runs and 28 RBI. The quick-of-foot southpaw stole a team-best 19 bases in 23 attempts.

Jones' junior teammate **Frank DiMasi (Staten Island, NY/Moore Catholic)** joins him in the outfield after amassing the NEC's fourth-highest batting average (.346). DiMasi ranks in the league's top ten for five additional offensive categories. He cracks the top five in RBI (49) and runs scored (39). One of the conference's most well-rounded bats produced 62 hits (8th), a .542 slugging percentage (8th), and a .421 OBP (6th).

Senior backstop **Danny Etkin (Brooklyn, NY/James Madison)** is the third Blackbird to garner first team accolades. Leading all NEC catchers with a .317 batting average, Etkin drove in 30 runs in 38 games. Etkin, who owns a .975 fielding percentage, not only guns down would-be base stealers from behind the plate, but stole 15 bases of his own this season.

The 2007 Pitcher of the Year joins Testa on the all-NEC first team. Senior right-hander **Brad Brach (Freehold, NJ/Freehold Twp.)** notched a third straight all-NEC selection after overtaking Monmouth's career records in wins (27), strikeouts (270), and innings (318.0). One of league's four seven-game winners, Brach posted a 7-2 record and 2.92 ERA. Continuing to exercise his trademark, pin-point control, Brach allowed the fifth-fewest walks (17) in the league while striking out third-most batters (63) over fifth-most innings (74.0). Only one NEC pitcher threw more innings in conference play than Brach's 50.0.

Freshman outfielder/designated hitter **Nick Pulsonetti (Old Tappan, NJ/Northern Valley)**, a four-time *Akadema* NEC Rookie of the Week and one-time *Akadema* NEC Player of the Week, rounds out Monmouth's first team presence with his selection to the designated hitter's spot. Batting .329 to rank eighth in the NEC, Pulsonetti owns the NEC's second-highest slugging percentage (.624).

and has a team-best 10 round trippers. With 22 of his 49 hits being of the extra-base variety, Pulsonetti racked up the second-most total bases (93) on the team over 42 games.

Splitting most of his playing time between right field and the DH spot, Sacred Heart junior **Ryan Lynch (North Babylon, NY/North Babylon)** occupies the final spot on the all-NEC first team in the utility position. The burly, right-handed hitting junior batted .285 for the Pioneers. His slugging percentage (.392) was third on the club.

Regular season runner-up Central Connecticut State placed three of its players on the all-NEC second team as did Mount St. Mary's and Wagner. Each of the three schools had a representative in outfield. Wagner sophomore centerfielder **Damian Csakai (Freehold, NJ/Freehold Twp.)**, the league's most potent stolen base threat, claimed one of the spots after hitting .290 over a team-high 200 at-bats. The speedy Csakai proved nearly impossible for opposing catchers to throw out, converting 33-of-35 (.943) stolen base attempts. Hailing from the same hometown as Csakai, CCSU junior outfielder **Casey Walko (Freehold, NJ/Red Bank Catholic)** gave Freehold, NJ a double presence in the second team outfield. Playing in all 46 of the Blue Devils games, Walko amassed a team-high .394 on-base percentage and made only one miscue in the field the entire season. The Mount's **Ryan Murray (Enola, PA/East Pennsboro)**, a first team selection a year ago, is the third member of the second team outfield. The right-handed senior batted .280 and drove in the second-most runs (31) on the Mount.

Wagner sophomore **Vin Avella (Matawan, NJ/CBA)** earned a second team all-NEC selection at first base after emerging as the Seahawks' premier offensive threat. The right-handed slugging first baseman leads the team in average (.321), home runs (10), and RBI (35). Rookie of the Year Ryan Terry claimed the other corner infield spot thanks to his remarkable rookie campaign.

A pair of Mount St. Mary's seniors claimed the two infield spots up the middle. Second baseman **Matt Eiden (Silver Spring, MD/St. John's HS)** returns to the all-league second team for the second consecutive season. Defensively sound and a solid contact hitter, Eiden carries a .979 fielding percentage and has struck out only 17 times in 162 at-bats. Shortstop **Drew Counselman (Sykesville, MD/Liberty)** joins Eiden to form the all-NEC second team's double-play combination after batting .324. The senior shortstop led the league with 20 doubles, 13 of which came in conference play.

Wagner junior catcher **Chris Drechsel (Cranford, NJ/Cranford)** makes his third straight appearance on the all-NEC second team. His second team battery mates are CCSU senior righty **John Tesseyman (High Falls, NY/Maine)** and Monmouth sophomore **Ryan Buch (Yardley, PA/Conwell Egan Catholic)**. No pitcher worked longer or harder in conference play than Tesseyman. Five of the senior right-hander's NEC-best six complete games came against league opponents as the Blue Devils' ace tossed 57.0 of a possible 61.0 innings to post a 6-0 record in NEC play. Tesseyman has held opposing batters to a .259 average over a league-high 84.2 innings and his 2.76 overall ERA ranks second amongst all NEC pitchers. Buch, a two-time second team all-NEC honoree, was a tremendous compliment to Brach in Monmouth's rotation, limiting NEC batters to a league-low .177 average. Proving ready to take over the ace role next season, Buch went 6-1 to the tune of a 3.26 ERA.

Central Connecticut State freshman **Pat Epps (Waterford, CT/Waterford)** and FDU rookie **Steven LaForge (Garfield, NJ/St. Mary's)** round out the all-league second squad at designated hitter and utility, respectively. Epps ranks second on the playoff-bound Blue Devils in batting average (.315), while LaForge batted .289 to rank fourth on FDU.

2008 NEC Baseball Major Award Winners**Player of the Year**

Name	School	B/T	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/Highschool
Kyle Higgins	Monmouth	R/R	6-1	185	Sr.	Green Brook, NJ/Watchung Hills

Pitcher of the Year

Name	School	B/T	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/Highschool
Joe Testa	Wagner	L/L	5-10	180	Sr.	Brick, NJ/Brick Twp.

Rookie of the Year

Name	School	B/T	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/Highschool
Ryan Terry	Monmouth	R/R	6-0	190	Fr.	Levittown, PA/Truman

Coach of the Year

Dean Ehehalt	Monmouth
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2008 NEC Baseball All-Conference First Team

Pos	Name	School	B/T	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/High School
1B	Josh Vittek	Mount St. Mary's	L/R	6-4	240	Sr	Eldersburg, MD/Liberty
2B	Chris Collazo	Monmouth	R/R	5-10	180	Jr.	Wall, NJ/Wall Twp.
3B	John Delaney	Quinnipiac	R/R	5-10	180	Sr.	Hanson, MA/Xaverian Brothers
SS	Kyle Higgins	Monmouth	R/R	6-1	185	Sr.	Green Brook, NJ/Watchung Hills
OF	Jeff Vincent	Fairleigh Dickinson	R/R	5-11	185	Jr.	Murrysville, PA/Franklin Regional
OF	Frank DiMasi	Long Island	R/R	6-0	205	Jr.	Staten Island, NY/Moore Catholic
OF	James Jones	Long Island	L/L	6-3	185	So.	Brooklyn, NY/Telecommunications HS
C	Danny Etkin	Long Island	R/R	6-3	220	Sr.	Brooklyn, NY/James Madison
DH	Nick Pulsonetti	Monmouth	R/R	6-1	210	Fr.	Old Tappan, NJ/Northern Valley
UT	Ryan Lynch	Sacred Heart	R/R	6-2	240	Jr.	North Babylon, NY/North Babylon
P	Joe Testa	Wagner	L/L	5-10	180	Sr.	Brick, NJ/Brick Twp.
P	Brad Brach	Monmouth	R/R	6-4	210	Sr.	Freehold, NJ/Freehold Twp.

2008 NEC Baseball All-Conference Second Team

Pos	Name	School	B/T	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown/High School
1B	Vin Avella	Wagner	R/R	6-0	205	So.	Matawan, NJ/CBA
2B	Matt Eiden	Mount St. Mary's	R/R	6-0	180	Sr.	Silver Spring, MD/St. John's HS
3B	Ryan Terry	Monmouth	R/R	6-0	190	Fr.	Levittown, PA/Truman
SS	Drew Counselman	Mount St. Mary's	R/R	5-11	190	Sr.	Sykesville, MD/Liberty
OF	Damian Csakai	Wagner	R/R	5-9	160	So.	Freehold, NJ/Freehold Twp.
OF	Ryan Murray	Mount St. Mary's	R/R	6-0	200	Sr.	Enola, PA/East Pennsboro
OF	Casey Walko	Central Conn. St.	R/R	5-10	190	Jr.	Freehold, NJ/Red Bank Catholic
C	Chris Drechsel	Wagner	R/R	5-11	215	Jr.	Cranford, NJ/Cranford
DH	Pat Epps	Central Conn. St.	R/R	6-3	225	Fr.	Waterford, CT/Waterford
UT	Steven LaForge	Fairleigh Dickinson	L/R	5-10	165	Fr.	Garfield, NJ/St. Mary's
P	John Tesseymann	Central Conn. St.	R/R	6-2	205	Sr.	High Falls, NY/Maine
P	Ryan Buch	Monmouth	R/R	6-3	195	So.	Yardley, PA/Conwell Egan Catholic