

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release
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Northeast Conference Announces 2005 Valley National Bank Fall Scholar-Athletes

Somerset, NJ -- Three student-athletes from Central Connecticut State, along with two from St. Francis (PA) and one apiece from Monmouth and Quinnipiac comprise the 2005 Valley National Bank Fall Scholar-Athlete award winners for the Northeast Conference. In addition to the scholar-athletes, the NEC also announced its fall Valley National Bank Academic Honor Roll, consisting of 383 student-athletes. All scholar-athlete award winners must have earned a minimum of 60 semester hours, maintained a minimum cumulative grade-point-average of 3.20 and participated with distinction as a member of a varsity team.

St. Francis (PA) senior **Ryan Sheehan (Pittsburgh, PA/Baldwin)** closes out his star-studded career with his fifth Valley National Bank Scholar-Athlete award and third in men's cross country. Sheehan recently became the first runner in league history to win three NEC Cross Country individual championships when he crossed the tape in 26:21 at the conference meet in Loretto on October 29. Earlier in the season, he won the prestigious Brooks Paul Short College 8K, beating out 300 runners in a school-record time of 23:52.6. A four-time all-NEC cross country performer and the 2001 NEC Freshman of the Year, Sheehan helped lead the Red Flash to three conference championships over the course of his career and was a two-time NCAA qualifier. The Pittsburgh, PA native finished as a 16-time NEC individual champion in cross country and track and field, the second highest total in league history. A 2005 *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-American, Sheehan majors in Biology and maintains a 3.44 grade point average.

Quinnipiac senior **Katie Gwyther (Madison, NH/Kennett)** is this year's winner of the Valley National Bank Scholar-Athlete award for women's cross country. In November, Gwyther became the first harrier in NEC history to earn All-America status after finishing 12th out of 253 competitors at the NCAA Championships in Terra Haute, IN. Just three weeks earlier, Gwyther captured her second straight NEC individual crown with a virtuoso performance, beating the field by 1:32 in a course record time of 18:01 as the Bobcats won their first conference title. The Madison, NH product also finished first at the New England Championships, and was undefeated in race competition until crossing the tape in fourth place at NCAA regionals. A three-time NEC Athlete of the Week this past fall, Gwyther carries a 3.43 grade point average majoring in Health Sciences.

Monmouth senior midfielder **Janine McMillin (Milltown, NJ/East Brunswick)** earns Valley National Bank Scholar-Athlete plaudits in the sport of field hockey. McMillin was tabbed to the all-NEC second team in 2005 after tallying three goals and one assist on the season for the Hawks. She is a current member of the U.S. National Indoor Field Hockey team and is also a certified field hockey official. The Monmouth team captain is a member of Kappa Mu Epsilon (National Mathematics Honor Society) and Chi Alpha Sigma (National College Athletic Society) and is a two-time recipient of the All-American Scholar Award. A National Merit Scholar, McMillin was also named Monmouth's Jane Freed Scholar Award winner in 2004 and has been named to the Dean's List every semester since transferring to the school as a sophomore. Involved in a number of community service initiatives, McMillin personally raised \$500 for two distinct causes - to donate to a foundation for rare children's blood disorders and for needy families in Romania. She traveled to Romania last summer to volunteer at an orphanage and is currently sponsoring a Romanian teenager in an orphanage for a one-year period. A native of Milltown, NJ, McMillin also volunteers at VITAS Hospice Care. She majors in Secondary Math Education and has posted a 3.74 grade point average.

(2005 NEC Fall Scholar-Athlete Release; 1-of-2)

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
St. Francis (PA) University • Wagner College

St. Francis (PA) junior wide receiver **Luke Palko (Imperial, PA/West Allegheny)** is recognized for his performance on and off the field as the Valley National Bank Scholar-Athlete for football. Palko, who was recently named a first team *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-America, ranked second in the conference in 2005 with 85 receptions, and finished with 812 receiving yards and seven touchdowns. A second team all-NEC wideout this past season, he ranked third in the nation in receptions per game (7.7) and enters his senior year as the league's all-time receptions leader with 209. A native of Imperial, PA, Palko is President of the St. Francis (PA) Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and is a two-time member of the NEC Academic Honor Roll. Palko has recorded a 3.73 grade point average as an Accounting major.

Central Connecticut State junior forward **Alex Harrison (Eastbourne, England/Willingdon)** collects Valley National Bank Scholar-Athlete honors in men's soccer. Harrison was tabbed NEC Player of the Year for the second straight season this past November, and is only the fourth two-time winner of the award in league history. He finished second in the conference in both points (28) and goals (13), while leading the circuit in both points per game (1.75; 12th nationally) and goals per game (0.81; sixth nationally). A three-time NEC first team all-star and the 2003 NEC Rookie of the Year, Harrison has boosted his career totals to 40 goals and 89 points in three seasons. The Eastbourne, England product spent his offseason last summer representing Great Britain at the World University Games, capping off a sophomore year that saw him lead the nation in goals per game and finish second in points per game. Harrison was recently tabbed to the NSCAA/adidas all-New England team for the third time and the *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District first team for the second year in a row. Harrison is a Physical Education major with a 3.70 grade point average.

Central Connecticut State senior goaltender **Ashley Ferra (Canterbury, CT/Norwich Free Academy)** follows in the footsteps of former teammate and fellow netminder Sabrina Mariani (a two-time winner) as the Valley National Bank Scholar-Athlete honoree for women's soccer. The 2005 NEC Defensive Player of the Year and first team all-conference pick, Ferra broke Mariani's school record with a league-high ten shutouts and finished second in the NEC in save percentage (.800) and fourth in goals against average (0.86). She anchored a CCSU defense that set a new school mark for fewest goals allowed (20) on the season en route to the Blue Devils' fourth straight conference championship and NCAA berth. A New England Intercollegiate Women's Soccer Association first team all-star and Senior Bowl selection, Ferra's past accomplishments include being honored as the 2004 NEC Tournament Most Valuable Player and serving as the winning goalkeeper in CCSU's 2-0 victory over Boston College in the 2003 NCAA Women's College Cup. A member of the 2005 *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District first team, Ferra majors in Marketing and maintains a 3.60 grade point average.

Central Connecticut State senior outside hitter **Chantelle Bowden (Chilliwack, British Columbia/Highroad Academy)** becomes the second straight Blue Devil competitor to take home Valley National Bank Scholar-Athlete accolades in women's volleyball, one year after Jen Cote was bestowed with the honor. Bowden claimed the third second team all-NEC honor of her career in 2005 after finishing in the league top-10 in kills (ninth; 3.0/game), service aces (seventh; 0.4/game), points (10th; 3.5/game) and digs (seventh; 3.4/game). She also made volleyball history at CCSU as a senior when she became the first player in Blue Devil annals to reach both 1,000 kills and digs in her career. Bowden, who is a two-time *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-District honoree, carries a 3.86 grade point average majoring in Athletic Training.

Northeast Conference 2005 Valley National Bank Fall Scholar-Athletes

Sport	Name	School	Cl	GPA	Major
Men's Cross Country	Ryan Sheehan	St. Francis (PA)	Sr	3.44	Biology/Pre-Professional
Women's Cross Country	Katie Gwyther	Quinnipiac	Sr	3.43	Health Sciences
Field Hockey	Janine McMillin	Monmouth	Sr	3.74	Secondary Math Education
Football	Luke Palko	St. Francis (PA)	Jr	3.73	Accounting
Men's Soccer	Alex Harrison	Central Connecticut State	Jr	3.70	Physical Education
Women's Soccer	Ashley Ferra	Central Connecticut State	Sr	3.60	Marketing
Women's Volleyball	Chantelle Bowden	Central Connecticut State	Sr	3.86	Athletic Training