

# Northeast Conference

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## Northeast Conference Announces 2010 Spring Scholar Athletes *Academic and Commissioner's Honor Rolls Also Released*

**Somerset, NJ** - Three student-athletes from Sacred Heart, along with two from Bryant and one apiece from Fairleigh Dickinson, Long Island, Mount St. Mary's, Robert Morris, Saint Francis (PA), and Wagner comprise the list of 2010 Northeast Conference (NEC) Spring Scholar-Athlete award winners. Along with the naming of the Scholar-Athlete honorees, the NEC announced a spring Academic Honor Roll that consists of 921 student-athletes across 10 conference-sponsored spring sports as well as a 207-member Commissioner's Honor Roll comprised by student-athletes who attained a 3.75 grade-point average or higher.

The number of Academic Honor Roll students represents a 22.4 percent increase over the 752 individuals who received accolades following the 2009 spring semester. In order to receive consideration for the list, one must maintain at least a 3.20 grade-point average (GPA).

During the course of the 2009-10 academic year, a record 2,257 student-athletes earned their way onto the Academic Honor Roll. That figure represents more than half of the league's competitors and stands as a 12.5-percent increase from one year ago. Likewise, 495 student-athletes were tabbed to the Commissioner's Honor Roll in 2009-10, an all-time high for the league and a year-to-year increase of 14.6 percent.

Only weeks after pitching Sacred Heart into the NEC Championship Game, senior **Jared Balbach (Pine Bush, NY/Pine Bush)** captures the baseball Scholar-Athlete award. The veteran left-hander compiled a 9-3 record this season while sporting a 3.63 earned-run average that was fourth amongst league leaders. Balbach produced seven complete-game efforts in 14 starts on the way to logging the third-most innings (91.2) in the conference. Following his selection to the 2010 All-NEC First Team, Balbach continued his winning ways in the postseason. The senior southpaw went the distance, tossing 141 pitches, to notch an 8-3 victory over eventual-league champion Central Connecticut State at the 2010 NEC Tournament. Pitching best during the season's stretch run, Balbach went 4-0 with a 1.85 ERA in his last six starts. Studying Business, Balbach accounted for a 3.77 grade-point average.

**Annie Dubovec (Chagrin Falls, OH/Kenston)** brings the softball Scholar-Athlete accolade home to Robert Morris following a junior season during which she started all 48 games and led the Colonials in five major offensive categories. Earning an all-NEC first team nod at designated player, she posted RMU team highs in batting average (.359), home runs (5), RBI (39), slugging percentage (.538), and on-base percentage (.410). The 39 runs batted in were fourth most in the conference and the .359 average ranked sixth amongst league leaders. Dubovec's athletic prowess coupled with her 3.93 grade-point average resulted in a selection to the 2010 ESPN the Magazine District II All-Academic First Team following second team honors in 2009. The Ohio native is majoring in Mathematics.

Sacred Heart sophomore **Leo Garcia (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico)** caps another award-winning spring by claiming the men's golf Scholar-Athlete honor. After being named the 2009 NEC Rookie of the Year, Garcia added a second consecutive all-NEC second team selection to his resume in 2010. He carded a three-round score of 232 to crack the Top 25 at this year's Northeast Conference Championship. He shot a season-best round of 70 on three separate occasions, one of which was part of a third-place individual finish at the New England Division I Championship. Garcia has declared a major in Biological Sciences and maintains a 3.71 grade-point average.

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Bryant University (2012-13) • 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

Junior **Michele Holzwarth (Berlin, Germany)** keeps the women's golf Scholar-Athlete award at Fairleigh Dickinson for a third consecutive year after former Knight Eva Mayr held the honor in 2008 and 2009. Holzwarth's latest honor concludes a season during which she earned NEC Golfer of the Year accolades while powering FDU to a third consecutive NEC title. Holzwarth, who won the league's Golfer of the Week award an unprecedented five times in 2010, placed amongst the top-10 individual finishers at every tournament she contested this year. She claimed two tournament titles and posted a trio of runner-up showings on the way to a NEC-best 76.60 strokes per round average. Holzwarth, who shot a season-low 68 at the fall semester's Yale Invitational, carded a three-round score of 228 at the NEC Championship. The Management major boasts a 3.63 grade-point average.

It's been quite a spring for Sacred Heart senior **Timmy Katz (Freeport, NY/Freeport)**, the winner of the men's lacrosse Scholar-Athlete award. En-route to earning all-NEC first team honors, Katz tallied a career-high 32 goals and led the Pioneers in scoring for a third consecutive season. He totaled 116 points (78 G, 38 A) in 53 career games at Sacred Heart. Two different organizations (NEILA and USILA) named the veteran attacker to their All-Star Game. Katz tallied two goals and an assist in the USILA North-South All-Star Game before becoming the second player in Sacred Heart history to be selected in the Major League Lacrosse Draft. The fifth-round choice of his hometown Long Island Lizards, Katz was the 28<sup>th</sup> player overall selected in this year's draft. The Business major posted a 3.28 grade-point average and was named both a USILA Scholar All-American and a NEILA Scholar-Athlete.

Mount St. Mary's senior **Jackie Kearney (Baltimore, MD/Seton Keough)** closes her collegiate career by capturing the women's lacrosse Scholar-Athlete honor. The decorated defender was an all-NEC first team selection in 2010, while also earning a place in the IWFLCA North-South All-Star Game. Kearney anchored the Mount's back line, accumulating a team-high 46 groundballs in 17 games. Her 34 caused turnovers, which rank 10<sup>th</sup> in the program's all-time single-season record book, yielded a 2.00 per game average that ranked second in the conference. After helping Mount St. Mary's qualify for the postseason NEC Tournament for the eighth consecutive season, Kearney earned her second-ever appearance on the All-Tournament Team. Majoring in Mathematics, the three-time NEC Academic Honor Roll student accounted for a 3.92 grade-point average.

The men's tennis Scholar-Athlete award goes to Bryant's No. 1 singles player, junior **Cristian Balestrieri (Mar Del Plata, Argentina)**. The third-year Bulldog maintained a 3.81 grade-point average while playing all-NEC caliber tennis. Balestrieri posted a perfect 9-0 mark in the No. 3 doubles position where he earned second team all-conference honors. He won 12 top-flight singles matches, including an impressive come-from-behind victory over Brian Mikkelson of the 2010 NEC Champion Quinnipiac Bobcats this past March. The Argentine went undefeated in three matches at the fall semester's Lehigh Invitational and won the NEC Player of the Week award on October 27, 2009 for his efforts. Balestrieri is working towards a degree in Accounting.

A pair of NEC seniors - Long Island's **Selma Babic (Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina/Clemson University)** and Bryant's **Chelsea Downing (Cherry Hills Village, CO/Cherry Hills)** - share the women's tennis Scholar-Athlete award. On the court, Babic accounted for arguably the best season of any individual since the conference began sponsoring women's tennis. Long Island's top player, who was ranked No. 121 by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association, became the first woman in NEC history to earn a berth into the NCAA Singles Championship. Babic posted a 19-2 overall singles record to capture a second consecutive NEC Player of the Year award. Her perfect 6-0 mark against conference opponents helped the Blackbirds to repeat as NEC team champions. A Psychology major, Babic was responsible for a 3.46 grade-point average. Meanwhile, Downing posted a near-perfect 3.99 grade-point average as a Finance major at Bryant. She posted a 7-5 singles record, while accumulating numerous academic distinctions. The Valedictorian of Bryant's School of Business was awarded the Delta Sigma Pi Scholarship Key, an University honor that goes to the graduating student with the highest cumulative GPA amongst those studying business administration or economics.

Saint Francis (PA) senior **Chris Behre (Flanders, NJ/Mt. Olive)** adds the men's outdoor track & field Scholar-Athlete award to a list of career accolades that includes seven first-place NEC Championship finishes. Behre, who was the conference's top miler during the 2009 and 2010 indoor seasons, captured his sixth-ever individual NEC crown by winning the 1500-meter run at this spring's conference title meet. The New Jersey native also claimed gold in the 1500m at the 2008 NEC Outdoor Championships. Behre was also ranked amongst the league's top-5 800-meter runners this outdoor season. Having majored in Computer Science, Behre posted a 3.78 grade-point average during his time at Saint Francis.

Wagner senior distance runner **Brecken Drager (Loomis, CA/Del Oro)** claims the women's outdoor track & field Scholar-Athlete accolade. In a remarkable display of mettle and ability, Drager posted a triumphant distance double at the 2010 NEC Championships. After striking gold on the first day of the title meet in the 10,000-meter race, the Californian returned as the top finisher in the 5K run the following afternoon. One week later, the versatile Drager finished first in the 1500-meter run at the NYC Qualifying Challenge. In her final intercollegiate competition, Drager contested the 5,000-meter run at the ECAC Championships where she logged a time of 17:05.20. Having recently earned her degree in Psychology, Drager graduated from Wagner with a 3.83 grade-point average.

All Scholar-Athlete award winners must have earned a minimum of 60 semester hours and held a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.20, while participating, with distinction, as a member of a varsity team.

### **2010 NEC Spring Scholar-Athletes**

<b>Sport</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Cl</b>	<b>GPA</b>	<b>Major</b>
Baseball	Jared Balbach	Sacred Heart	Sr.	3.77	Business
Softball	Annie Dubovec	Robert Morris	Jr.	3.93	Mathematics
Men's Golf	Leo Garcia	Sacred Heart	So	3.71	Biological Sciences
Women's Golf	Michele Holzwarth	Fairleigh Dickinson	Jr.	3.63	Management
Men's Lacrosse	Timmy Katz	Sacred Heart	Sr.	3.28	Business
Women's Lacrosse	Jackie Kearney	Mount St. Mary's	Sr.	3.92	Mathematics
Men's Tennis	Cristian Balestrieri	Bryant	Jr.	3.81	Accounting
Women's Tennis	Selma Babic	Long Island	Sr.	3.46	Psychology
	Chelsea Downing	Bryant	Sr.	3.99	Finance
Men's Track & Field	Chris Behre	Saint Francis (PA)	Sr.	3.78	Computer Science
Women's Track & Field	Brecken Drager	Wagner	Sr.	3.83	Psychology