

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release

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Central Connecticut State's Javier Mojica Named NEC Men's Basketball Player of the Year

Monmouth's Jhamar Youngblood Tabbed NEC Rookie of the Year

CCSU's Tristan Blackwood & Mount St. Mary's Mychal Kearsse Selected NEC Co-Defensive Players of the Year

Central Connecticut State's Howie Dickenman Earns Jim Phelan Coach of the Year Honors

Somerset, NJ -- Central Connecticut State senior guard **Javier Mojica (Auburn, MA/Auburn)** was selected as the 2006-07 Northeast Conference Player of the Year in a vote conducted by league head coaches. Monmouth freshman guard **Jhamar Youngblood (Newark, NJ/St. Patrick's)** was named NEC Rookie of the Year, while Central Connecticut State junior guard **Tristan Blackwood (Toronto, Ontario/Eastern Commerce)** and Mount St. Mary's senior guard **Mychal Kearsse (Charlotte, NC/Providence Day)** were voted NEC Co-Defensive Players of the Year. The Jim Phelan Coach of the Year honor was awarded to Central Connecticut State's **Howie Dickenman** for the second straight season. NEC regular season champion Central Connecticut State also earned itself a place in the league recordbook by becoming the first team in conference history to land three players on the all-NEC first team. The honorees were announced on the eve of the 2007 NEC Basketball Tournament, which begins on Thursday with quarterfinal play at four campus sites.

Mojica is the fourth CCSU player in the last eight years to walk away with NEC Player of the Year honors, joining Ron Robinson (2003-04), Corsley Edwards (2001-02) and Rick Mickens (1999-00). A former walk-on who earned a scholarship following his freshman campaign, Mojica's steady emergence as a key contributor in the CCSU rotation the last two years foreshadowed the success that would come as a senior, when he elevated his game to another level in the Blue Devils' run to their third NEC regular season crown and accompanying automatic bid to the postseason NIT. A two-time *Choice Hotels/NEC* Player of the Week, Mojica raised his scoring average eight points to 16.9 ppg, ranking him third in the conference entering the postseason. The versatile guard from Auburn, MA can do it all on the court as evidenced by his inclusion in the NEC top-15 in nine different categories, including fifth in rebounding (6.9 rpg) and three-point percentage (.416), and sixth in double-doubles (five). Named the team's co-captain prior to the season, Mojica has recorded 11 games of 20 or more points and scored his 1,000th career point in January. He has since boosted his total to 1,238, third among active NEC players.

In a year that featured a host of impressive rookie performers throughout the conference, Youngblood established himself as one of the NEC's future stars. Stepping into a lead role in Monmouth's backcourt with the graduation of four-year stalwarts Tyler Azzarelli and Chris Kenny, Youngblood earned a starting spot by late December and finished the season as a three-time *Choice Hotels/NEC* Rookie of the Week award winner. A lightning quick combo guard, Youngblood leads all NEC freshman in field goal percentage (.525; sixth overall) and ranks second in steals (1.7 spg; fifth overall) and scoring (12.3 ppg). The Newark, NJ native is not only difficult to contain off the dribble and leading the break, but has also showed range on his shot, hitting 17-33 (.515) from beyond the arc in league play. Youngblood capped his season with a 31-point, eight rebound performance against Sacred Heart on February 23. The 31 points were the most scored by an NEC freshman since St. Francis (NY)'s John Quintana hit for 31 on February 22, 2003.

Kearsse becomes the first two-time winner of the league's Defensive Player of the Year award, which is all the more remarkable considering his long road to recovery from offseason knee surgery. The senior maintained his reputation as a defensive stopper on a Mount team that finished the regular season third in the NEC in scoring defense at 68.4 ppg. A Charlotte, NC product, he ranks 15th in the conference with 1.4 steals per contest.

(2006-07 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 University • Quinnipiac University
Robert Morris University • Sacred Heart University • St. Francis (NY) College
Saint Francis (PA) University • Wagner College

A terrific on-the-ball defender, Blackwood has been the driving force behind the NEC's top-rated defensive unit in 2006-07. CCSU has allowed a league-low 65.7 ppg entering the postseason and has held league rivals to under 70 points in 14-of-18 games. Blackwood, who hails from Toronto, Ontario, ranks second on the Blue Devils with 38 steals (1.3 spg).

Now in his 11th year as the chief architect of the Central Connecticut State program, Dickenman is the recipient of his second straight Jim Phelan Coach of the Year honor and NEC record fourth overall, having also won the award in 1999-00 and 2001-02. Tabbed fourth in the preseason, CCSU started slow before hitting its stride in mid-January, reeling off 12 straight wins to take control of the NEC race. The Blue Devils had already clinched their third league title by February 15th and finished the regular season with a four-game cushion in the standings. CCSU's 16 league victories and .889 winning percentage tied for the third-best marks in NEC history. Dickenman has also turned the Blue Devils into a powerhouse at Detrick Gymnasium, where they finished 9-0 against league rivals in 2006-07 and have won 17 consecutive NEC regular season home games. Under his direction, the Blue Devils are 11-6 (.647) all-time in NEC Tournament play, including a 6-0 mark in the postseason as a #1 seed.

Four of the five players comprising the all-NEC first team are first time all-stars with Sacred Heart senior guard **Jarrid Frye (Maspeth, NY/Mt. Luther)** being the lone repeat honoree. Frye is joined on the team by CCSU teammates Mojica, Blackwood and senior forward **Obie Nwadike (Jersey City, NJ/St. Anthony's)**, along with Fairleigh Dickinson senior forward **Andre Harris (Detroit, MI/Robichaud)**.

A second team all-NEC pick a year ago, Frye is a silky slasher with a proficient mid-range game who can also direct the break and attack the boards. In helping lead Sacred Heart to the #2 seed in the NEC Tournament and its best-ever Division I season, he has paced a balanced scoring attack - six players average over nine points per game - with 13.3 ppg. A native of Maspeth, NY, Frye has reached double figures in scoring in 24-of-29 games on the year and also leads the Pioneers with 5.2 rpg. He hit the 1,000-point plateau back in December and is the NEC second-leading active scorer with 1,247 career points.

Blackwood has not only excelled on the defensive end of the floor, but also built himself into the league's most prolific long range bomber and an exceptional scorer. With an NEC-high and CCSU-record 108 three-pointers this year, he is just nine shy of breaking the conference single-season mark of 116 established by Long Island's Charles Jones in 1997-98 and ranks eighth in the nation with 3.5 trifectas per game. Blackwood has also been near-perfect from the charity stripe, standing first in the NEC and fifth nationally in free throw percentage (.921). He has been even better in league play, sinking 69-72 (.958) from the line. Hailing from Toronto, Ontario, Blackwood is also the NEC's top-rated scorer against conference opponents (20.0 ppg) and is second overall at 17.1 ppg. He tallied an NEC single-game season-high 40 points - tying an NEC single-game record with 10 three-pointers in the process - against Robert Morris on February 22 to reach the 1,000-point milestone for his career (now up to 1,043). Blackwood was twice named *Choice Hotels/NEC Player of the Week*.

Nwadike's ability to dominate on the boards has helped separate CCSU from the pack this season. He is currently the only player in the nation ranked in the top-50 in rebounding who isn't at least 6'5" tall. The 6'4" Nwadike is also one of just eight players in the country - he ranks seventh - putting up double digits in rebounds with 10.9 rpg. The NEC's leading glass sweeper has posted a league-best 16 double-doubles, and for the second straight year has earned the distinction of being the only conference player to average a double-double, scoring at a 14.5 ppg clip. A Jersey City, NJ product, Nwadike has moved into fifth place on the league's career rebounding chart with 942 caroms.

Harris made the transition from sixth-man to featured player for the Knights in 2006-07, and in the process has developed into the NEC's top-rated scorer. The lone NEC player to score in double-figures in every game this season, Harris leads the NEC with 18.7 ppg and has compiled a conference-high 15 20+ point scoring performances. By improving the range on his shot to complement his interior game, Harris has made the biggest offensive leap by an NEC player this season, increasing his output by 10.8 ppg. The Detroit, MI native passed the 1,000-point mark with a career-high 34-point effort against Robert Morris on February 1st and has now amassed 1,143 career points.

The all-NEC second team features three first-time recipients, while Long Island senior guard **James Williams (DeSoto, TX/DeSoto)** adds to his stockpile of awards and Robert Morris senior forward **A.J. Jackson (Monessen, PA/Monessen (East Tennessee St.))** makes his second all-star appearance. They are flanked by a trio of juniors in Quinnipiac junior guard **DeMario Anderson (Oxon Hill, MD/Oxon Hill (Globe Institute, CCSU))**, St. Francis (NY) junior forward **Robert Hines (Trenton, NJ/St. Patrick's (Arizona Western CC))** and Robert Morris junior guard **Tony Lee (Boston, MA/Charlestown)**.

Williams wraps his Long Island career as one of the most decorated players in NEC recent memory. The DeSoto, TX native is a three-time all-NEC performer - including first team honors the last two seasons - and former NEC Rookie of the Year. Blessed with unlimited range on his shot and an ability to perform in the clutch, Williams ranks sixth in the league in scoring at 16.2 ppg. He is also fourth the conference in both free throw percentage (.841) and three-pointers (2.6/game). Williams ascended to 17th on the NEC's career scoring chart with 1,710 points and is the third-ranked three-point artist in league annals with 277 trifectas.

A first team all-NEC selection a year ago, Jackson sealed his reputation as one of the NEC's top offensive threats - both in the post and outside the arc, where he has drilled 41 treys on the year - by averaging 16.7 ppg over the course of the regular season to place fourth in the conference in scoring. He is also second in the NEC with 7.7 rpg and third with seven double-doubles. Jackson, a local recruit out of Monessen, PA, is coming off one of his best performances of the year with a season-high 34 points and 12 rebounds in Monday's win over LIU that clinched the #4 seed and a quarterfinal home game for the Colonials. He was a two-time *Choice Hotels*/NEC Player of the Week honoree.

A natural scorer, Anderson's ability to heat up in a hurry and convert shots from any spot on the court is tailor made for his sixth-man role on the Bobcats, who enter the NEC Tournament as the #3 seed. With a 15.7 ppg average, he is the eighth-leading scorer on the circuit and has hit double-digits in 18 consecutive games. He has also torched league competition, averaging 17.9 ppg and hitting at a 53.0 percent rate from the floor. Anderson, who hails from Oxon Hill, MD and played his first two years at CCSU, eclipsed the 1,000-point mark for his career on Monday and begins the postseason with 1,016 points to his credit.

The only league newcomer to be awarded an all-NEC spot, Hines' versatility on the offensive end of the floor made him nearly impossible to guard for the Terriers, whose late season charge toward a playoff berth was sparked by the Trenton, NJ native. By combining a vast array of post moves with an ability to create off the dribble and stroke it from the outside (26 three-pointers), the 6'5", 250 lb. Hines was able to finish the regular season as the fifth-leading scorer in the conference at 16.6 ppg. He also ranked third on the circuit with 18.5 ppg in league games. Hines showed his mettle as the season wore on, posting averages of 23.0 ppg, 8.1 rpg and 3.4 apg over his last seven outings.

A consummate leader, there is little that the 6'0" Lee can't do on the court for the Colonials, who established an NEC record this season for non-conference winning percentage following an 8-1 campaign. Lee recently became the sixth player in NEC history, and the first as a junior, to hit career totals of 1,000 points, 500 rebounds and 250 assists. He did so on Saturday against Quinnipiac, and enters postseason play with 1,017 points, 523 rebounds and 267 assists. A Boston, MA product, Lee is the NEC leader and ranks among the best in the nation in field goal percentage (.600, 23rd nationally) and steals (2.8 spg, sixth nationally), while also contributing 16.1 ppg and 6.2 rpg. He was honored as *Choice Hotels*/NEC Player of the Week on two occasions.

To glimpse the future of the NEC, one simply needs to turn their attention to the league's All-Rookie team. Led by Youngblood, the NEC Rookie of the Year, the squad features four freshman guards, along with Saint Francis (PA) swingman **Devin Sweetney (Washington, D.C./Riverdale Baptist)**. Sweetney paced the circuit in 2006-07 with four *Choice Hotels*/NEC Rookie of the Week accolades. His six double-doubles rank him fourth in the NEC and are the most by an NEC freshman since the Mount's Pat Atangana tallied six in 2000-01. An explosive leaper, Sweetney leads all NEC freshman with 13.0 ppg (18th in NEC), 7.7 rpg (third in NEC), and an 83.4 percent accuracy rate from the stripe (sixth in NEC). Mount St. Mary's point guard **Jeremy Goode (Charlotte, NC/Providence Day)** made a seamless transition to the Mount starting lineup early on and finished the regular season with a school freshman record 144 assists. A three-time *Choice Hotels*/NEC Rookie of the Week award winner, the super-quick Goode is third on the team with 10.2 ppg, and ranks third in the NEC in steals (1.9 spg) and fourth in assists (5.0 apg) and assist-to-turnover ratio (1.58:1). Sacred Heart's **Chauncey Hardy (Middletown, CT/Xavier)** provided instant offense off the bench for the Pioneers. The team's second leading scorer at 11.1 ppg, Hardy shot a solid 49.8 percent from the floor and is the second-leading three-point shooter in the NEC at 45.9 percent. He claimed *Choice Hotels*/NEC Rookie of the Week plaudits twice in 2006-07. Rounding out the list is Long Island's **Jaytornah Wisseh (Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy)**, a fearless penetrator who came on strong late in the season and earned a spot in the starting rotation for the Blackbirds. He finished the year as the LIU team leader with 3.0 apg, while also averaging 8.7 ppg, including a career-best 29-point effort against Sacred Heart on February 2.

2006-07 NEC Men's Basketball Award Winners

Player of the Year

Javier Mojica	Central Connecticut State	G	6-3	180	Sr	Auburn, MA/Auburn
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Rookie of the Year

Jhamar Youngblood	Monmouth	G	6-1	190	Fr	Newark, NJ/St. Patrick's
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Co-Defensive Players of the Year

Tristan Blackwood	Central Connecticut State	G	6-0	170	Jr	Toronto, Ontario/Eastern Commerce
Mychal Kearse	Mount St. Mary's	G	6-4	205	Sr	Charlotte, NC/Providence Day

Jim Phelan Coach of the Year

Howie Dickenman	Central Connecticut State
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2006-07 NEC Men's Basketball First Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
Tristan Blackwood	Central Connecticut State	G	6-0	170	Jr	Toronto, Ontario/Eastern Commerce
Jarrid Frye	Sacred Heart	G	6-3	190	Sr	Maspeth, NY/Mt. Luther
Andre Harris	Fairleigh Dickinson	F	6-8	233	Sr	Detroit, MI/Robichaud
Javier Mojica	Central Connecticut State	G	6-3	180	Sr	Auburn, MA/Auburn
Obie Nwadike	Central Connecticut State	F	6-4	224	Sr	Jersey City, NJ/St. Anthony's

2006-07 NEC Men's Basketball Second Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
DeMario Anderson	Quinnipiac	G	6-2	205	Jr	Oxon Hill, MD/Oxon Hill (Globe Institute, CCSU)
Robert Hines	St. Francis (NY)	F	6-5	250	Jr	Trenton, NJ/St. Patrick's (Arizona Western CC)
A.J. Jackson	Robert Morris	F	6-6	230	Sr	Monessen, PA/Monessen (E. Tennessee St.)
Tony Lee	Robert Morris	G	6-0	205	Jr	Boston, MA/Charlestown
James Williams	Long Island	G	5-10	180	Sr	DeSoto, TX/DeSoto

2006-07 NEC Men's Basketball All-Rookie Team

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
Jeremy Goode	Mount St. Mary's	G	5-9	172	Fr	Charlotte, NC/Providence Day
Chauncey Hardy	Sacred Heart	G	6-0	170	Fr	Middletown, CT/Xavier
Devin Sweetney	Saint Francis (PA)	G/F	6-6	180	Fr	Washington, D.C./Riverdale Baptist
Jaytornah Wisseh	Long Island	G	6-1	180	Fr	Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy
Jhamar Youngblood	Monmouth	G	6-1	190	Fr	Newark, NJ/St. Patrick's