

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release

March 5, 2008

Robert Morris' Tony Lee Chosen NEC Men's Basketball Player of the Year

CCSU's Shemik Thompson Selected NEC Rookie of the Year

CCSU's Tristan Blackwood Voted NEC Defensive Player of the Year

Robert Morris' Mike Rice Wins Jim Phelan Coach of the Year Honors

Somerset, NJ -- Robert Morris senior guard **Tony Lee (Boston, MA/Charlestown)** was named the 2007-08 Northeast Conference men's basketball Player of the Year in a vote conducted by league head coaches. Central Connecticut State freshman guard **Shemik Thompson (Milton, DE/Cape Henlopen)** was named NEC Rookie of the Year, while Central Connecticut State junior guard **Tristan Blackwood (Toronto, Ontario/Eastern Commerce)** was voted NEC Defensive Player of the Year for the second straight season. The Jim Phelan Coach of the Year award goes to first year Robert Morris head coach **Mike Rice**. The honorees were announced on the eve of the 2008 NEC Men's Basketball Tournament, which begins on Thursday with quarterfinal play at four campus sites.

Lee's inclusion among the pantheon of Robert Morris greats who have won NEC Player of the Year honors - Chipper Harris in 1983-84, Vaughn Luton in 1988-89 and Myron Walker in 1991-92 - is well deserved. Destined to go down as one of the top all-around players in league history, Lee served as the undisputed leader and driving force behind the Colonials' run to their first NEC regular season title since 1991-92 and the accompanying automatic bid to the Postseason NIT. He leads the league with 6.4 apg and 2.8 spg, and ranks fifth nationally in steals and 10th in assists. Inch-for-inch one of the best rebounders in the country, the 6'0" Lee ranks third in the NEC with 6.9 rpg, while also contributing 13.8 ppg. The two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week from Boston, MA became one of six players in NCAA history to post back-to-back triple-doubles, a feat he accomplished against Long Island on February 9th (13/10/11) and CCSU on February 14th (12/10/10). With career marks of 1,454 points, 741 rebounds, 467 assists and 268 steals, Lee is the only player in NEC annals to reach 1,000 points, 500 rebounds 250 assists and 250 steals in his career. His 741 career caroms are 11 shy of breaking the school record of 751 held by Anthony Dickens and rank 23rd on the NEC career chart. Lee's 199 assists in 2007-08 are also five shy of the Robert Morris single season record of 204 established by Wade Timmerman in 1991-92. He was just recently named to the NABC All-District Three second team on Tuesday.

Thompson heads a terrific crop of rookie performers this season in the NEC. A steady contributor from the outset who started 27 games on the year, Thompson's game began to blossom in mid-January. He earned three *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week nods over the final seven weeks of the season to finish the year tied with teammate Ken Horton for most in the conference. A proficient mid-range shooter and pinpoint passer, Thompson is averaging 8.8 ppg, 3.5 rpg and ranks third among NEC freshman with 3.2 apg. Over the last 11 games of the year, he averaged 12.6 ppg, 3.5 apg and shot 55.4 percent from the floor. In the best game of his young career, the Milton, DE product finished with 21 points, six rebounds and three steals in the Blue Devils' 73-60 win over Fairleigh Dickinson on February 21.

Blackwood becomes the second two-time winner of the NEC Defensive Player of the Year award, joining the Mount's Mychal Kearsse, with whom he shared the award last season. An outstanding perimeter defender, Blackwood has anchored a CCSU defense that ranks third in the conference in points allowed (67.9 ppg) and has held 15 opponents to under 65 points on the year. Individually, he ranks first on the Blue Devils and 15th in the league with 1.2 steals per outing.

(2007-08 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

In his first year as head coach at Robert Morris, Rice took over an experienced unit that had experienced some success in recent years and immediately catapulted the program to the next level. The Colonials finished the regular season with a school-record 25 victories, tied for second most in league history, and the most ever by a first year NEC head coach. In leading the program to the NEC regular season title and the #1 seed in the NEC Tournament with a 16-2 conference mark, the Colonials have reeled off 13 straight wins, the third longest streak in the nation heading into the postseason. The 16 league victories and .889 winning percentage tied for the third-best marks in NEC annals. Robert Morris, which is ranked 12th in the CollegeInsider.com Mid-Major poll, has posted a remarkable 14-2 road record, including ten straight victories to close out the year and a perfect 9-0 mark against NEC competition. One of those road wins, a 57-51 conquest of Boston College on January 7th, was a watershed moment in Colonial basketball history. Rice joins Monmouth's Wayne Szoke (1987-88) as the only first-year head coaches in conference history to be voted NEC Coach of the Year.

Three of the five players comprising the all-NEC first team were all-stars a year ago, led by Central Connecticut State senior guard **Tristan Blackwood (Toronto, Ontario/Eastern Commerce)**, the only repeat first team honoree. Lee and Quinnipiac senior guard **DeMario Anderson (Oxon Hill, MD/Oxon Hill (Globe Institute, CCSU))** were second team award winners last season, while Wagner senior forward **Durell Vinson (Vineland, NJ/St. Augustine Prep)** was tabbed to the second team in 2005-06. Vinson's teammate, senior guard **Mark Porter (Atlantic City, NJ/St. Augustine Prep)**, rounds out the first team.

One of the most prolific scorers to compete in the NEC in recent years, Anderson presents the complete offensive package: the ability to shake defenders in the halfcourt, finish on the break, play above the rim, create mid-range shot opportunities and shoot with accuracy from three-point territory. The NEC's leading scorer at 21.7 ppg, Anderson is the nation's 15th-ranked point producer. He has compiled an NEC-best 19 games of 20+ points on the year, has scored in double figures in 47 straight games dating back to last season and is the leading active scorer in the league with 1,633 points. Anderson was named *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week a league-high three times, including the final week of the regular season after his halfcourt heave at the buzzer gave the Bobcats a 76-73 overtime win over Central Connecticut State and generated national attention when the clip was featured on ESPN. In addition to his scoring ability, Anderson also ranks sixth in the NEC with 6.9 rpg and is an 80.6 percent shooter from the line.

The lone experienced performer on a youthful Central Connecticut State team, Blackwood has used his court savvy and proficient three-point shooting ability to help transform the Blue Devils from a team loaded with potential into a contender in a short period of time. A two-time first team all-NEC honoree, Blackwood leads the NEC and ranks 13th nationally with 3.6 trifectas per game. He is also fourth in the conference in scoring (16.4 ppg), second in free throw percentage (.859) and fifth in assists (5.3 apg). Blackwood became the NEC's all-time three-point shooting king this season and has drained 326 treys in his career. With 103 three-pointers in 2007-08 and an NEC record 122 a year ago, the Toronto, Ontario product joins former LIU guard Charles Jones as the only players in conference annals to knock down 100 treys twice in their careers. Blackwood also ranks second among active NEC players with 1,590 career points and is one of six players in league history with career totals of 1,500 points and 500 assists (504).

Porter began his career in 2004-05 by putting the Seahawks on his shoulders in an improbable run to the NEC title game after starting the year 2-15. Three years later he hopes to close out a terrific career that includes a legacy of clutch performances by leading #2 seeded Wagner to its first conference championship since 2003. A point guard with a scorer's mentality, Porter ranks fifth in the NEC in scoring (16.2 ppg), third in assists (5.6 apg) and fifth in steals (1.9 spg) this season. He is one of just two players in NEC history to compile 500 rebounds and 500 assists and one of six with 1,500 points and 500 assists. Porter, an Atlantic City, NJ native, enters the postseason third among active NEC players and 10th in Wagner history with 1,543 points, to go along with 513 rebounds and 512 assists. He was a two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week in 2007-08.

Vinson's return after sitting out the 2006-07 season provided Wagner with a dominant interior force and served as the impetus for the Seahawks' ascension up the NEC standings. One of the few players with the ability to change the course of a game through his work on the glass, Vinson currently ranks first in the conference and fourth nationally with 11.3 rpg. He also paces the league with 13 double-doubles on the year to boost his career total to 27, the most among current NEC players. Named *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week on two occasions, Vinson averages 13.7 ppg and is third in the conference in field goal shooting at 55.6 percent. The Vineland, NJ native has moved up to tenth on the NEC career chart with 864 rebounds and is one of three Wagner players to reach the 1,000-point milestone with 1,121 career points.

The all-NEC second team features four first-time honorees, while Robert Morris senior forward **A.J. Jackson (Monessen, PA/Monessen (East Tennessee St.))** adds to his stockpile of awards. Jackson is flanked by teammate **Jeremy Chappell (Cincinnati, OH/Northwest)**, a junior guard, along with Sacred Heart senior guard **Drew Shubik (Stoystown, PA/North Star)**, Fairleigh Dickinson senior guard **Manny Ubilla (Freehold, NJ/Freehold (Lackawanna CC))** and Long Island sophomore guard **Jaytornah Wisseh (Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy)**.

Jackson has been one of the key figures in the Colonials' upswing in recent years and claims an all-NEC spot for the third time in his career. A first team pick as a sophomore, followed by second team honors in each of the last two seasons, Jackson's versatility on the offensive end of the floor is what sets him apart from his peers. At 6'6" and 240 lbs., he is not just a force in the paint, but also a threat from the outside where he has drilled 42 three-pointers at a 40.0 percent conversion rate. Jackson, who hails from Monessen, PA, is tenth in the NEC in scoring (14.2 ppg) and 13th in rebounding (5.7 rpg). His 25 career double-doubles ranks him second among active league players, while his 1,388 career points places him fifth.

Chappell is a former NEC Rookie of the Year who has blossomed into one of the top offensive talents in the league. The Cincinnati, OH native not only can fire from downtown - he hit 57 three-pointers during the regular season - but also sports a refined mid-range game and has earned a reputation as a crunch-time shooter. Chappell ranks among league leaders in a host of categories, including scoring (15.0 ppg, ninth), field goal percentage (.513, tenth), steals (2.6 spg, second) and made three-pointers (2.0 per game, ninth). He is tenth nationally in steals and with 1,248 points, is the only junior in the conference who has reached the 1,000-point plateau for his career.

Shubik has been the consummate team leader on a veteran Sacred Heart squad that has designs on its first NEC crown. Excelling in all facets of the game, Shubik is not only the second-leading scorer (10.7 ppg) on a balanced Pioneer attack, but he also leads the Pioneers with 5.6 rpg and ranks third in the NEC in steals (2.3 spg), fourth in assists (5.5 apg) and sixth in assist-to-turnover ratio (1.51:1). The Stoystown, PA native has made tremendous strides in his game over the last four years and nearly posted his first triple-double on February 23rd when he finished with 10 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists in an 88-74 win at Quinnipiac. Shubik is just 12 points shy of reaching 1,000 for his career.

A silky smooth scorer with unlimited range on his shot, Ubilla made the leap from role player to franchise player for the Knights this season. He finished his senior year ranked second in the NEC in scoring at 20.8 ppg, including a 39-point explosion at Rhode Island in early January that set a Ryan Center record and was the top single-game effort by a conference player this season. Ubilla was lights out from three-point range in 2007-08, ranking second on the circuit with 3.3 trifectas per game and a 42.9 percent success rate from outside the arc. He is also ranked nationally in scoring (27th), made three-pointers (21st) and three-point percentage (28th). Ubilla, a Freehold, NJ product who tallied 939 points in his two years with the Knights, concluded his career in spectacular fashion on March 1st as his three-pointer at the buzzer gave Fairleigh Dickinson a 72-70 overtime win over Saint Francis (PA) and head coach Tom Green his 400th career victory.

After earning NEC all-Rookie honors a year ago as a freshman, Wisseh came into his own for the Blackbirds, who improved their win total from 10 to 15 and finished the regular season with a winning record (15-14) for the first time since 1997-98. The only underclassmen to earn all-NEC recognition, the cat-quick Wisseh enters the postseason having scored in double-digits in 20 straight games to raise his season scoring average to 15.6 ppg, sixth in the NEC. With his ability to push the ball up the floor and find open teammates, the Brooklyn native also ranks sixth in the NEC with 5.1 apg.

A terrific freshman crop is led by Thompson, the NEC Rookie of the Year, who shares a spot on the all-Rookie squad with teammate **Ken Horton (Ossining, NY/Ossining)**, a lanky 6'6" forward. A three-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week, Horton is the NEC's top freshman scorer at 12.8 ppg. He also leads the conference with 2.1 bpg and ranks fourth in the league in field goal shooting at 54.9 percent. With a nose for the basket and a reliable outside shot, Horton became the first CCSU player to post at least five 20+ point games since Corsley Edwards in 1998-99. Quinnipiac guard **Evann Baker (Washington, D.C./Archbishop Carroll)** stepped right into a prominent role in his first year with the Bobcats. At 11.1 ppg, he ranks second on the club in scoring and is the second-leading freshman point producer in the NEC. With a terrific stroke, the two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week has hit 53.3 percent of his three-point attempts. Long Island sports a pair of backcourt honorees in **David Hicks (Mendota Heights, MN/St. Thomas Academy (S. Kent Prep (CT)))** and **Kyle Johnson (Ajax, Ontario/West Hill)**. Hicks was a steady performer for the Blackbirds, averaging 8.0 ppg, and 3.0 rpg. With an improving outside shot, he closed out the regular season with 34 three-pointers. Johnson provided instant offense off the bench for Long Island. The team's second leading scorer at 10.5 ppg, Johnson hit 56 shots from outside the arc and is an 87.5 percent free throw shooter. Both Hicks and Johnson claimed one *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week accolade.

2007-08 NEC Men's Basketball Award Winners

Player of the Year

Tony Lee	Robert Morris	G	6-0	205	Sr	Boston, MA/Charlestown
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Rookie of the Year

Shemik Thompson	Central Connecticut State	G	6-0	185	Fr	Milton, DE/Cape Henlopen
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Defensive Player of the Year

Tristan Blackwood	Central Connecticut State	G	6-0	175	Sr	Toronto, Ontario/Eastern Commerce
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Jim Phelan Coach of the Year

Mike Rice	Robert Morris
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2007-08 NEC Men's Basketball First Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
DeMario Anderson	Quinnipiac	G	6-4	205	Sr	Oxon Hill, MD/Oxon Hill (Globe Institute, CCSU)
Tristan Blackwood	Central Connecticut State	G	6-0	175	Sr	Toronto, Ontario/Eastern Commerce
Tony Lee	Robert Morris	G	6-0	205	Sr	Boston, MA/Charlestown
Mark Porter	Wagner	G	6-2	205	Sr	Atlantic City, NJ/St. Augustine Prep
Durell Vinson	Wagner	F	6-7	215	Sr	Vineland, NJ/St. Augustine Prep

2007-08 NEC Men's Basketball Second Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
Jeremy Chappell	Robert Morris	G	6-3	200	Jr	Cincinnati, OH/Northwest
A.J. Jackson	Robert Morris	F	6-6	240	Sr	Monessen, PA/Monessen (E. Tennessee St.)
Drew Shubik	Sacred Heart	G	6-4	205	Sr	Stoystown, PA/North Star
Manny Ubilla	Fairleigh Dickinson	G	6-2	185	Sr	Freehold, NJ/Freehold (Lackawanna CC)
Jaytornah Wisseh	Long Island	G	6-1	180	So	Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy

2007-08 NEC Men's Basketball All-Rookie Team

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School
Evann Baker	Quinnipiac	G	6-3	185	Fr	Washington, D.C./Archbishop Carroll (Maine Central Institute)
David Hicks	Long Island	G	6-1	195	Fr	Mendota Heights, MN/St. Thomas Academy (S. Kent Prep (CT))
Ken Horton	Central Connecticut State	F	6-6	185	Fr	Ossining, NY/Ossining
Kyle Johnson	Long Island	G	6-3	200	Fr	Ajax, Ontario/West Hill
Shemik Thompson	Central Connecticut State	G	6-0	185	Fr	Milton, DE/Cape Henlopen