

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release
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Quinnipiac's Graciano Brito Named NEC Men's Soccer Player of the Year
Central Connecticut State's David Tyrie Tabbed NEC Defensive Player of the Year
St. Francis (NY)'s John Sallhag Chosen NEC Rookie of the Year
Monmouth's Rob McCourt Earns Third Consecutive NEC Coach of the Year Honor
Sacred Heart Wins NEC Fair Play Award

Somerset, NJ -- Quinnipiac junior forward **Graciano Brito** (Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde/Liceu Ludgero Lima) was awarded NEC Men's Soccer Player of the Year honors in a vote by league head coaches. Central Connecticut State senior defender **David Tyrie** (Norwich-Norfolk, England/City Of Norwich) claimed NEC Defensive Player of the Year accolades, while St. Francis (NY) freshman forward **John Sallhag** (Vaxjo, Sweden/Katedralskolan) was chosen as NEC Rookie of the Year. Monmouth's **Rob McCourt** won his third straight NEC Coach of the Year accolade for the regular season champion Hawks. In addition, Sacred Heart was named the NEC's Fair Play Award recipient.

On the eve of the NEC Men's Soccer Tournament, the awards were announced at a banquet held on the campus of tourney host Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ on Thursday evening. In Friday's semifinals at the Great Lawn, top-seeded Monmouth entertains #4 seed Central Connecticut State at 11:00 am, followed by #2 seed Saint Francis (PA) meeting #3 seed Sacred Heart at 1:30 pm. The championship match is slated for Sunday, November 18 at 12:00 pm. The winner of the NEC championship will claim the league's automatic berth to the NCAA College Cup. First round NCAA action begins on November 23-24 at campus sites.

Brito becomes the second player in Quinnipiac history to walk away with NEC Player of the Year honors, joining Everson Maciel, who won the award in 2001. Brito's breakout season included a five-week stint as the leading goal scorer in the nation, along with a four-week run as the top point producer in the country. He currently ranks ninth nationally in goals per game and 11th in points per game. In leading Quinnipiac's stunning turnaround, Brito finished his year with an NEC-best four game-winning goals, and ranks second in the conference with 12 goals and 27 points. A three-time *Brine*/NEC Player of the Week, he recorded a pair of hat tricks in September against Army and Canisius. Brito, who hails from Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde, was the driving force behind the best season in Quinnipiac's Division I history after winning just one match in 2006. The Bobcats jumped out to the best start in NEC annals, going 9-0-1 over their first ten matches, while receiving votes for the first time in both the *College Soccer News* Top 30 National Poll and the NSCAA/*adidas* Top 25 National Poll. The Bobcats were also ranked first in the NSCAA North Atlantic regional rankings at one point in October and finished the year 9-3-5.

A three-time NEC all-star, Tyrie's strong play in the backfield helped spark CCSU's late season surge that earned the Blue Devils a spot in the NEC Tournament for the second time in the last three years. CCSU yielded a league-low six goals in conference play and just two markers in a 4-0-1 stretch over the final two weeks of the regular season. While helping protect the box in front of keeper Paul Armstrong, Tyrie also provided some offensive punch with a goal and an assist. A native of Norwich-Norfolk, England, Tyrie was tabbed to the all-NEC second team as a freshman, followed by consecutive first team honors in 2006 and 2007.

Sallhag wasted little time in becoming one of the most feared strikers on the circuit. The Vaxjo, Sweden product tallied nine goals, four assists and 22 points on the year to rank first among NEC freshman in all three categories. Overall, he stands third in the conference in points, fourth in goals and seventh in assists. A three-time *Brine*/NEC Rookie of the Week, Sallhag registered a hat trick in just his second career match, a 3-2 win at La Salle. He also erupted for five points with two goals and an assist against crosstown rival Long Island on October 20. Sallhag was the only NEC freshman to be voted all-conference, earning second team accolades. He is the fifth St. Francis (NY) player to be named NEC Rookie of the Year, joining Agard Radoncic (1998), Duncan Gladwin (1996), Ron Mitchell (1992) and Steve Mason (1991).

(2007 NEC Men's Soccer All-Conference Team Release; Page 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 four short years, McCourt has not only built Monmouth into an NEC power, but also a regional and national contender. Under his tutelage the Hawks have won three consecutive conference regular season championships and are the defending NEC Tournament champions. The Blue & White have posted a 20-2-5 record against league opposition over the last three years, including a 24-game unbeaten streak that was snapped last month. This season Monmouth knocked off perennial powerhouse North Carolina in its season opener and enjoyed a two-week stay in October atop the NSCAA North Atlantic region poll before settling into its current position at #3 in the rankings. McCourt is the second three-time NEC Coach of the Year award winner, joining ex-St. Francis (NY) coach Sam Carrington, who was recognized in 1991, 1998 and 1999.

In winning the NEC Fair Play Award, Sacred Heart ended the regular season as the least cautioned team in the conference and was not issued a single red card on the year. The sportsmanship-based award is determined by a vote of the league's head coaches.

Playoff bound Sacred Heart features a pair of first team selections on the defensive side of the ball in junior keeper **Matthew Jones (Stoke-on-Trent, England/Sandon)** and junior defender **David Backman (Gothenburg, Sweden/Aspero Idrotts Gymnasium)**. Jones, who was a second team all-NEC pick as a freshman in 2005, is tied for the league-lead with seven shutouts. He is also third in the conference in save percentage (.851) and fourth in goals against average (0.80). Backman has helped spearhead Sacred Heart's near impenetrable defense in recent weeks, as the Pioneers - who have won a school Division I record ten games this season - have allowed just four goals while posting a 5-1 mark over their last six league matches.

Robert Morris featured two veteran standouts on the first team. Senior forward **Jacek Przednowek (Brantford, Ontario/St. John's College (Drexel))** takes home his third all-conference honor after a stellar campaign that landed him atop the NEC rankings with 15 goals and 34 points. He has steadily climbed the national charts and currently sits second in the nation with 0.83 goals per game and fourth with 1.89 points per game. Przednowek, who was a first team all-star as a sophomore and second team honoree in each of the last two years, will graduate fourth on the school's all-time list with 38 goals and 87 points in just three seasons. In his final career game, the crafty forward netted the 14th fastest hat trick in NCAA history, taking just 16:20 from start to finish in a 3-3 deadlock with Mount St. Mary's. Przednowek's classmate, senior midfielder **Ryan Zabinski (New Cumberland, PA/Cedar Cliff)**, has become a familiar face on the first team with his third consecutive appearance. Zabinski enjoyed success as a tablesetter for a potent Colonial attack that ranked second in the NEC in goals. He scored twice and ranks fourth in the conference with five assists.

In addition to Sallhag, St. Francis (NY) featured dynamic senior midfielder **Semso Nikocecic (Brooklyn, NY/Kingsborough CC)**. Measuring just 5'5", Nikocecic was a creative force in the midfield this past season with four goals and an NEC-best six assists. He finished the season by scoring goals in three consecutive contests and is tied for ninth in the league with 14 points.

The NEC Rookie of the Year and a second team all-star in 2006, Fairleigh Dickinson sophomore forward **Samson Malijani (Lusaka, Zambia/La Sapienza)** elevated his game this past season, culminating in first team all-conference plaudits. Malijani ranks third in the NEC with 10 goals and 22 points on the year and is 28th nationally with 0.59 goals per game. He accounted for 10 of the Knights' 16 markers this season.

Saint Francis (PA) defender **Bryan Maguire (Glasgow, Scotland/Memorial)** directed one of the league's premier defensive units that posted seven shutouts on the year and allowed only seven goals in nine NEC matches. He added a pair of goals for the Red Flash, who will be heading into the postseason for the third time in four seasons and are 12-3-3 over the last two years against league rivals.

Monmouth senior **Michael Millar (Kearny, NJ/Kearny (Philadelphia U.))** made his presence felt in the midfield for the Hawks, who ended the regular season as the top-scoring team in the NEC. Millar ranks third on the club with three assists and also scored one goal.

Quinnipiac senior midfielder **Danilo Schiavon (Sao Paulo, Brazil/South Georgia CC)** formed a high-scoring tandem with fellow first-team recipient Brito. He concluded his year seventh in the NEC with six goals, and also ranks ninth with 15 points.

NEC regular season champion Monmouth placed three players on the all-NEC second team, while Saint Francis (PA) and Quinnipiac had two players recognized for their performances.

Monmouth senior forward **Tom Gray (Middletown, NJ/Middletown South)** will close out a prolific career as a three-time NEC all-star. A second team all-conference pick as a sophomore and first teamer a year ago, Gray is one of the league's finest at creating scoring opportunities for teammates. Chosen to the Hermann Trophy Watch List in the preseason, he is currently seventh in the NEC in assists (four), goals (six) and points (16). Anchoring the Monmouth backfield are a pair of stalwart defenders in junior **Angelo Amato (Livingston, NJ/Montclair Kimberly Academy)** and sophomore **Daniel Bostock (Nottinghamshire, England/Virginia Intermont)**. Due in part to their efforts, the Hawks permitted a league-low 13 goals during the regular season and shutout an NEC-high 10 opponents. Monmouth also ranks 13th nationally with 0.56 shutouts per game. Amato pitched in with a goal, while Bostock added a goal and an assist, including the game-winner in overtime that clinched the NEC regular season title for the Hawks with a 3-2 win over Saint Francis (PA) on November 4.

Saint Francis (PA) senior **Jarron Brooks (Mitchellville, MD/Archbishop Carroll)** is a rare four-time award winner, having been tabbed to the second team in each of his four seasons. Making the transition to midfielder after three years as a defender, Brooks tied for first on the Red Flash with four goals, three assists and 11 points. Senior defender **Bryce Luetzen (Denver, CO/Denver Lutheran)** was not only one of the ringleaders of a stingy Red Flash defense, but also contributed to the Red Flash attack with three assists.

Quinnipiac sophomore goalkeeper **Frederick Hall (St. George, Bermuda/South Florida)** was a dominant presence in between the pipes for the Bobcats this season. He shutout six opponents and currently paces the NEC in goals against average (0.64), save percentage (.915) and saves per game (7.4). Hall has ranked first nationally in save percentage and saves per game in each of the last four weeks, and sits 16th in the country in goals against average. Sophomore midfielder **Ross McGibney (Westport, CT/Staples)** was the third leading goal scorer (three) and point producer (eight) for the Bobcats this year.

Central Connecticut State junior forward **Yan Klukowski (Wiltshire, England/Sheldon)** has been an all-conference performer in each of his three seasons with the Blue Devils, including first team accolades in both 2005 and 2006. A former NEC Rookie of the Year, Klukowski sparked CCSU's playoff push by scoring at least one point in each game of the Blue Devils' five-match unbeaten streak to close out the regular season. He compiled three goals and ranks fourth in the NEC with five assists. His four assists in NEC play led the conference.

Mount St. Mary's junior midfielder **Vinnie Berry (Helensburgh, Scotland/St. Patrick's)** captained a young Mount team that featured 13 underclassmen. A repeat second team all-NEC pick, Berry registered one goal on the season.

Sacred Heart midfielder **Luke Gagliardi (North Branford, CT/North Branford)** rounds out the second team. Gagliardi heads into postseason play with one goal and one assist to his credit.

2007 NEC Men's Soccer Award Winners

Player of the Year

Graciano Brito	Quinnipiac	F	6-2	Jr.	Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde/Liceu Ludgero Lima
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Defensive Player of the Year

David Tyrie	Central Connecticut State	D	6-1	Jr.	Norwich-Norfolk, England/City Of Norwich
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Rookie of the Year

John Sallhag	St. Francis (NY)	F	5-9	Fr.	Vaxjo, Sweden/Katedralskolan
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Coach of the Year

Rob McCourt	Monmouth
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2007 NEC Men's Soccer First Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos.	Ht.	Yr	Hometown/High School
Graciano Brito	Quinnipiac	F	6-2	Jr.	Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde/Liceu Ludgero Lima
Samson Malijani	Fairleigh Dickinson	F	5-8	So.	Lusaka, Zambia/La Sapienza
Jacek Przednowek	Robert Morris	F	6-1	Sr.	Brantford, Ontario/St. John's College (Drexel)
Michael Millar	Monmouth	MF	6-0	Sr.	Kearny, NJ/Kearny (Philadelphia U.)
Semso Nikocecic	St. Francis (NY)	MF	5-5	Jr.	Brooklyn, NY/Kingsborough CC
Danilo Schiavon	Quinnipiac	MF	6-1	Sr.	Sao Paulo, Brazil/South Georgia CC
Ryan Zabinski	Robert Morris	MF	5-9	Sr.	New Cumberland, PA/Cedar Cliff
David Backman	Sacred Heart	D	6-3	Jr.	Gothenburg, Sweden/Aspero Idrotts Gymnasium
Bryan Maguire	Saint Francis (PA)	D	5-11	Sr.	Glasgow, Scotland/Memorial
David Tyrie	Central Connecticut State	D	6-1	Jr.	Norwich-Norfolk, England/City Of Norwich
Matthew Jones	Sacred Heart	GK	6-2	Jr.	Stoke-on-Trent, England/Sandon

2007 NEC Men's Soccer Second Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos.	Ht.	Yr	Hometown/High School
Tom Gray	Monmouth	F	5-8	Sr.	Middletown, NJ/Middletown South
Yan Klukowski	Central Connecticut State	F	6-1	Jr.	Wiltshire, England/Sheldon
John Sallhag	St. Francis (NY)	F	5-9	Fr.	Vaxjo, Sweden/Katedralskolan
Vinnie Berry	Mount St. Mary's	MF	5-9	Jr.	Helensburgh, Scotland/St. Patrick's
Jarron Brooks	Saint Francis (PA)	MF	5-9	Sr.	Mitchellville, MD/Archbishop Carroll
Luke Gagliardi	Sacred Heart	MF	6-0	Jr.	North Branford, CT/North Branford
Ross McGibney	Quinnipiac	MF	5-11	So.	Dublin, Ireland/Staples
Angelo Amato	Monmouth	D	6-0	Jr.	Livingston, NJ/Montclair Kimberly Academy
Daniel Bostock	Monmouth	D	6-3	So.	Nottinghamshire, England/Virginia Intermont
Bryce Luetzen	Saint Francis (PA)	D	5-11	Sr.	Denver, CO/Denver Lutheran
Frederick Hall	Quinnipiac	GK	6-2	So.	St. George, Bermuda/South Florida