

# Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release  
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**Long Island's Bianca Mejia Voted NEC Player of the Year**  
*Long Island's Blaire Porter Tabbed NEC Pitcher of the Year*  
*Quinnipiac's Alex Alba Chosen NEC Rookie of the Year*  
**Mount St. Mary's Liz Christiansen Selected Defensive Player of the Year**  
*Central Connecticut State's Sara Budrick Named Most Improved Player*  
**Long Island Picked as NEC Coaching Staff of the Year**

**Somerset, NJ** - With the 2010 NEC Championship set to begin in just over 12 hours, a number of student-athletes were honored at a pre-tournament banquet for their success on the field of play. A new NEC Player of the Year was selected in 2010, as Long Island's **Bianca Mejia (Sylmar, CA/El Camino Real)** came away with the accolade. In the circle, **Blaire Porter (Redmond, WA/Redmond)** earned her third-straight NEC Pitcher of the Year award, which marks the fifth year in a row that a Blackbird has won this category. Quinnipiac newcomer **Alex Alba (Sylmar, CA/Sylmar)** capped off a successful freshman campaign with NEC Rookie of the Year distinction. Mount St. Mary's sophomore **Liz Christiansen (Etters, PA/Red Land)** earned the inaugural Golden Glove Award for NEC Defensive Player of the Year, while Central Connecticut State's **Sara Budrick (Burbank, CA/Burbank Burroughs)** highlighted her career as the league's Most Improved Player, another award that made its debut in 2010. The NEC Coach of the Year award has also been altered, as it is now referred to as NEC Coaching Staff of the Year, which has been earned by Long Island. Previously, Head Coach **Roy Kortmann** earned the individual honor an unprecedented seven times, five of which came between 2000 and 2004. He now shares the recognition with **Bill Gehrke, Krystal Mejia Forbes** and **Jessie DePippo**. The group led their Blackbirds to a 34-16 overall record and 17-3 Conference record in 2010, one win more than 2009. The squad also leads the team leaderboards in 15 different statistical categories. Long Island has made an appearance in the postseason since softball joined the league in 1987, 11 times earning the Conference crown.

A member of the All-Conference First Team at the shortstop position, Mejia was a force at the plate batting a NEC-best .397 (60-for-151) while also belting at a .508 clip in Conference play. The junior also holds the league lead for slugging percentage (.722) and was familiar with the base paths as she owns the top numbers for on-base percentage (.486) and total bases (109). Part of Mejia's success on reaching base was not only her ability to hit, but her intimidation at the plate, where she drew 26 walks (1st in NEC). She scored the third-most runs (40), four behind the leader, after connecting with the most hits (60). One round-tripper off the pace, the Sylmar, CA native belted 10 homers to stand in a three-way tie for second in the Conference. An Akadema/NEC Player of the Week in April, Mejia also got it done between second and third with a .935 fielding percentage, recording 120 assists (T-2nd in NEC). This is her second First Team selection, as she was a member of the All-league team last year, and she becomes the fifth Blackbird to garner this major award.

Though her overall ERA (1.65) is only ranked third in the league, Porter registered a circuit-low 1.28 ERA through 13 appearances. She completed 10-of-11 Conference games through 82.0 innings while surrendering 61 overall walks through the 2010 regular season but fanned 145 batters (5th in NEC). She tops the leaderboard with 24 wins, 11 of which came in Conference action. The Redmond, WA native garnered three Akadema/NEC Pitcher of the Week honors and earns her fourth All-NEC honor, third on the First Team. She finished with the most shutouts overall (6) as well as the most during Conference play (4).

Alba, a utility player for QU, having appeared on the mound, at the plate and in the shortstop slot, brings the NEC Rookie of the Year trophy back to Hamden for the third time ever and second time in as many years. Her versatility propelled the Bobcats into the postseason for the fifth time, and first since 2007. Most recently, Alba garnered a double weekly honor as the Akadema/NEC Player and Rookie of the Week. She posted a 5-for-7 hitting mark with six RBIs in the contingent's doubleheader against Fairleigh Dickinson to garner those selections. Her .329 average and 46 hits lead the team heading into postseason play, while she also recorded a .422 average and 27 hits in league games, both

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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

good for fourth in the NEC. The Sylmar, CA native stole eight bases on 11 attempts throughout the season, and nearly all of her statistics surpass those of the other first-years on the circuit. To begin her career, Alba finds a position on the All-NEC Second Team.

In its first year as a major award, NEC Defensive Player of the Year is presented to Christiansen for her steady glove that recorded a .994 fielding percentage overall, complemented by a flawless 1.000 fielding mark in league matches. She is fifth on the circuit for overall putouts (337) and stands in a tie for third after fielding nine double plays on the year. Not only was the sophomore strong on the diamond, she also excelled in the batter's box. Her most notable accomplishment in 2010 came on Mar. 28 against the Blue Devils where she rounded 14 bags and belted three home runs, both game highs in the Conference. Her .669 slugging percentage ranks second in the league, while her 50 RBIs tally the most of any other NEC foe. Another league-best mark from the Etters, PA native is homers, of which she recorded 11. Along with her Golden Glove recognition, she found her way onto the First Team of All-leaguers.

Another new category this year is the Most Improved Player, fittingly earned by a senior, Budrick, after a drastic jump from 2009 into 2010. Her batting average skyrocketed from a .134 (last in NEC) to a .331 (top-15 in NEC). She scored 28 more runs this year and had 31 more hits. In 2009, Budrick never connected for a homer but notched eight this past season (T-3rd in NEC). Her 2009 on-base percentage (.162) slumps in comparison to her .443 this season, which is good for third on the loop. The Burbank, CA native also improved as a first baseman, recording a NEC-best 410 putouts (165 in 2009) on 443 chances (1st in NEC). She also was hit by 15 pitches, No. 1 in the Conference. Budrick earned a place on the All-Conference First Team - her first All-NEC selection - to cap a much-improved career.

Also enjoying spots on the First Team are two more from Brooklyn in the form of **Mariesha Marker (Keizer, OR/McNary)** and **Chelsea Martinson (Agoura Hills, CA/Agoura)**. Marker is now a two-time honoree from behind the plate, while Martinson is getting her first taste of postseason recognition in the outfield. The catcher made the most of her league-high 188 plate appearances with 59 hits (2nd in NEC) totaling 98 bases (3rd in NEC), three triples (T-2nd in NEC), 15 doubles (4th in NEC), 42 runs scored (2nd in NEC) and a third-best .369 batting average. Her .458 average in league play is the best behind Mejia as is her 49 total bases. Defensively, the Keizer, OR native caught 14 base runners stealing on 22 attempts. Martinson wreaked havoc on the bases as she stole a perfect 5-for-5 bases against league opponents and reached safely on all 11 attempts throughout the season, which makes her the only Northeast Conference softball player to attempt that many steals without being tagged out once.

**Amanda Buckel (Finksburg, MD/North Carroll)** joins Christiansen on the First Team from the third-base line. Buckel notched a .310 average, balanced by a .431 slugging clip in the NEC. She tallied a home run and 25 total bases. Her 43 total hits are good for the second-most for MSM as are her 68 assists. This is the senior's first selection to the honor roll, and though the Mount did not qualify for the Conference Championship, 2010 is the first year it's had any All-NEC members since the 2007 season. Representing another team that was unable to advance to postseason play, **Becca Mussatti (Valley Center, CA/Palomar)** is the only Blue Devil awarded with First Team honors. She notched a team-high 58 hits (3rd in NEC) and 44 runs, which was enough for the league lead. The outfielder finished fourth for 16 stolen base attempts, 12 of which were successful.

After being recognized as the 2009 NEC Rookie of the Year, **Heather Schwartzburg (Mission Viejo, CA/Capistrano Valley)** returns to the All-NEC list of honorees and nabs a spot on the First Team. This season she tallied three Akademia/NEC Pitcher of the Week selections, two of which came in back-to-back weeks and the third surfaced in the most recent installment. Without missing a beat from 2009, the right-handed hurler finished atop the league leaderboard with a 1.33 ERA and held batters to the lowest clip of .178. She also struck out the most batters (246), 69 of which went down looking (1st in NEC). The sophomore tallied the second-most wins (20) but also topped the standings in four other categories: saves (4), appearances (39), games finished (16) and games in relief (17), all in 194.1 innings of work. The Mission Viejo native is the first QU player to record 20 wins in a season since 1995 and is one win away from matching the school record (21) set that same year.

As the No. 2 seed entering tomorrow's event, Monmouth finds two familiar First Teamers on the list of 12. Senior **Alexa Ferrara (West Caldwell, NJ/James Caldwell)** and junior **Emily deLong (Rothschild, WI/DC Everest)** made it two years in a row. Ferrara's efforts in the middle infield are highlighted by a .975 fielding percentage and 90 putouts. She notched a .362 batting average, a top-10 mark in the league, and helped the Hawks to a sweep over top-seeded LIU on Apr. 10. Her RBIs (31) are tied for the team lead, and the second baseman has the second-most doubles on the team (12). deLong was one of 15 players to bat over .330 for the season. She ranks second overall with three triples and fourth overall with 38 runs scored. On the squad, the outfielder leads in hits (49), triples (3) and stolen bases (12). Her success around the bases earned a tie for third in the league.

Rounding out the First Team, representing Robert Morris, are **Annie Dubovec (Chagrin Falls, OH/Kenston)** and **Megan Picinic (Cliffside, NJ/Immaculate Heart)**. Dubovec ranked sixth in the Conference and first among Colonials with a .358 batting clip while ranking seventh in hits (49). As a designated player, the junior also compiled eight wins in the circle on 27 appearances. She returns to the All-league list after earning a spot on the Second Team in 2008. Picinic ranked second in the NEC in fielding percentage (.966) and batted

.405 in 15 starts during Conference games. Her spot comes in the utility position as she saw action at both first and second base.

Two more Blackbirds came away with All-NEC honors in the form of senior **Brynn Lewis (Woodinville, WA/Woodinville)** and sophomore **Sterling Hoham (Norco, CA/Riverside Christian)** who are both members of the Second Team. Lewis, a second baseman who is a two-time Second Teamer, hit at an even .300 clip with five homers and 29 RBIs to account for 74 total bases. The Norco, CA native earns her place in the third baseman position after 105 total assists defensively and five safe steal attempts on the year.

**Heather Maffeo (Milton, MA/Milton)** joins teammate Alba on the Second Team for the Bobcats after recording a .385 batting average against Conference competition, slugging .538. She performed defensively as well with a .923 NEC fielding percentage. One of two Pioneers to earn her way onto the list of All-leaguers is **Jen Russell (Seymour, CT/St. Joseph's)**, representing Sacred Heart on the Second Team. The pitcher garnered Second Team honors in 2008 and First Team honors last season, as well as the Tournament MVP accolade after her team upset LIU, bringing the NEC title to Fairfield for the first time ever. This past season, Russell ranked fourth among her foes on the mound, tallying a 1.86 ERA and held all her opponents to a .227 batting average. She struck out 147, with 50 of them looking (3rd in NEC). The Seymour, CT native only allowed four round-trippers all season, which ranks third in the Conference. Classmate **Taylor Froelich (Garden Grove, CA/Pacifica)** makes her way as an honoree for SHU in the outfield with five home runs, a .327 batting clip and 3-of-5 stolen bases. She started all 18 Conference games for the Pioneers.

Along with Budrick, **Katherine Knowles (Woodline, WA/Bishop Blanchet)** earns a Second Team accolade at catcher. With a .982 fielding percentage and a perfect 1.000 in NEC play, the junior caught 11 players stealing. She also batted the best on her team (.378) and notched the highest slugging percentage (.650) with 18 doubles (1st in NEC). The sole Hawk taking Second Team honors is **Melissa Mehrer (Florence, NJ/Florence Township)**. The right hander posted a perfect 9-0 record in league action, yielding just 26 earned runs in more than 68 innings of work. She also recorded the fourth most wins on the NEC overall standings with 16.

Two more non-postseason players make up part of the Second Team as Mount St. Mary's shortstop **Taylor Beebe (Olympia, WA/Capital)** earned a spot for the first time since joining the squad in Emmitsburg. She is second on the team hitting .360 in 111 at bats. The sophomore also fielded .952. Along with Beebe, **Rachel Rugani (McKees Rocks, PA/Montour)** represents Saint Francis (PA) on the Second Team. The designated player improved her batting average during Conference play, making a jump from .310 to .421. She did, however, swing for four homers in non-conference play while fielding seamlessly (1.000).

One final Colonial fills out the list of All-league representatives in **Jaci Timko (Houston, PA/Chartiers-Houston)**, who scored 37 runs (5th in NEC) after 51 hits. She stole six bags and putout 39 base runners. Timko's .352 batting average ranks second on the team close behind Dubovec as she is inked on the Second Team.

## 2010 NEC Softball Award Winners

### Player of the Year

Bianca Mejia                      Long Island                      SS                      Jr.                      Sylmar, CA/El Camino Real

### Pitcher of the Year

Blaire Porter                      Long Island                      RHP                      Sr.                      Redmond, WA/Redmond

### Rookie of the Year

Alex Alba                      Quinnipiac                      UT                      Fr.                      Sylmar, CA/Sylmar

### Defensive Player of the Year

Liz Christiansen                      Mount St. Mary's                      1B                      So.                      Etters, PA/Red Land

### Most Improved Player

Sara Budrick                      Central Conn. St.                      1B                      Sr.                      Burbank, CA/Burbank Burroughs

### Coaching Staff of the Year

Long Island

## 2010 NEC Softball All-Conference First Team

<u>Name</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Pos</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>Hometown/High School</u>
Blaire Porter	Long Island	P	Sr.	Redmond, WA/Redmond
Heather Schwartzburg	Quinnipiac	P	So.	Mission Viejo, CA/Capistrano Valley
Mariesha Marker	Long Island	C	Sr.	Keizer, OR/McNary
Liz Christiansen	Mount St. Mary's	1B	So.	Etters, PA/Red Land
Alexa Ferrara	Monmouth	2B	Sr.	West Caldwell, NJ/James Caldwell
Amanda Buckel	Mount St. Mary's	3B	Sr.	Finksburg, MD/North Carroll
Bianca Mejia	Long Island	SS	Jr.	Sylmar, CA/El Camino Real
Becca Mussatti	Central Conn. St.	OF	So.	Valley Center, CA/Palomar
Chelsea Martinson	Long Island	OF	Sr.	Agoura Hills, CA/Agoura
Emily deLong	Monmouth	OF	Jr.	Rothschild, WI/DC Everest
Annie Dubovec	Robert Morris	DP	Jr.	Chagrin Falls, OH/Kenston
Megan Picinic	Robert Morris	UT	Sr.	Cliffside, NJ/Immaculate Heart

## 2010 NEC Softball All-Conference Second Team

<u>Name</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Pos</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>Hometown/High School</u>
Melissa Mehrer	Monmouth	P	Jr.	Florence, NJ/Florence Township
Jen Russell	Sacred Heart	P	Jr.	Seymour, CT/St. Joseph's
Katherine Knowles	Central Conn. St.	C	Jr.	Woodline, WA/Bishop Blanchet
Sara Budrick	Central Conn. St.	1B	Sr.	Burbank, CA/Burbank Burroughs
Brynn Lewis	Long Island	2B	Sr.	Woodinville, WA/Woodinville
Sterling Hoham	Long Island	3B	So.	Norco, CA/Riverside Christian
Taylor Beebe	Mount St. Mary's	SS	So.	Olympia, WA/Capital
Heather Maffeo	Quinnipiac	OF	Sr.	Milton, MA/Milton
Jaci Timko	Robert Morris	OF	So.	Houston, PA/Chartiers-Houston
Taylor Froelich	Sacred Heart	OF	Jr.	Garden Grove, CA/Pacifica
Raquel Rugani	Saint Francis (PA)	DP	Jr.	McKees Rocks, PA/Montour
Alex Alba	Quinnipiac	UT	Fr.	Sylmar, CA/Sylmar