

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release

March 4, 2004

St. Francis (PA)'s Beth Swink Voted NEC Women's Basketball Player of the Year

Sacred Heart's Amanda Pape Selected NEC Rookie of the Year

St. Francis (PA)'s Tonjee Ward Named NEC Defensive Player of the Year

Ed Swanson of Sacred Heart Tabbed Brenda Reilly NEC Coach of the Year

Somerset, NJ -- St. Francis (PA) junior center **Beth Swink (Connellsville, PA/Connellsville)** was voted by league head coaches as the 2003-04 Northeast Conference Women's Basketball Player of the Year. Sacred Heart freshman guard **Amanda Pape (Stamford, CT/Trinity Catholic)** earned NEC Rookie of the Year honors, while St. Francis (PA)'s junior guard **Tonjee Ward (Creedmoor, NC/Port Jervis (NJ))** snagged NEC Defensive Player of the Year accolades for the second-straight season. Sacred Heart's **Ed Swanson** was selected as NEC Coach of the Year. The NEC Women's Tournament will commence on Friday, March 5 with the quarterfinal round at host Wagner College in Staten Island, NY.

In addition to her first-team all-NEC selection, Swink earns her first NEC Player of the Year award after guiding the Red Flash to an 18-0 NEC regular season. The junior leads the league in scoring with a 21.4 average and also ranks second in the conference in both rebounding (10.0 rpg) and field-goal percentage (59.7%). The 2002 NEC Rookie of the Year has scored in double-figures in 26 of 27 games this season, including 20 games of 20 points or more. She netted a season-high 30 points against Fairleigh Dickinson on February 23, and has hauled in 14 double-doubles in 2003-04. A consistent performer the entire year, Swink was a six-time Choice Hotels NEC Player of the Week honoree. The St. Francis (PA) force in the middle, who enters the tournament with 1,352 career points and 716 career rebounds, becomes the first Red Flash player since Jess Zinoble in 2000 to be named NEC Player of the Year.

Pape, a seven-time NEC Rookie of the Week winner, did not play like a freshman this season, posting veteran-like numbers for Sacred Heart. The Stamford, CT native, who follows teammate Nicolle Rubino as the league's top rookie, ranks seventh in the conference in scoring (15.0 ppg), 10th in rebounding (6.2 rpg), eighth in field-goal percentage (49.6%) and second in steals (2.48 spg). On a roll as the Pioneers enter the NEC tournament, Pape has scored in double-figures in eight-straight games. She also impressed the NEC's coaches enough to earn all-NEC second-team.

Ward continues her reign as the NEC Defensive Player of the Year after leading the conference with 2.65 steals per game. The competitiveness of one of the smoothest offensive and defensive players in the league is a major part of St. Francis (PA)'s success. The Creedmoor, NC product played a major role in the Red Flash allowing just 62.0 ppg, second in the conference.

Swanson receives his first Brenda Reilly NEC Coach of the Year award by pushing Sacred Heart to its best NEC record (14-4) and highest seed (No. 2) since the school joined the league and Division I in 1999. Sacred Heart's 20-7 overall record also matches the school's best mark, which was established in 1995-96 under Swanson's guidance. Earlier this season, the Sacred Heart alum, who has coached the Pioneer women since 1990, won his 200th career game, and enters the tournament with a 211-175 (.549) record over 14 years.

(2003-04 NEC Women's Basketball All-Conference Release; 1-of-4)

Central Connecticut State University • Fairleigh Dickinson University • Long Island University
Monmouth University • Mount St. Mary's College • Quinnipiac University
Robert Morris University • Sacred Heart University • St. Francis (NY) College
St. Francis (PA) University • Wagner College

The all-conference first team would be a nice starting five for any all-star team, including two center/forwards and three guards. Joining Swink on the squad are senior center/forward and 2003 NEC Player of the Year **Ashlee Kelly (Pittsburgh, PA/Mount Lebanon)** of Quinnipiac, and senior guards **Tonjee Ward (Creedmoor, NJ/Port Jervis (NJ))**, **Natallia Marchanka (Rechitsa, Belarus)** of Fairleigh Dickinson and **Myriam Baccouche (Fairfax, VA/Robinson)** of Mount St. Mary's.

In addition to her defensive accolade, the lightening-quick Ward was also selected to first-team All-NEC for the first time in her career by pouring in the league's sixth-best scoring average (15.3 ppg) to go along with 2.7 assists per contest and a 45.0% shooting percentage. In her four years on the team, St. Francis (PA)'s record is an impressive 73-43.

Kelly earns her third all-conference nod after being named to the first-team last year and second team in 2001. The senior, who was a two-time NEC Player of the Week this season, leads all players in the NEC again with 20 double-doubles. The Pittsburgh, PA native, who is one of the most imposing inside forces in league history, ranks third in the NEC in scoring (17.8 ppg), and for the second-straight season is the conference leader in rebounding (12.5 rpg). Kelly became only the ninth player in NEC history to grab 1,000 career boards and now has 1,053 to lead all active players in the conference. She is also the second leading active scorer with 1,522 career points. Kelly is one of only eight NEC stars to reach 1,000 and 1,000 over the course of their careers. The last to do so before her was Jinea Butler of Long Island in 1997.

One of the top scorers and all-around talents in the league is Marchanka. The senior, who paced the NEC in scoring last season, is the league's fourth-leading scorer this year (16.6 ppg). The Rechitsa, Belarus native was a second-team honoree a year ago after earning first-team honors as a sophomore and all-rookie team accolades as a freshman. Marchanka enters tourney play with 1,652 career points, placing her atop all active players and eighth all-time in NEC annals. The guard has hit 72 three-pointers in 2003-04, placing her third in the NEC. Along with her scoring exploits, she has collected 5.7 assists and 2.41 steals per contest, ranking second and fourth, respectively, among league leaders.

Rounding out the conference's first team is the Mount's Baccouche. The senior trails only Swink on the NEC's scoring chart at 18.0 points per contest and has posted double-figures in 22 of 27 games this season while tying the conference's single-game high with 36 points at Radford to open the season on November 21. The long-range shooter ranks second in three-pointers made (79) and eighth in free-throw percentage (72.2%). A capable defender, Baccouche has tallied 40 steals on the season, an average of 1.5 per outing.

Joining Pape on the all-NEC second team are Monmouth senior center **Jewonda Bright (Norfolk, VA/Norview)** and sophomore guard **Niamh Dwyer (Thurles, Ireland)**, Wagner senior forward **Carrie Walker (Gibsonia, PA/Pine-Richland)** and Quinnipiac senior forward **Sara Esidore (Portland, CT/Portland)**.

Bright is recognized for the first time in her career after putting together a strong senior campaign. The 6-2 center ranks 12th in the NEC in scoring (11.9 ppg) and fourth in rebounding (7.7 rpg), field-goal percentage (56.4%) and blocked shots (0.96 bpg). Bright is tied for the NEC single-game high this season with 36 points, set just eight days ago in a terrific all-around effort against Sacred Heart. She also added a season-high 15 rebounds in the contest.

Bright's teammate and McKendree College transfer Dwyer is one of the outstanding newcomers in the NEC this season. The sophomore leads the Hawks and ranks ninth in the NEC in scoring (14.3 ppg) and fifth in three-pointers made (57). A capable ballhandler and distributor, the native of Ireland averages 3.0 assists per contest, good for 12th in the NEC. Playing nearly 37 minutes per games this season, Dwyer has reached double-figures in scoring 19 times, including five 20-point games and a career-high of 27 points versus Quinnipiac on February 7.

Walker takes home NEC second-team honors despite missing 11 games during Wagner's 27-game slate, due to a broken thumb suffered in a practice after the Seahawks' game versus Mount St. Mary's on January 15. The third-team Verizon Academic All-American was an all-NEC first-team member last year and the 2001 NEC Rookie of the Year. When the power forward did play, she averaged 16.9 points and 10.4 rebounds, one of three NEC players to average a double-double on the season. Impressively for the low-post player, she hit a career-high 17 three-pointers on the season and earned NEC Player of the Week in December.

Another newcomer to postseason honors is Quinnipiac's Esidore. The senior, who is a perfect complement to teammate Kelly, averages 14.5 points per contest and is shooting 43.7% from the field, including 40.0% from three-point range. Her 46 trifectas during the year ranks eighth in the league. Entering the NEC playoffs, the Portland, CT product has recorded double-figure points in nine straight games, including a season-high 31 against No. 1 seed St. Francis (PA) on Valentine's Day. She once was named NEC Player of the Week.

The 2003-04 All-NEC Rookie Team is made up of a center, a forward and three guards. Joining Pape on the squad are Long Island freshmen guard **Kelli Sawyer (Philadelphia, PA/Friends Select)**, Quinnipiac freshman guard **Krystal Pressley (New Haven, CT/Career)**, Central Connecticut State freshman forward **Gabriella Guegbelet (Central Africa/Laurinburg Institute)** and Robert Morris freshman center **Sarah Bradley (Hasting, PA/Bishop Carroll)**.

Sawyer, a two-time NEC Rookie of the Week, ranks second on LIU in scoring at 10.9 points per contest. She also leads all freshman and ranks fifth in the NEC in assists (4.11 apg). Pressley, a three-time Rookie of the Week winner, is the Bobcats' third-leading scorer behind Kelly and Esidore at 9.6 per game. The freshman posted a season-high 28 points in a win over Long Island on February 4.

Guegbelet was a consistent low-post player for the Blue Devils. The newcomer finished the season averaging 10.4 points and a freshman-best 9.9 rebounds, which stood third in the conference listings. Her 12 double-doubles were also a freshman high and third overall. Bradley averaged 7.4 points and 3.9 rebounds for the Colonials, and shot 41.9% from the field for the season. She registered double-figure points in 12 of her last 14 games.

2003-04 NEC Women's Basketball Award Winners

Player of the Year

Beth Swink	St. Francis (PA)	C	6-2	Sr	Connellsville, PA/Connellsville
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Rookie of the Year

Amanda Pape	Sacred Heart	G	5-8	Fr	Stamford, CT/Trinity Catholic
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Defensive Player of the Year

Tonjee Ward	St. Francis (PA)	G	5-7	Sr	Creedmoor, NC/Port Jervis (NJ)
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Brenda Reilly Coach of the Year

Ed Swanson	Sacred Heart
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2003-04 NEC Women's Basketball First Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Yr	Hometown/High School
Natallia Marchanka	Fairleigh Dickinson	G	5-7	Sr	Rechitsa, Belarus/Republic School of Olympic Reserve
Myriam Baccouche	Mount St. Mary's	G	5-10	Sr	Fairfax, VA/Robinson
Ashlee Kelly	Quinnipiac	C/F	6-0	Sr	Pittsburgh, PA/Mount Lebanon
Beth Swink	St. Francis (PA)	C	6-2	Jr	Connellsville, PA/Connellsville
Tonjee Ward	St. Francis (PA)	G	5-7	Sr	Creedmoor, NC/Port Jervis (NJ)

2003-04 NEC Women's Basketball Second Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Yr	Hometown/High School
Jewonda Bright	Monmouth	C	6-2	Sr	Norfolk, VA/Norview
Niamh Dwyer	Monmouth	G	5-9	So	Thurles, Ireland/Presentation Convent
Sara Esidore	Quinnipiac	F	6-1	Sr	Portland, CT/Portland
Amanda Pape	Sacred Heart	G	5-8	Fr	Stamford, CT/Trinity Catholic
Carrie Walker	Wagner	F	6-0	Sr	Gibsonia, PA/Pine-Richland

2003-04 NEC Women's Basketball All-Rookie Team

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Yr	Hometown/High School
Gabriella Guegbelet	Central Connecticut St.	F	5-11	Fr	Central Africa/Laurinburg Institute
Kelli Sawyer	Long Island	G	5-5	Fr	Philadelphia, PA/Friends Select
Krystal Pressley	Quinnipiac	G	5-7	Fr	New Haven, CT/Career
Sarah Bradley	Robert Morris	C	6-1	Fr	Hasting, PA/Bishop Carroll
Amanda Pape	Sacred Heart	G	5-8	Fr	Stamford, CT/Trinity Catholic