

Northeast Conference

200 Cottontail Lane • Vantage Court North • Somerset, NJ 08873
(732) 469-0440 • Fax (732) 469-0744 • www.northeastconference.org



For Immediate Release

August 12, 2008

Football Contact: Ralph Ventre (ext. 7)

Northeast Conference Announces 2008 Preseason All-NEC Football Team

Albany and Monmouth Each Enjoy League-High Six All-Conference Selections

Somerset, NJ -- Defending league champion Albany and perennial title contender Monmouth each placed a conference-high six representatives on the 2008 Preseason All-Northeast Conference Football Team. As a prelude to its 13th season on the gridiron, the NEC announced the members of its 2008 preseason all-league squad, along with the annual preseason poll results, during a media teleconference on Tuesday morning.

Nineteen of the 25 student-athletes, who were selected via a vote amongst the league's eight head coaches, earned Northeast Conference postseason honors last year. Ten players were 2006 all-NEC first team honorees, while nine were on the second team.

Duquesne quarterback **Kevin Rombach (Harrisburg, PA/Central Dauphin)** was an all-conference selection last season, but not an all-NEC selection. The top-ranked passer in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference a year ago, Rombach brings his 153.6 career passer efficiency rating into the NEC for Duquesne's inaugural season as the league's eighth football member. (associate member) Whether it's his job or a game, Rombach has shown his knack for winning. Claiming the starting job three games into the 2007 campaign, Rombach completed 177-of-290 passes for 2,410 yards and 20 touchdowns on his way to a 5-2 record. Setting a single-season program record with his 61.0 completion percentage, the signal caller led an offensive unit that gained an average of 407 yards per contest.

Last season's second team all-conference running backs occupy the two spots on the preseason squad. Albany junior **David McCarty (Gansevoort, NY/La Salle Institute)** and third-year Monmouth starter **Dave Sinisi (Cedar Grove, NJ/Cedar Grove)** were two of the league's 1,000-yard rushers in 2007. Making a successful transition from receiver to tailback, McCarty powered the Great Danes in their surge to a third conference title, rushing for at least 125 yards in each of his final six regular season contests, the final five of which were league games. McCarty saved his grandest effort for the Great Danes title-clinching victory over Central Connecticut State in the regular season finale, totaling 247 yards and two touchdowns on 19 rushes. Coming within 21 yards of the program's single-season rushing record, McCarty carried the ball 219 times for 1,503 yards, 13 scores, and a conference-best 6.9 yards per carry average.

Sinisi followed up his 2006 NEC Offensive Rookie of the Year award with a record sophomore campaign. Eclipsing the mark set by Chris Reed in 1998, Sinisi rushed for a program-record 1,184 yards on 206 attempts. Ranked ninth nationally in all-purpose yardage (178.7/g) en route to establishing another single-season program record, the Monmouth tailback found the end zone 17 times on the season. Before Albany kept him from reaching payday on November 10, Sinisi owned the nation's longest scoring streak at 20 consecutive contests with a touchdown.

Owning a chance to capture a fourth consecutive all-NEC award, Monmouth senior tight end **John Nalbone (Lawrenceville, NJ/Lawrence)** couples pass-catching skills with an ability to block. A 2007 first team all-league choice, the 6'4", 240-pound Nalbone led all NEC tight ends with 22 receptions for 252 yards and three touchdowns.

(Preseason All-NEC 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

Senior tackle **Raphael Nguti (Rochester, NY/Brighton)** and junior center **Kevin Richards (Clifton Park, NY/Shenendehowa)**, two 2007 all-conference selections, comprise Albany's portion of the preseason all-league offensive line. Nguti, who is one of the league's more intimidating presences at 6'7" and 330 pounds, and Richards paved the way for the conference's top scoring offense (28.4 ppg) and second-leading ground game (208.9 ypg). Monmouth places a pair of starters on the preseason all-NEC line. Senior tackle **Nick LoCastro (Wenonah, NJ/Gateway Regional)** protected the blind side of the league's top-ranked passer, surrendering only one sack during eight starts last season. His junior teammate **Shawn Wright (Fort Washington, MD/Dematha)** started in all of the Hawks' ten games at guard on his way to all-NEC second team accolades. Also a 2007 second team honoree, Central Connecticut State junior **Anthony Pineiro (Brooklyn, NY/Xaverian)** rounds out the preseason offensive line selections. Pineiro, a two-year starter, played all 11 games on the NEC's most productive rushing offense (257.6 ypg) last season.

The Nutmeg State is the collegiate home of both preseason all-NEC receivers. Sacred Heart junior **Steve Tedesco (Mission Viejo, CA/Trabuco Hills)** led the league in receptions per game (5.36), while ranking second in receiving yards per game (67.0). Effectively utilizing his size and speed, the 6'1" Tedesco, who made 26 catches for 355 yards during the final five games of his rookie campaign, finished 2007 with a league-high 59 catches for 737 yards and a conference-best 11 touchdown grabs. Tedesco, a first team choice at receiver last season, is also a feared punt returner as evidenced by the 18.2 yards per return he averaged. CCSU junior **Nick Colagiovanni (Plainville, CT/Milford Academy)** made a team-high 39 catches for 537 yards and three touchdowns. The 5'11" target averaged nearly 50 receiving yards per game en route to second team honors.

Three of the four all-NEC first team defensive linemen return with the expectations of producing another all-league effort. Wagner senior defensive end **Robert Brown (Rome, NY/Rome Free Academy)**, a third team All-American as voted by the Associated Press, amassed 10 sacks for a per-game average that ranked him fourth nationally. In addition to 45 tackles, Brown logged seven quarterback hurries and forced one fumble. Albany senior nose guard **Tom Pandolf (Holbrook, NY/Sachem)** played in all 12 games for a unit that ranked in the top 20 nationally in rushing yards allowed and scoring defense. Pandolf, who made 34 stops and four sacks last season, will have an increased role in solidifying a defensive front that no longer features three-time all-NEC choice Michael Dungey.

Central Connecticut State senior defensive end **Ernie Greywacz (New Canaan, CT/New Canaan)** follows up his first team selection with the preseason all-league nod. Greywacz's quickness and athleticism made him one of the most productive defensive players in the league last year. The junior end showed his capabilities to play the run and rush the passer, making 73 tackles and notching eight sacks (-40 yds). His play-making ability resulted in five pass break-ups, three fumble recoveries, and two forced fumbles. Monmouth senior **Kevin Walsh (Mt. Laurel, NJ/Lenape)** found his way onto the preseason all-league team for the second consecutive summer after leading Monmouth with 10.0 tackles for a loss a year ago. Walsh, a 2007 postseason second team choice, showed a tendency to raise his level of play against top competition, registering ten tackles at Maine while forcing a fumble to go with two tackles for a loss at Delaware.

Saint Francis (PA) sophomore linebacker **Scott Lewis (South Fork, PA/Bishop McCort)**, the 2007 NEC Defensive Rookie of the Year, headlines the preseason all-NEC linebacking corps. Lewis, who also garnered ECAC Rookie of the Year accolades, made a league-best 126 tackles, which stand as the fourth-best single-season total in NEC history. Lewis spent two weeks of his freshman campaign atop the nation in tackling and finished the regular season ranked fourth amongst all DI FCS tacklers (12.60 tackles/gm). The two-time NEC Rookie of the Week totaled 55 solo tackles this season to rank 18th in the nation.

Wagner senior **Jeremy Spinks (Tampa, FL/Chamberlain)** and Albany junior **Justin Brancaccio (Rockaway, NJ/Morris Knolls)** have the task of stepping up following the graduation of two former all-league teammates. A team captain for the second consecutive season, Spinks will take on an even more significant role this season with the loss of first team all-league linebacker Bryan Brand and his 117 tackles. Spinks made 72 stops of his own last season, including 3.5 for a loss. Brancaccio, an inside linebacker, will no longer have two-time NEC Defensive Player of the Year Colin Disch playing alongside of him in the middle of UA's four-linebacker scheme. Tabbed a team captain as he assumes a starting role for the second straight season, Brancaccio looks to build upon the 63 tackles and 6.5 stops for a loss he tallied as a sophomore.

All four members of the 2008 preseason all-NEC secondary were all-league players a year ago. Monmouth senior cornerback **Ayo Falae (Newark, NJ/Barringer)**, Albany senior safety **Dave West (Toms River, NJ/TR North)**, and CCSU senior safety **Michael Bailey (Yonkers, NY/Gorton)** were all second team all-NEC choices while Duquesne senior cornerback **Aaron Strader (Pittsburgh, PA/Westinghouse)** earned first team honors during the Dukes' final season in the MAAC.

Falae, who returns for his fifth year, successfully defended 13 passes last season and picked off two of them. A second team all-conference selection, Falae started all ten games on Monmouth's 2007 slate and made a team-high 37 solo tackles to show for it. West, who has 34 career games and 100 tackles under his belt, emerged as a serious force in Albany's secondary last season. The agile West, who is also a member of the Great Danes' baseball team, totaled the fourth-most tackles on the team (60), including a team-high 44 solo stops, and five pass break-ups.

Bailey, a captain for a second straight season, made 54 tackles and one interception at safety last season for the Blue Devils. The versatile senior has added bulk and could see some time at linebacker in 2008. The 2005 MAAC Defensive Rookie of the Year, Strader has nine career interception in 27 games. Making nine starts at cornerback last season, the first team all-MAAC selection picked off four passes and broke up three more to lead the Dukes. He also made 38 tackles, 26 of the solo variety.

The Steel City is where one can find both preseason all-conference kicking specialists. Robert Morris sophomore punter **Nick Schirtzinger (Hurricane, WV/Hurricane)**, a second team choice behind All-American kicker Piotr Czech in 2007, led the league by averaging 41.4 yards per punt. Duquesne senior **Mark Troyan (Ford City, PA/Ford City)**, the most productive place kicker in program history, earns the preseason nod on the merit of nearly-impeccable accuracy. Troyan converted on a single-season program record 12-of-13 field goal attempts en route to setting a Dukes' record for career points by a kicker (186). His 32 field goals rank sixth amongst all Division I FCS returnees and rank him first in DU history.

CCSU's speedy sophomore **Josue Paul (Delray Beach, FL/Pope John Paul II)** is the preseason all-NEC return specialist after earning second team honors there as a freshman. Returning a league-high 32 kickoffs for a conference-best 21.9 yards per return average, Paul proved a constant threat to bring one back for a score. His 95-yard touchdown return in a victory over long-time local rival Southern Connecticut State was the longest in the league last season.

2008 NEC Football Preseason All-Conference Team

Offense

Pos	Name		School	Yr	Ht	Wt	Hometown/High School
QB	Kevin Rombach		Duquesne	Jr.	6-1	205	Harrisburg, PA/Central Dauphin
RB	David McCarty	!	Albany	Jr.	6-0	190	Gansevoort, NY/La Salle Institute
RB	Dave Sinisi	!^	Monmouth	Sr.	5-10	200	Cedar Grove, NJ/Cedar Grove
WR	Steve Tedesco	\$	Sacred Heart	Jr.	6-1	195	Mission Viejo, CA/Trabuco Hills
WR	Nick Colagiovanni	!	Central Connecticut State	Jr.	5-11	175	Plainville, CT/Milford Academy
TE	John Nalbone	\$^&	Monmouth	Sr.	6-4	240	Lawrenceville, NJ/Lawrence
OL	Raphael Nguti	\$	Albany	Sr.	6-6	330	Rochester, NY/Brighton
OL	Kevin Richards	!	Albany	Jr.	6-2	280	Clifton Park, NY/Shenedehowa
OL	Anthony Pineiro	!	Central Connecticut State	Jr.	6-3	270	Brooklyn, NY/Xaverian
OL	Shawn Wright	!	Monmouth	Jr.	6-2	275	Ft. Washington, MD/Dematha
OL	Nick LoCastro	\$	Monmouth	Sr.	6-6	285	Wenonah, NJ/Gateway

Defense

Pos	Name		School	Yr	Ht	Wt	Hometown/High School
DL	Ernie Greywacz	\$	Central Connecticut State	Sr.	6-3	215	New Canaan, CT/New Canaan
DL	Robert Brown	\$	Wagner	Sr.	6-1	230	Rome, NY/Rome Free Academy
DL	Tom Pandolf	\$	Albany	Sr.	6-0	260	Holbrook, NY/Sachem
DL	Kevin Walsh	!	Monmouth	Sr.	6-2	250	Mt. Laurel, NJ/Lenape
LB	Scott Lewis	\$	Saint Francis (PA)	So.	5-11	200	South Fork, PA/Bishop McCort
LB	Justin Brancaccio		Albany	Jr.	6-0	220	Rockaway, NJ/Morris Knolls
LB	Jeremy Spinks		Wagner	Sr.	5-11	230	Tampa, FL/Chamberlain
DB	Ayo Falae	!	Monmouth	Sr.	6-0	200	Newark, NJ/Barringer
DB	Dave West	!	Albany	Sr.	5-10	185	Toms River, NJ/Toms River North
DB	Mike Bailey	!	Central Connecticut State	Sr.	6-0	200	Yonkers, NY/Gorton
DB	Aaron Strader		Duquesne	Sr.	6-3	190	Pittsburgh, PA/Westinghouse

Special Teams

Pos	Name		School	Yr	Ht	Wt	Hometown/High School
K	Mark Troyan		Duquesne	Sr.	5-9	195	Ford City, PA/Ford City
P	Nick Schirtzinger	!	Robert Morris	So.	5-8	240	Hurricane, WV/Hurricane
RS	Josue Paul		Central Connecticut State	So.	6-1	190	Delray Beach, FL/Pope John Paul II

\$ 2007 First Team All-NEC Selection ! 2007 Second Team All-NEC Selection

* 2006 First Team All-NEC Selection ^ 2006 Second Team All-NEC Selection

2005 First Team All-NEC Selection & 2005 Second Team All-NEC Selection