

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release
November 4, 2009

Mount St. Mary's Picked To Win 2009-10 Northeast Conference Men's Basketball Championship *Defending Champ Robert Morris Picked Third; Preseason All-Conference Team Announced*

Somerset, NJ -- After making back-to-back postseason appearances, Mount St. Mary's has been tabbed as the frontrunner to capture the 2009-10 Northeast Conference (NEC) men's basketball championship, according to a vote of the league's head coaches. The preseason rankings, along with the league's preseason all-conference team, were announced during a media teleconference with coaches this afternoon as a prelude to the NEC's 29th season.

The Mount received nine first place votes from NEC head coaches, who were not permitted to vote for their own team. Long Island was chosen second and earned a single first place vote. Defending NEC champion Robert Morris and Quinnipiac tied for third with the Colonials securing two first place nods. Central Connecticut State was picked fifth, with Sacred Heart in sixth and St. Francis (NY) in the seventh position. Fairleigh Dickinson landed in eighth place, followed by Monmouth in ninth, Wagner in tenth, Bryant in eleventh and Saint Francis (PA) in twelfth.

This marks the second straight season and fourth time overall that Mount St. Mary's has been selected the NEC's preseason favorite by head coaches. The Mount was picked first in 1998-99 and went on to capture its second league crown with a 72-56 win over Central Connecticut State. The Mountaineers were tapped as the NEC favorite the following season, but bowed to Robert Morris in the 2000 tournament semifinals. A year ago, Mount St. Mary's fell two points short of taking home its second straight conference championship, dropping a 48-46 decision to host Robert Morris in the title tilt.

Mount St. Mary's enters the 2009-10 campaign fresh off back-to-back postseason appearances, the first such instance for the program since capturing the NEC crown in 1995 and playing in the NIT in 1996. The Mount won the NEC Tournament in 2008 and competed in the inaugural College Insider Postseason Tournament (CIT) last season against James Madison. Head coach Milan Brown boasts a deep and talented lineup featuring the stellar backcourt duo of All-NEC first teamer **Jeremy Goode (Charlotte, NC/Providence Day)**, a senior point guard, and sharpshooting junior **Jean Cajou (Fairfax, VA/Paul VI)**, along with versatile senior forward **Kelly Beidler (Virginia Beach, VA/Tallwood)**. With brother Sam and Markus Mitchell now graduated, athletic junior forward **Shawn Atupem (Newport News, VA/Woodside)** will assume a prominent role up front after spending the last two years as a key reserve. Look for Mount St. Mary's to utilize its trademark suffocating defense - the Mountaineers led the league in scoring defense (63.0 ppg) and field goal percentage defense (.419) in 2008-09 - to shut down the opposition once again this season.

(2009-10 Northeast Conference Preseason Men's Basketball Coaches Poll/All-Conference Team; 1-of-4)

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

Northeast Conference 2009-10 Men's Basketball Preseason Coaches Poll

1. Mount St. Mary's (9)
2. Long Island (1)
3. Robert Morris (2)
Quinnipiac
5. CCSU
6. Sacred Heart
7. St. Francis (NY)
8. Fairleigh Dickinson
9. Monmouth
10. Wagner
11. Bryant
12. Saint Francis (PA)

First place votes in parentheses

Robert Morris will attempt to become the first team since Rider in 1993 and 1994 to repeat as league champions. In order to do so, NEC Coach of the Year Mike Rice must replace NEC Player of the Year Jeremy Chappell, as well as NEC Defensive Player of the Year Bateko Francisco, both of whom were lost to graduation. Rice faced a similar situation last season after losing NEC Player of the Year Tony Lee and three-time All-NEC performer A.J. Jackson, but in stepped Chappell, who elevated his game and led the Colonials to their first conference championship since 1992. With five seniors and seven upperclassmen on the roster, including second team All-NEC performer **Rob Robinson (Waldorf, MD/Oxon Hill (Globe Institute of Technology))**, the Colonials will look to keep the momentum going for a program that has posted a league record 50 wins and posted a 31-5 record against conference opposition over the last two seasons.

Conducted annually, NEC coaches have failed to correctly forecast the eventual league champion since selecting Mount St. Mary's to win it all in 1998-99, and have proven inaccurate in 20 of the last 22 years. After its 1999 tourney win, Mount St. Mary's was the choice to repeat the following season, but Central Connecticut State, tabbed third, captured the championship. CCSU was then installed as the favorite in 2000-01, but the title went to Monmouth, picked sixth in the preseason. Monmouth received the nod in 2001-02, but it was CCSU, predicted fourth, which went on to win its second title in three years. In 2002-03, NEC coaches continued their trend of selecting the previous year's champion as preseason favorite when they went with CCSU, only to have Wagner earn its first-ever NEC Tournament crown. Three years ago, it was Quinnipiac that was placed on the preseason perch, but the Bobcats struggled all season and finished in 10th place. Monmouth garnered its third league crown that year after being selected third in the preseason. In 2004-05, the Hawks were the logical choice to repeat, and even won the conference regular season title, but were eliminated in the NEC semifinals as Fairleigh Dickinson went on to claim the championship. Fairleigh Dickinson was then installed as the 2005-06 favorite, but dropped a one-point decision to Monmouth in the title contest. Monmouth was picked first in 2006-07, but became the first defending NEC champion to fail to qualify for the tournament the following year. It was Sacred Heart's turn in 2007-08, and the Pioneers made it all the way to the title game for the second straight season, but came up short in a setback to Mount St. Mary's. The Mount nearly broke the streak in 2008-09, but the preseason favorites dropped a two-point decision to Robert Morris.

The preseason all-NEC team is comprised of three guards and two forwards: Fairleigh Dickinson senior guard **Sean Baptiste (North Brunswick, NJ/St. Joseph's of Metuchen)**, Mount St. Mary's senior guard **Jeremy Goode (Charlotte, NC/Providence Day)**, CCSU junior forward **Ken Horton (Ossining, NY/Ossining)**, Quinnipiac junior forward **Justin Rutty (Newburgh, NY/Newburgh Free Academy)** and Long Island senior guard **Jaytornah Wisseh (Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy)**. Goode, Rutty and Wisseh were all first team All-NEC picks a year ago, while Baptiste and Horton were second team honorees. Wisseh is the only two-time All-NEC honoree in the group.

With an ability to beat defenders off the dribble, score in traffic and shoot with accuracy from three-point territory, Fairleigh Dickinson's **Baptiste** led the NEC with four 30+ point scoring efforts in 2008-09, including 37 in a win over Quinnipiac and 31 against Seton Hall. A North Brunswick, NJ native, he ended the year as the fourth-ranked point producer on the circuit with 16.3 ppg, and was the top scorer in league play at 18.6 ppg. The 6'3" Baptiste was also one of three players in the conference - joining CCSU's Horton and Robert Morris' Jeremy Chappell - who led his team in two noteworthy, yet disparate categories: made three-pointers (48) and rebounding (a team-high 5.9 rpg, the 11th best mark on the circuit). He enters the year with 1,034 career points, the fourth-highest total among returning NEC players.

The Mount's resurgence under Milan Brown can be traced to **Goode** arriving in Emmitsburg back in 2006. He helped lead Mount St. Mary's to the conference semifinals as a freshman, followed by the Mount's first league championship since 1999 in his sophomore campaign. A year ago, the Mountaineers reached the NEC title game and made their second straight postseason appearance with a berth in the inaugural CIT. A one-man fast break, Goode's end-to-end quickness creates scoring opportunities for both himself and teammates. In 2008-09, he led the Mount and ranked ninth in the NEC with 14.9 ppg, and also ended the year in the top-10 in assists (4.1, ninth), steals (1.9, third) and assist-to-turnover ratio (1.72:1). Goode also improved his three-point shooting accuracy from 29.9 percent in 2007-08 to 37.2 percent a year ago. All the Charlotte, NC native has done in three years is accumulate 1,283 points and 471 assists, while racking up NEC All-Rookie honors in 2006-07, along with first team All-NEC and NABC All-District plaudits in 2008-09. He enters his senior year as the league's leading active scorer and distributor, and ranks 21st on the league's all-time assist chart.

Any discussion of players who pose extreme matchup problems in the NEC must include **Horton** at or near the top of that list. A springy 6'6" forward, Horton finished his sophomore season for Central Connecticut State ranked third in the NEC in scoring (16.5 ppg) and recorded 20 or more points a league best 13 times. The Ossining, NY product converted 50.3 percent of his field goal attempts, led the Blue Devils with 5.8 rebounds per outing and was the seventh-best free throw shooter in the league at 80.2 percent. While adept in the low post, he also showed off his long distance marksmanship with a team-best 32 shots from three-point territory. Defensively, the second team All-NEC performer swatted 1.6 shots per game to rank third in the conference. As a result, Horton became just the fourth NEC player in the last 20 years to lead his team in both three-pointers made and blocked shots, joining LIU's Eugene Kotorobai (2007-08), St. Francis (NY)'s Charles Hatcher (1992-93) and Marist's Steve Paterno (1990-91). Horton has accumulated 829 points, 317 rebounds and 105 rejections in his three seasons of play.

Rutty put together one of the more impressive statistical NEC campaigns in recent years for Quinnipiac last season. The burly 6'7", 240 lb. forward not only led the NEC with 9.8 rpg and 13 double-doubles, but also ranked second in field goal shooting (.604), and finished tenth in scoring (14.8 ppg) to earn first team All-Conference honors and first team NABC All-District accolades. Nationally, Rutty finished second in the nation in offensive rebounding (only behind Pittsburgh All-American DeJuan Blair), 10th in field goal percentage and 20th in overall rebounding. With 295 boards on the year, he came within three caroms of eclipsing the NEC sophomore record in the category. Rutty, who hails from Newburgh, NY, also elevated his game in the NEC playoffs last season, averaging 14.0 points and 15.0 rebounds over two contests, numbers that earned him All-Tournament accolades.

The only two-time returning NEC all-star, **Wisseh** will look to close out his career on a high note and spark Long Island to its first league crown since 1997. One of the most difficult defensive assignments in the conference is matching up one-on-one with the cat-quick Wisseh, who seems to be a direct descendent from former elusive LIU guards Charles Jones, Antawn Dobie and James Williams. With an ability to both find open teammates and hit shots in traffic, the Brooklyn native finished his junior year as the fourth-leading distributor in the conference with 4.4 apg, and also ranked first in made free throws (150), sixth in free throw percentage (.802), seventh in steals (1.6 spg) and eighth in scoring (15.2 ppg). His 1,182 career points and 373 assists rank him second and third, respectively, among active NEC players in both categories. In addition to first team All-NEC plaudits, Wisseh was also tabbed to the NABC All-District first team in 2008-09.

Now in its 29th season, the Northeast Conference is an NCAA Division I collegiate athletic association consisting of 12 institutions of higher learning located throughout six states. Media coverage of the NEC extends to four of the largest markets in the United States - New York (#1), Pittsburgh (#23), Baltimore (#26), and Hartford/New Haven (#30). Founded in 1981 as the basketball-only ECAC Metro Conference, the NEC has grown to sponsor 22 championship sports for men and women and now enjoys automatic or play-in access to 13 different NCAA Championships. NEC member institutions include Central Connecticut State, Fairleigh Dickinson, Long Island, Monmouth, Mount St. Mary's, Quinnipiac, Robert Morris, Sacred Heart, St. Francis (NY), Saint Francis (PA) and Wagner. Bryant will become the NEC's 12th member upon completion of the NCAA Division I reclassification process in 2012. For more information on the NEC, visit www.northeastconference.org.

2009-10 Northeast Conference Preseason All-Conference Team

Name	School	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown/High School (Previous School)
Sean Baptiste	Fairleigh Dickinson	G	6-3	185	Sr	North Brunswick, NJ/St. Joseph's of Metuchen
Jeremy Goode	Mount St. Mary's	G	5-9	170	Sr	Charlotte, NC/Providence Day
Ken Horton	Central Connecticut State	F	6-6	190	Jr	Ossining, NY/Ossining
Justin Rutty	Quinnipiac	F	6-7	240	Jr	Newburgh, NY/Newburgh Free Academy
Jaytornah Wisseh	Long Island	G	6-1	170	Sr	Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy

NEC Men's Basketball Preseason Coaches Poll History

Year	Preseason Favorite (actual regular season finish)	NEC Tournament Champion (preseason selection)
2008-09	Mount St. Mary's (tie 2nd)	Robert Morris (3rd)
2007-08	Sacred Heart (3rd)	Mount St. Mary's (4th)
2006-07	Monmouth (tie 8th)	Central Connecticut State (tie 4th)
2005-06	Fairleigh Dickinson (1st)	Monmouth (2nd)
2004-05	Monmouth (1st)	Fairleigh Dickinson (2nd)
2003-04	Quinnipiac (10th)	Monmouth (3rd)
2002-03	Central Connecticut State (3rd)	Wagner (2nd)
2001-02	Monmouth (4th)	Central Connecticut State (4th)
2000-01	Central Connecticut State (tie 5th)	Monmouth (6th)
1999-00	Mount St. Mary's (tie 7th)	Central Connecticut State (3rd)
1998-99	Mount St. Mary's (tie 5th)	Mount St. Mary's (1st)
1997-98	Long Island (1st)	Fairleigh Dickinson (2nd)
1996-97	Monmouth (3rd)	Long Island (4th)
1995-96	Monmouth/Rider (tie 2nd/4th)	Monmouth (tie 1st)
1994-95	Rider (1st)	Mount St. Mary's (3rd)
1993-94	Fairleigh Dickinson (tie 5th)	Rider (3rd)
1992-93	Wagner (2nd)	Rider (3rd)
1991-92	Monmouth (tie 2nd)	Robert Morris (2nd)
1990-91	Monmouth (4th)	St. Francis (PA) (3rd)
1989-90	Fairleigh Dickinson (6th)	Robert Morris (3rd)
1988-89	Monmouth (3rd)	Robert Morris (5th)
1987-88	*Marist (tie 1st)	Fairleigh Dickinson (2nd)

* Marist was ineligible for the NEC Tournament in 1987-88

