

# Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release

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## Quinnipiac's Justin Rutty Voted Northeast Conference Men's Basketball Player of the Year

*Robert Morris' Karon Abraham Named NEC Rookie of the Year*  
*Robert Morris' Mezie Nwigwe Tabbed NEC Defensive Player of the Year*  
*Sacred Heart's Liam Potter Chosen NEC Most Improved Player*  
*Quinnipiac's Tom Moore Wins Jim Phelan Coach of the Year Honors*

**Somerset, NJ** -- Quinnipiac junior forward **Justin Rutty** (**Newburgh, NY/Newburgh Free Academy**) was selected as the 2009-10 Northeast Conference (NEC) Men's Basketball Player of the Year in a vote conducted by league head coaches. Robert Morris freshman guard **Karon Abraham** (**Paterson, NJ/Harp Academy**) was picked unanimously as NEC Rookie of the Year, while Robert Morris senior guard **Mezie Nwigwe** (**Hyattsville, MD/High Point**) was chosen NEC Defensive Player of the Year. Sacred Heart senior center **Liam Potter** (**Lincolnshire, England/Tilton School (NH)**) was the recipient of the inaugural NEC Most Improved Player award. Jim Phelan Coach of the Year honors went to Quinnipiac's **Tom Moore**. The honorees were announced on a media teleconference this morning to promote the 2010 NEC Men's Basketball Tournament, which begins on Thursday with quarterfinal play at four campus sites.

Rutty becomes Quinnipiac's first NEC Player of the Year after a dominant season in the post for the Bobcats, who head into March as the top seed in the NEC Tournament. Most notably, Rutty has become the face of a program that has reinvented itself through its ability to attack the glass. Unmatched physically by his conference peers, the Newburgh, NY native leads the NEC in rebounding for the second straight year and is 13th nationally with 10.8 rpg. Rutty has also earned recognition as one of the top offensive rebounders in the nation. After finishing second nationally in offensive rebounding as a sophomore, he ranks third in Division I this season with 4.9 per game. Along with his ferocious work on the boards, Rutty continued to refine his offensive game in 2009-10 and enters the postseason third in the conference in field goal percentage (.539) and eighth in scoring (15.0 ppg). He has compiled a conference-best 14 double-doubles on the year and 27 over the course of his career, a Quinnipiac Division I record. In just three years, Rutty has moved up to 19th on the NEC career rebounding chart with 762 and has a good chance of ending his career as the league's all-time leader in the category. The 6'7", 240 lb. forward also cracked the 1,000-point mark this season (up to 1,088) and was a two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week. Rutty joins former Bobcat Nate Pondexter (1998-00) as two-time first team All-NEC performers.

The smallest starter in the conference, Abraham took little time to develop into a big-time player for the Colonials this season. The graduation of 2008-09 NEC Player of the Year Jeremy Chappell and a season-ending injury to starter Jimmy Langhurst resulted in Abraham and classmate Velton Jones stepping into the starting lineup for the Colonials, who didn't miss a beat in claiming a share of their third consecutive NEC regular season title. Abraham not only leads all NEC freshman in scoring at 12.9 ppg, but also enters the playoffs as the only freshman to lead his team in point production. With a quick first step and incredible elevation on his shot, the 5'9" shooting guard has almost unlimited shooting range. Abraham has drilled 72 three-pointers on the year, and ranks third in the league in three-point percentage (.436) and fourth in three-pointers per game (2.3). Automatic from the line, he leads the NEC in free throw percentage at 86.3 percent. Abraham, who hails from Paterson, NJ, is a three-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week. He is the third Robert Morris recipient of the NEC Rookie of the Year award, joining Chappell (2005-06) and Steve Vandiver (1986-87).

(2009-10 NEC Men's Basketball All-Conference Release; 1-of-5)

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

A terrific on-the-ball defender for Robert Morris, Nwigwe follows in the footsteps of former teammate Bateko Francisco, who won the award a year ago. Often matched up with the opposing team's top scoring guard, Nwigwe was a central figure on a Colonial defense that limited opponents to a conference-low 38.3 percent shooting from the field and just 60.0 ppg in NEC play. Likewise, Robert Morris allowed 60 or less points in nine-of-18 conference games this year. Individually, the Hyattsville, MD native finished the regular season with 41 steals to rank second on the club.

Potter's remarkable metamorphosis into one of the NEC's top pivot players was one of the intriguing individual storylines in the conference this season. The seven-footer from Lincolnshire, England entered the year with career averages of just 2.7 ppg and 2.1 rpg, and went the first 79 games of his career without a double-double before posting three straight double-double performances over the holidays to earn the first *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week honor of his career. Potter would end his year as the NEC's most improved scorer, lifting his average from 1.4 ppg as a junior to 9.5 ppg in his senior campaign. He also ranks second in the conference in double-doubles (eight), third in rebounding (8.3 rpg) and blocked shots (2.0 bpg), and fifth in field goal percentage (.505).

In what has been a breakthrough season for Quinnipiac, Moore has his sights set on one more milestone - bringing home an NEC Tournament championship to Hamden. In just his third year, Moore has led the Bobcats to a school Division I record 21 wins this season, a perfect 12-0 mark at home and a best-ever 15-3 record against conference opponents. In doing so, Quinnipiac earned a share of its first NEC regular season title and enters the postseason as the NEC Tournament's top seed. The Bobcats are also assured of playing past the NEC Tournament with an automatic berth to the Postseason NIT. Bolstered by the outstanding inside-outside duo of Justin Rutty and James Feldeine, Moore has forced the opposition to take a pick-your-poison approach to playing his squad. Even if opponents are able to stop one or both of his All-NEC players, the Bobcats' ability to attack the glass - Quinnipiac is ranked second nationally in rebound margin - makes them difficult to beat. Moore has now posted a winning conference record in all three of his seasons and has posted a 36-18 record against NEC competition.

Three of the five players who comprise the all-NEC first team were first teamers a year ago, led by Quinnipiac junior forward **Justin Rutty (Newburgh, NY/Newburgh Free Academy)**, the league's Player of the Year. Mount St. Mary's senior guard **Jeremy Goode (Charlotte, NC/Providence Day)** and Long Island senior guard **Jaytornah Wisseh (Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy)** are also repeat first team honorees, while Quinnipiac senior guard **James Feldeine (New York, NY/Cardinal Hayes)** was a second team recipient in 2008-09. Saint Francis (PA) senior forward **Devin Sweetney (Washington, D.C./Riverdale Baptist)** is a first time award winner.

Picking up his second consecutive first team All-NEC honor, Goode will leave an indelible imprint on the Mount program, which has won more games in his four years (64) than it had in the previous seven (60). He helped lead Mount St. Mary's to the 2008 NEC championship, followed by a run to the 2009 title game and a #3 seed in this year's tournament. The 5'9" point guard is superb running the pick and roll, a blur in the open court, a pinpoint passer and a capable outside shooter who will end his career high atop a number of career categories in the conference. Goode's 599 career assists rank him second in league history behind Marist's Drafton Davis. He also ranks ninth on the NEC's career list in steals (256) and 25th in points (1,678). Goode is one of just two players in conference annals to reach 1,500 points, 500 assists and 250 steals in his career (LIU's Dave Masciale is the other). Entering the playoffs, the Charlotte, NC native paces the circuit with 2.5 spg (17th nationally), and is also fifth in assists (4.4 apg) and 10th in scoring (14.0 ppg).

Wisseh hopes to close out his career by adding an NEC Tournament title to his long list of accomplishments at Long Island, which include two first team and one second team All-NEC honor. A 6'1" combo guard from Brooklyn, Wisseh's quickness and court vision, coupled with his unselfish nature and ability to score in traffic, have made him one of the league's most exciting and unstoppable players. He is the NEC leader and sits 22nd nationally with 5.7 assists per game, and it is his ability to find players in traffic that has assisted in the development of promising young forwards Kenny Onyechi and Jamal Olasewere. Wisseh also ranks third in the league in scoring (17.3 ppg) and free throw percentage (.826), and eighth in steals (1.5 spg). A three-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week this past season, he has scored 20 or more points on 11 occasions and enters the postseason having hit the 20-point mark in four of his last five games. Wisseh has dished out 526 career assists to rank 11th in NEC history. He is also 30th on the league's all-time scoring list with 1,650 career points and one of just eight NEC players to crack the 1,500-point/500-assist mark for his career.

Feldeine and his picture perfect jump shot provided the perfect complement to Justin Rutty's rugged inside play for the regular season champion Bobcats. Possessing one of the top mid-range games in the league, Feldeine was often unstoppable, finishing the regular season ranked fourth in the NEC with 17.3 ppg. The two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week leads the conference with 13 games of 20+ points

and also contributes on the boards, pulling down 6.0 per game. Feldeine recently became the just the seventh NEC player since 1997 to record a triple-double when he torched Monmouth for 19 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists in a late February win. After scoring just seven points as a freshman, Feldeine became a key contributor for Quinnipiac as a sophomore and was named the NEC's Most Improved Player as a junior in 2008-09 when he finished second in the league in scoring. The New York City native has amassed 1,027 points over the last two years to lift his career total to 1,275.

Plagued by injuries as a junior, Sweetney came back stronger than ever in his senior year to lead Saint Francis (PA) to its first NEC Tournament berth since 2005. A sinewy slasher and capable long range shooter, he heads into the playoffs ranked fifth in the league in scoring (16.7 ppg), sixth in rebounding (7.4 rpg), fourth in free throw percentage (.824) and fifth in double-doubles (five). Along with the ability to take over games - see his 31-point, 13-board masterpiece in a win over Sacred Heart that clinched a playoff spot for the Red Flash - Sweetney provided senior leadership on a youthful Red Flash squad that entered the year with nine newcomers on its roster. The Washington, D.C. product is just three rebounds shy of joining Maurice Stokes and Sandy Williams as the only players in program history to reach 1,500 points and 750 rebounds during their collegiate careers. He is 24th on the NEC career rebounding list (747) and has racked up 1,508 career points. Sweetney was a two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week this past season.

The all-NEC second team features two past honorees in Fairleigh Dickinson senior guard **Sean Baptiste (North Brunswick, NJ/St. Joseph's of Metuchen)** and Robert Morris senior forward **Rob Robinson (Waldorf, MD/Oxon Hill (Globe Institute))**. Both were second team selections a year ago. Joining them are St. Francis (NY) junior guard **Akeem Bennett (Long Island, NY/West Hempstead ((W. Oklahoma St.))**, Sacred Heart senior guard **Corey Hassan (Merrimack, NH/Merrimack (Boston U.))** and Monmouth sophomore forward **Travis Taylor (Union, NJ/Union)**.

Baptiste has been a terrific offensive performer for Fairleigh Dickinson throughout his star-studded career. Playing bigger than his 6'3" listed height, Baptiste's potent inside-outside game may be unmatched in the conference. Few guards score more points in the paint off drives to the hoop, yet he has always had the ability to step back and effortlessly drill shots from outside the arc. For the second year in a row, the North Brunswick, NJ resident led all NEC players in scoring during league play with 18.8 ppg, and ranks sixth overall with 16.4 ppg. Baptiste also hit 60 three-pointers during the regular season for the playoff bound Knights and rates eighth among conference leaders with 2.1 treys per outing. His gritty play in and around the hoop also resulted in 5.6 rpg, the second-best mark on the club. Baptiste, a two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week in 2009-10, now ranks 50th on the NEC career scoring list with 1,511 points. He recently became the 26th player in league history to reach 1,500 points and 500 rebounds.

While Robert Morris features some of the league's quickest guards, the Colonials would struggle without Robinson manning the pivot. At 6'8" and 215 lbs., Robinson is a superb athlete, strong post defender and a capable interior scorer with a reliable baby hook. He ended the regular season strong, averaging 14.3 ppg over his last six outings heading into the playoffs, including an 8-8 performance from the field in a win over Sacred Heart. On the year, he leads the Colonials with 5.2 rpg and ranks second with 10.2 ppg. Robinson, a Waldorf, MD native, is also the fourth most accurate shooter in the conference, converting 52.0 percent of his field goal attempts.

One of the most well-rounded players on the circuit, there is little Bennett didn't do on the court for St. Francis (NY) this season. The sturdy 6'3" guard plays with a fearless swagger and isn't afraid to mix it up underneath as evidenced by his team-best 6.4 rpg. Bennett also led St. Francis (NY) with 4.0 apg, 2.2 spg and ranked second in scoring with 14.0 ppg. On the year, the West Hempstead, NY product paces the NEC in minutes played (36.0 per game) and free throw attempts (208), and also ranks in the top-10 in steals (second), double-doubles (fifth), assists (sixth), scoring (ninth), rebounding (ninth) and assist-to-turnover ratio (tenth).

After finishing his junior year with a flourish, Hassan established himself as both the NEC's premier scorer and one of the nation's top long range shooters this season. With 90 three-pointers on the year, he leads the NEC and ranks 13th nationally with 3.2 trifectas per game. Hassan put on a number of extraordinary shooting exhibitions throughout the year for Sacred Heart, first hitting a school record nine three-pointers in a win over Hartford in December, then delivering a performance for the ages when he hit 10 treys - tied for second on the NEC's single-game list - in just 12 attempts as part of a career-high 36 point explosion against Wagner on January 30th. In addition to his league-leading 19.2 ppg, Hassan ranks first in the NEC with three 30+ point scoring outings and posted 12 games of 20 or more points. Not content to be just a scorer, the 6'5" swingman also sits fifth in the conference with 7.6 rpg. He closed out his career with 1,472 career points, of which 1,140 have come in his three years with the Pioneers. Hassan, who hails from Merrimack, NH, was a three-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Player of the Week in 2009-10.

It didn't take Taylor long to make the leap from promising rookie to NEC all-star in just his sophomore season. With an arsenal of post moves at his disposal, he was unguardable at times down low in 2009-10 and became the Hawks' go-to offensive weapon. Taylor currently ranks second in the league with 18.1 ppg and is the fourth-leading rebounder with 7.7 per game. He is also second on the loop in field goal accuracy (.543) and has recorded six double-doubles. Taylor, who hails from Union, NJ, has scored in double-digits in 25 straight games, the longest current streak in the conference.

An outstanding freshman crop is led by Robert Morris guard **Karon Abraham (Paterson, NJ/Harp Academy)**, the NEC Rookie of the Year. He is joined on the All-Rookie team by four forwards. Saint Francis (PA)'s **Will Felder (Cleveland, OH/Lutheran East)** took home three *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week awards and was one of the key ingredients in the Red Flash's revival this season. With a smooth stroke from three-point range and the ability to score off the dribble, Felder concluded the regular season second on the Red Flash in scoring with 9.3 ppg. He also leads Saint Francis with 25 blocks and ranks second with 5.3 rpg. Bryant will only get better with **Vladyslav Kondratyev (Nikolayev, Ukraine/The Rock School)** patrolling the paint. Kondratyev kept improving as the season progressed and finished with 11.2 ppg in NEC play, the second best mark among league freshman. Long and athletic, Kondratyev ranks sixth in the conference in field goal percentage (.523) and ended the year as the Bulldogs' top scorer at 8.9 ppg. Long Island's **Kenny Onyechi (Sugar Land, TX/Kempner)** has had a first year resembling that of the Julian Boyd, the 2008-09 NEC Rookie of the Year who sat out this season for the Blackbirds. Athletically gifted and an active defender, Onyechi emerged as the league's premier shot blocker with 2.2 per outing. The two-time *Choice Hotels* NEC Rookie of the Week also provided a steady supply of scoring (8.1 ppg) and rebounding (4.8 rpg) for LIU, and could form one of the top frontcourts of the future in the conference along with classmate Jamal Olasewere. Monmouth's **Ed Waite (Fort Lauderdale, FL/Pine Crest)** quickly assumed a starting role, and befitting his football playing background, stood out as an impressive physical presence on an improved Hawk squad. A solid offensive rebounder, Waite is adept at finishing around the hoop, but can also step back and hit from the outside. He heads into the postseason averaging 8.9 ppg and is Monmouth's second-leading rebounder at 5.1 rpg.

## 2009-10 Northeast Conference Men's Basketball Award Winners

### Player of the Year

Justin Ruttly                      Quinnipiac                      F      6-7    240    Jr    Newburgh, NY/Newburgh Free Academy

### Rookie of the Year

Karon Abraham                  Robert Morris                  G      5-9    150    Fr    Paterson, NJ/Harp Academy

### Defensive Player of the Year

Mezie Nwigwe                  Robert Morris                  G      6-4    195    Sr    Hyattsville, MD/High Point

### Most Improved Player

Liam Potter                      Sacred Heart                      C      7-0    255    Sr    Lincolnshire, England/Tilton School (NH)

### Jim Phelan Coach of the Year

Tom Moore                      Quinnipiac

## 2009-10 Northeast Conference Men's Basketball First Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School (Previous School)
James Feldeine	Quinnipiac	G	6-4	190	Sr	New York, NY/Cardinal Hayes
Jeremy Goode	Mount St. Mary's	G	5-9	170	Sr	Charlotte, NC/Providence Day
Justin Ruttly	Quinnipiac	F	6-7	240	Jr	Newburgh, NY/Newburgh Free Academy
Devin Sweetney	Saint Francis (PA)	F	6-6	195	Sr	Washington, D.C./Riverdale Baptist
Jaytornah Wisseh	Long Island	G	6-1	180	Sr	Brooklyn, NY/Banneker Academy

## 2009-10 Northeast Conference Men's Basketball Second Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School (Previous School)
Sean Baptiste	Fairleigh Dickinson	G	6-3	185	Sr	North Brunswick, NJ/St. Joseph's of Metuchen
Akeem Bennett	St. Francis (NY)	G	6-3	180	Jr	Long Island, NY/West Hempstead (W. Oklahoma St.)
Corey Hassan	Sacred Heart	G	6-5	200	Sr	Merrimack, NH/Merrimack (Boston U.)
Rob Robinson	Robert Morris	F	6-8	215	Sr	Waldorf, MD/Oxon Hill (Globe Institute)
Travis Taylor	Monmouth	F	6-8	200	So	Union, NJ/Union

## 2009-10 Northeast Conference Men's Basketball All-Rookie Team

Name	School	Pos	Ht	Wt	Yr	Hometown/High School (Previous School)
Karon Abraham	Robert Morris	G	5-9	150	Fr	Paterson, NJ/Harp Academy
Will Felder	Saint Francis (PA)	F	6-6	200	Fr	Cleveland, OH/Lutheran East
Vladyslav Kondratyev	Bryant	F	6-8	220	Fr	Nikolayev, Ukraine/The Rock School
Kenny Onyechi	Long Island	F	6-7	225	Fr	Sugar Land, TX/Kempner
Ed Waite	Monmouth	F	6-5	240	Fr	Fort Lauderdale, FL/Pine Crest