Long Island Wins Sixth Straight Northeast Conference Women’s Volleyball Tournament Title in 2009

Brooklyn, NY — In true top-seed fashion, the Blackbirds of Long Island topped the No. 2 Pioneers of Sacred Heart, 3-0 (25-17, 25-20, 25-21), for the 2009 Northeast Conference Championship Crown Sunday, Nov. 22 at the Wellness, Recreation Center on the campus of Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY.

LIU took an early lead in the first set, and though SHU brought the score within three on two different occasions, they never recovered the rest of the game. The numbers were close for both teams, but LIU held the biggest edge in hitting percentage with .250 compared to SHU’s .103, led by this year’s tournament MVP sophomore Ashley Rice (Marlton, NJ/Cherokee).

In the second stanza, Sacred Heart took an early 2-0 lead and the teams fought a hard back and forth battle with the Pioneers eventually working out a 9-5 edge. Long Island hung tough and eventually tied the set at 14-14 on a kill by NEC Player of the Year Svetlana Simic (Klerk, Serbia/Commercial School). LIU extended its lead to 18-16 before the Pioneers rallied to tie with two straight points. A pair of Simic kills and an error by SHU pushed the Blackbirds ahead 21-18 and LIU was able to fend off a late charge to earn the 25-20 win.

In the third set of the 71-minute match it was LIU who took the early lead at 3-0 after Rice slammed two strong kills down on the Pioneer side. The Blackbirds extended their lead to 16-8 in what seemed to be the start of their run to the crown, but SHU scored 11 of the next 14 points to fix the score at 19-19. Simic tallied a kill to give the Blackbirds back their lead, which was followed by a Maile Hetherington (Thousand Oaks, CA/Thousand Oaks) kill from the other side. LIU senior Martina Racic (Pula, Croatia/School of Arts) hit back-to-back kills before SHU had an attacking error that put the Blackbirds up 23-20. LIU then recorded an error of their own just before Simic finished out the match with the last two points for a 25-21 topping.

With a crowd of 385, SHU’s Jessica Colberg (Long Beach, CA/Long Beach Polytechnic) notched a team-high 18 digs while sophomore all-tournament teamer Ashlyn Trimble (Temecula/Temecula Valley) tallied a team-best 13 kills. NEC Setter of the Year Courtney
Kidd-Kadlubek (Santa Barbara, CA/Santa Barbara) racked up the most helpers (33) for the Pioneers.

In a match that marked LIU’s 18th win in the last 19 games, Simic finished with a team-high 12 kills, while classmate Dunja Milin (Pula, Croatia/School of Economics), another all-tournament team selection, had 29 assists, while sophomore Chelsey Stanton (Macungie, PA/Emauss) had the most digs (14).

Hoping to continue their now-12 game win streak – a new school record – LIU will await word on who it will face in the NCAA Tournament to be announced Monday, Nov. 29 at 3:00 p.m. on ESPNews.

2009 All-Tournament Team
Ashley Rice, LIU, MB, So., Marlton, NJ/Cherokee (Tournament MVP)
Dunja Milin, LIU, S, Sr., Pula, Croatia/School of Economics
Ashlyn Trimble, SHU, OH, So., Temecula, CA/Temecula Valley
Jessica Colberg, SHU, L, So., Long Beach, CA/Long Beach Polytechnic
Tori Vaughn, CCSU, MB, Jr., Salinas, CA/Salinas
Amanda Craig, RMU, OPP, Fr., Houston, TX/St. Agnes Academy