

Northeast Conference

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For Immediate Release
November 5, 2009

CCSU's Leah Blayney NEC Women's Soccer Player of the Year, Mick D'Arcy Coach of the Year *Monmouth's Ali Kliment Chosen NEC Defensive Player of the Year* *Quinnipiac's Jillian Strassner Selected NEC Rookie of the Year*

Somerset, NJ – Central Connecticut State garnered two of the four major Northeast Conference women's soccer postseason awards with senior midfielder **Leah Blayney (Katoomba, New South Wales/Auburn University)** slated as NEC Player of the Year and **Mick D'Arcy** voted NEC Coach of the Year by his peers. In the backfield, **Ali Kliment (Florence, NJ/The Pennington School)** of Monmouth claimed NEC Defensive Player of the Year, while Quinnipiac's **Jillian Strassner (Avon, CT/Avon)** captured NEC Rookie of the Year honors. All three players also earned a spot on the NEC all-conference first team.

The awards were presented at a banquet on the eve of the 2009 NEC Women's Soccer Tournament, set to commence on Friday, Nov. 6 hosted by Central Connecticut State University on the CCSU Soccer Field on campus in New Britain, CT. In the semifinals, top-seeded CCSU squares off with defending NEC Champion fourth-seeded Long Island at 11:00 a.m., followed by #2 Monmouth taking on #3 seed Quinnipiac at 1:30 p.m. The championship match is slated for Sunday, Nov. 8 at 1:00 p.m. The winner of the NEC championship will receive the league's automatic berth to the NCAA Tournament. First round NCAA action begins on Friday, Nov. 13 at campus sites.

Blayney's impressive senior campaign was highlighted by her success in her opponent's half of the field. The midfielder earns CCSU an unprecedented eighth Player of the Year honor all-time and its first since 2005. Hailing from Katoomba, New South Wales, the overwhelming vote-getter for this honor ranks second on the team and in the league with 10 goals but tops the leader board with 13 assists, eight of which came during conference contests, and 33 points. She recently was named *adidas*/NEC Player of the Week and is tied for 16th nationally in points per game (1.83). Her tallies for goals and assists helped pace the Blue Devils for a league-leading mark of 46 goals and 2.42 per game as well as 49 assists and 2.58 per game. This is Blayney's third all-NEC first team selection.

Kliment returned to the pitch hard in 2009 after seeing only seven games during her sophomore campaign before being dealt a season-ending shoulder injury. She was selected to the all-conference first team this year also gleaning enough votes for a Defensive Player of the Year nod in the NEC. The Florence, NJ native effectively patrolled a Monmouth backline that registered an unprecedented 12 shutouts over the course of the regular season, seven of which came against league opponents. The Hawks allowed just 10 goals on the season, only three of them being surrendered to NEC opponents. Their goals against average (0.54) is also the best in the league and ranks 12th on the Division I national poll. Furthermore, MU is tied for 8th in the nation in shutout percentage (.667). The team captain's successes extend to the classroom, too, as she was recently named a member of the ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District 2 First Team.

Strassner collects the award for NEC Rookie of the Year after a 2009 season where she ranked second on the team in goals (four), assists (three) and points (11). This honor is only the third for a Bobcat in NEC history as Elisa Goncalves (1999) and Kirsten van de

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Bryant University (2012-13) • Central Connecticut State University • Fairleigh Dickinson University •
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Ven (2004) earned the other two. Not missing a beat from garnering multiple awards as an Avon High School student-athlete, Strassner was selected in week eight as the *adidas*/NEC Rookie of the Week for totaling six points in two games.

D'Arcy earns NEC Coach of the Year accolades for the fourth time since he joined the head coaching ranks at CCSU in 2000. Since his inaugural season, D'Arcy has led the Blue Devils to four regular season first place finishes, eight straight postseason appearances and five conference tournament crowns, four of those won at home in New Britain, CT. CCSU notched an undefeated regular-season NEC slate (9-0-1) that marks its fifth time in history doing so. CCSU outscored their conference opponents 33-8 in 10 games as it enters the postseason ranked first in shots (282), points (141), goals (46), goals per game (2.24), assists (49) and assists per game (2.58). The Ireland native also led a Blue Devil squad in 2003 to its first-ever NCAA Tournament victory in any sport in the school's Division I history.

In addition to Blayney, regular season champion Central Connecticut State landed junior midfielder **Beth Lloyd (Reading, England/Oaklands College)**, and defender **Karise Hilt (Leominster, MA/Uxbridge)** on the all-NEC first team. Lloyd, a two-time *adidas*/NEC Player of the Week selection, recorded a league-leading three-way tie for goals scored (11) and ranks tied for 44th with .579 per game. She also added five assists and ranks 50th in the NCAA for points per game (1.42). Hilt anchored a defense that posted four shutouts. This is the senior's second first team honor.

Along with Kliment, the Hawks host a slew of first teamers in senior forward **Andrea Lopez (Oakhurst, NJ/Ocean Township)**, junior forward **Mary Wilks (Bridgeton, NJ/Bridgeton)**, sophomore midfielder **Courtney Snyder (Oradell, NJ/River Dell)** and junior netminder **Lia Fierro (Short Hills, NJ/Millburn)**. Those five cover almost half the list. Lopez, the 2006 NEC Rookie and Player of the Year, has shown consistent leadership throughout her four years as a Hawk combining for 30 career goals to lead active players, which also helps her place seventh on MU's all-time scoring list with 84 points. Wilks, who leads the squad with 11 goals (tied for first in NEC) and 27 points, good for third in the league, has scored six in the team's last three games of the regular season. The Garden State native is also tied for the NEC's top spot with five game-winning tallies. MU's goalkeeping stalwart owns two top statistics in the league for shutouts (12) and goals against average (0.54) and ranks second in save percentage with .841. Fierro also ranks 16th in the nation for goals against average (.542), which ranks 12th in Division I in team goals against average. The Hawks are also in a share of 8th place in the country with a .667 shutout percentage.

Quinnipiac notched two spots on the Conference's first team, including sophomore **Furtuna Velaj (Stamford, CT/Westhill)**, who was a 2008 all-NEC first team member as well as freshman midfielder **Jillian Strassner (Avon, CT/Avon)**. Velaj produced league-leading numbers again in 2009, most notably pacing the league in goals per game (0.73), which ranks 20th in the NCAA, points per game (2.00) - a mark that ties her for 8th nationally - and holds a three-way tie for the most goals (11). She also leads the team in assists with eight, good for second-best in the conference. The Stamford, CT native ranks 15th nationally in assists per game (0.53), too. Behind Velaj, Strassner has contributed in the middle of the park for the Bobcats as she is second on the team behind her sophomore counterpart in goals (four), assists (three) and points (11).

The only student-athlete earning an NEC first team accolade not participating in the postseason championship tournament is Sacred Heart's **Jasmine Rodriguez (Clinton, CT/The Morgan School)**. The defender started and played in all 18 games on the season adding one assist that came in the Pioneers final game of the season, a 5-1 toppling of Mount St. Mary's.

The Blue Devils find two more players taking home all-Conference honors as sophomore forward **Brittany Jackson (Madison, CT/Daniel Hand)** and senior goalkeeper **Caity Casey (Guilford, CT/Branford)** earned a place on the second team. Jackson tallied five goals and seven assists for 17 points during the regular season, while Casey notched four shutouts and boasted an undefeated record in the conference.

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Long Island notches two second team all-Conference spots this year in the form of midfielder **Kim Bishop (Valley Stream, NY/Kellenberg Memorial)** and defender **Kelly Carter (Exton, PA/Downingtown East)**. Bishop added three goals all of which were games winners. The first came against The Mount Oct. 2 when she grabbed a loose ball in a scramble of players to place it in the back of the net. Then she notched the only goal in the Blackbirds win over Fairleigh Dickinson Oct. 23. Her most notable game-winner came in a non-conference match against Buffalo when she tallied the lone goal 57 seconds into the second overtime period to clinch victory. Carter started and played in all 17 games this season adding one assist. Her defensive efforts are most impressive as she added depth to a backline that totaled eight shutouts.

Though not earning enough points to participate in the NEC Tournament, Saint Francis (PA) was able to produce two all-Conference second team winners. Senior forward **Rachel Seibert (Murrysville, PA/Franklin Regional)** started all 18 games in 2009's regular season and earned 21 points, good for fifth in NEC ranks. Joining Seibert is defensive counterpart **Brittany Valentine (Hudson, OH/Walsh Jesuit)**. The senior also started all 18 games for the Red Flash where she scored five goals and added one assist. Three of her goals were game-winning marks.

Rounding out the all-NEC second team list are players from four different schools. Representing the front line is Robert Morris' **Ayana Davis (Mt. Laurel, NJ/Holy Cross)** who didn't participate her freshman year but scored nine goals, five of which were game-winning tallies, in her first campaign as a sophomore. She was also a three-time *adidas*/NEC Rookie of the Week selection. In the midfield is Fairleigh Dickinson senior **Jennifer Arceneaux (Arvada, CO/Ralston Valley)** and Wagner freshman **Julie Vigliotti (Staten Island, NY/Notre Dame Academy)**. Despite finishing the season last in the conference standings, Arceneaux earns her spot on the second team for starting all 18 games, scoring three times and adding two helpers. Vigliotti helped the Seahawks in their efforts with four goals (three game-winners) and two assists. Finally, in its first season eligible for awards and honors, Bryant's **Mary Green (Merrick, NY/Calhoun)** made history as she was selected to the second team for her defensive efforts. Starting all 17 games and notching one goal and one assists for three points, Green helped BU battle in seven overtime matches, five that went into the second overtime period, even though they were only victorious once and finished twice in a deadlock.

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2009 NEC Women's Soccer Award Winners

Player of the Year

Leah Blayney Central Conn. St. M 5-4 Sr. Katoomba, New South Wales/Auburn University

Defensive Player of the Year

Ali Kliment Monmouth M/D 5-7 Jr. Florence, NJ/The Pennington School

Rookie of the Year

Jillian Strassner Quinnipiac M/F 5-7 Fr. Avon, CT/Avon

Coach of the Year

Mick D'Arcy Central Conn. St.

2009 NEC Women's Soccer First Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos.	Ht.	Yr	Hometown/High School
Mary Wilks	Monmouth	F	5-8	Jr.	Bridgeton, NJ/Bridgeton
Andrea Lopez	Monmouth	F	5-5	Sr.	Oakhurst, NJ/Ocean Township
Furtuna Velaj	Quinnipiac	F	5-6	So.	Stamford, CT/Westhill
Leah Blayney	Central Conn. St	M	5-4	Sr.	Katoomba, New South Wales/Auburn University
Beth Lloyd	Central Conn. St.	M	5-5	Jr.	Reading, England/Oaklands College
Courtney Snyder	Monmouth	M	5-3	So.	Oradell, NJ/River Dell
Jillian Strassner	Quinnipiac	M	5-7	Fr.	Avon, CT/Avon
Karise Hilt	Central Conn. St.	D	5-8	Sr.	Leominster, MA/Uxbridge
Ali Kliment	Monmouth	D	5-7	Jr.	Florence, NJ/The Pennington School
Jasmine Rodriguez	Sacred Heart	D	5-3	Jr.	Clinton, CT/The Morgan School
Lia Fierro	Monmouth	GK	5-7	Jr.	Short Hills, NJ/Millburn

2009 NEC Women's Soccer Second Team All-Conference

Name	School	Pos.	Ht.	Yr	Hometown/High School
Brittany Jackson	Central Conn. St.	F	5-8	So.	Madison, CT/Daniel Hand
Ayana Davis	Robert Morris	F	5-6	So.	Mt. Laurel, NJ/Holy Cross
Rachel Seibert	Saint Francis (PA)	F	5-8	Sr.	Murrysville, PA/Franklin Regional
Jennifer Arceneaux	Fairleigh Dickinson	M	5-8	Sr.	Arvada, CO/Ralston Valley
Kim Bishop	Long Island	M	5-3	Sr.	Valley Stream, NY/Kellenberg Memorial
Julie Vigliotti	Wagner	M	5-0	Fr.	Staten Island, NY/Notre Dame Academy
Mary Green	Bryant	D	5-8	So.	Merrick, NY/Calhoun
Kelly Carter	Long Island	D	5-4	Jr.	Exton, PA/Downingtown East
Hanne Walleck	Quinnipiac	D	5-6	Sr.	South Glastonbury, CT/Glastonbury
Brittany Valentine	Saint Francis (PA)	D	5-1	Sr.	Hudson, OH/Walsh Jesuit
Caity Casey	Central Conn. st.	GK	5-9	Sr.	Guilford, CT/Branford

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