



PRESS RELEASE

## WBCA announces finalists for the 2012 RUSSELL ATHLETIC/WBCA National JC/CC Coach of the Year

ATLANTA (March 15, 2012) – Ron Harris of Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Misty Opat of Rock Valley College (Rockford, Ill.), BJ Smith of Highland Community College (Highland, Kan.), Brett Vanna of Louisburg College (Louisburg, N.C.) and Karen Willey of Kishwaukee College (Malta, Ill.) are finalists for 2012 RUSSELL ATHLETIC/WBCA National Junior/Community College Coach of the Year honors, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association announced today.

The winner will be announced during the second annual WBCA Awards Show on Monday, April 2, in Denver. This event is part of the WBCA National Convention and is held in conjunction with the NCAA® Women's Final Four®.

"The WBCA congratulates these five coaches on being named finalists for this year's RUSSELL ATHLETIC/WBCA National Junior/Community College Coach of the Year award," said WBCA CEO Beth Bass. "Each coach was selected by their peers and is deserving of this honor for their terrific seasons. On behalf of the WBCA and its members, I wish all five of these finalists the best of luck at the WBCA Awards Show in Denver."

"Russell Athletic believes in the 'Power of Team' and no team can be successful without a powerful leader," said Executive Vice President Gary Barfield. "Russell Athletic is pleased to honor the coaches nominated for Coach of the Year and applaud their successes."

Harris was promoted to interim head coach at Cincinnati State prior to the 2011–12 season. Harris has served in various capacities with the program since 2006 when he was hired as an assistant coach and director of recruiting. Currently, the No. 2 Lady Surge are riding a 29–1 overall record and perfect 12–0 conference record into regional postseason play.

Opat led Rock Valley to a conference championship in 2011 and became the college's athletic director in the same year. This season, the Golden Eagles notched a 25–6 overall record on their way to a second consecutive North Central Community College Conference championship. Opat's team is ranked No. 4 nationally in NJCAA Division III and earned a No. 4 seed in the national tournament after winning the Region IV tournament March 4.

Smith is in his first season as head coach at Highland. Smith led the Scotties to a 27–3 record and a second–place finish in the Jayhawk East Conference. With Smith at the helm, the team not only enjoyed its most successful season in history, cracking the

top 10 national rankings, but also its first winning season since 1984.

Vana, in his first year at Louisburg, has led the Lady Hurricanes to a 26–1 mark this season. The team earned a first-round bye in the NJCAA Division II Region X tournament and climbed to the No. 5 spot in the top 20 national poll.

Wiley has been head coach at Kishwaukee for 11 years since taking over in 2000, and was named the athletic director in 2004. Wiley's team started breaking records early in the 2012 season after making the NJCAA Division II preseason top 10. With a 24–8 record, the Kougars are slated to face Illinois Valley in the Region IV finals March 10.

RUSSELL ATHLETIC and the WBCA annually recognize six national coaches of the year – one in each of the WBCA's five collegiate divisions (NCAA Divisions I, II, III, NAIA and junior/community college) as well as high school. This marks the 30th year this award has been presented, which has been selected by the WBCA since 1983.

#### About RUSSELL ATHLETIC:

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#### About the WBCA:

Founded in 1981, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association promotes women's basketball by unifying coaches at all levels to develop a reputable identity for the sport and to foster and promote the development of the game as a sport for women and girls. The WBCA is pleased to join the women's sports community in commemorating the 40th anniversary of Title IX, which was passed by Congress on June 23, 1972, and provides females with equal opportunities in athletics in the U.S. For more information on the WBCA, please visit [wbca.org](http://wbca.org).