



PRESS RELEASE

WBCA announces finalists for 2012 RUSSELL ATHLETIC/WBCA DIII National Coach of the Year award

ATLANTA (March 16, 2012) – Judith Blinstrub of Babson College (Babson Park, Mass.), Melissa West of Hartwick College (Oneonta, N.Y.), Deena Applebury of the University of Mary Washington (Fredericksburg, Va.), Yvonne Kauffman of Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.), Wendie Austin–Robinson of Centre College (Danville, Ky.), Suzy Venet of the University of Mount Union (Alliance, Ohio), Aaron Roussell of the University of Chicago and Michael Meek of George Fox University (Newberg, Ore.) are the 2012 RUSSELL ATHLETIC/WBCA Division III Regional Coaches of the Year, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association office announced today.

The regional honorees – Blinstrub (region 1), West (region 2), Applebury (region 3), Kauffman (region 4), Austin–Robinson (region 5), Venet (region 6), Roussell (region 7) and Meek (region 8) – as well as G.P. Gromacki of Amherst College (Amherst, Mass.), Mia Smith of Illinois Wesleyan University and Ruth Sinn of the University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, Minn.), who are at-large candidates due to their teams' berths in the NCAA® Division III Women's Final Four®, are finalists for the 2012 RUSSELL ATHLETIC/WBCA NCAA Division III National Coach of the Year award. 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 coaches on being named finalists for this year's Division III 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."

Blinstrub reached a milestone this season, earning her 500th career victory March 2. The win came in the first round of the NCAA Division III National Tournament, a scene Blinstrub has led her No. 11-ranked Babson squad to for four straight seasons. Blinstrub also led her team to a fourth consecutive conference title in 2012, and ended the season with an impressive 26–3 record.

West, the fourth-year head coach at Hartwick, led her team to its first NCAA DIII National Tournament appearance in 13 years. West's 22–6 Hawks finished runner-up

in the Empire 8 Conference championship, besting 2011's finish of fifth place.

Applebury's No. 7 Mary Washington team advanced to the Elite Eight of the NCAA DIII National Tournament, riding a program-best 30-0 record, before ending the season with a 30-1 mark. The eighth-year head coach was named the RUSSELL ATHLETIC/WBCA Coach of the Year in 2007 and has earned WBCA regional coach of the year nods twice before.

Kauffman was named Commonwealth Conference Coach of the Year following her team's 16-9 season. In her final year as head of the program, the 42-year veteran head coach guided Elizabethtown to its most successful season in more than a decade. Kauffman's Blue Jays advanced to the Commonwealth Conference semifinals after making their first postseason appearance since 2001.

Austin-Robinson earned SCAC Coach of the Year honors following No. 23 Centre's conference championship victory and 24-3 regular season record – the highest winning percentage in the program's history. In her 12th year as head coach of her alma mater, Austin-Robinson took her team to the third round of the NCAA DIII National Tournament.

Venet, the D3hoops.com Great Lakes Region Coach of the Year, is in her seventh season as head coach of No. 6 Mount Union. Venet's team advanced to the Sweet Sixteen of the NCAA DIII National Tournament and concluded the season with a 28-2 record.

Roussell is in his eighth season at the helm in Chicago. This marks the second straight year Roussell has earned WBCA Regional Coach of the Year honors. No. 2 ranked Chicago (27-1) took a spotless 25-0 mark into postseason play for the first time in the program's 41-year history.

Meek, the All-Northwest Conference Coach of the Year honoree, and his No. 3 George Fox Bruins advanced to the NCAA DIII National Tournament's Final Four. Meek's team boasts a blemish-free 31-0 record heading into the matchup. Meek is in his second year as head coach of the program.

Gromacki's Amherst team prevailed as the nation's No. 1 team for much of the 2012 season. The fifth-year head coach guided his top-ranked squad to a three-peat championship in the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) – the fourth conference crown in his five seasons – and a fourth straight NCAA DIII Final Four appearance. Now 31-0, Gromacki and the Lord Jeffs are vying for a second consecutive national title.

Smith, the D3hoops.com Central Region Coach of the Year, is in her 14th season as head coach of the No. 16 Illinois Wesleyan Titans. The veteran head coach also earned recognition as the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW) Coach of the Year. Her 26-5 team etched its name into the NCAA DIII Final Four semifinals for the second straight season.

Sinn is in her seventh season at St. Thomas. Named the West Region Coach of the Year by D3hoops.com, Sinn has led her team to a school-record 30-win season and Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIACC) title. The No. 10 Tommies (30-

1) are set to compete in the NCAA DIII Final Four.

RUSSELL ATHLETIC and the WBCA present the national coach of the year award annually in each of the five WBCA membership divisions (NCAA Divisions I, II and III; NAIA; junior/community college and high school). This marks the 30th year the award has been presented, which has been selected by the WBCA since 1985.

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.